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Spring of Freedom in the Middle East

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EDITORIAL

Freedom always works!

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Nothing comparable has occurred since the fall of the Wall in Germany and the spread of freedom throughout Eastern Europe. The unimaginable happened and a wave of revolutions aiming for different goals (democracy, liberty, human rights and justice), but eventually the same ultimate aim - that governments fall - swept across the Middle East. When a society has the opportunity to choose between freedom and oppression, it will always select freedom. Any oppressive system in history disappeared due to people's ultimate aim for freedom. Freedom is nothing abstract; it is a natural desire and a fundamental right to which every single person in the world is entitled. There are always critics who argue that this is nonsense. Even though they have proven to be wrong in modern history considering the events in the autumn of 1989 and, more recently, in the Arab world in the spring of 2011, they should not remain unchallenged as the power of the people outweighs any weapons arsenals, is stronger and more persistent than any dictator could imagine.

Although it is not possible to predict in which way the recent events will transform the Middle East, a lot will change and the political environment will not be the same again. There is a clear potential for a fundamental change, leading to more liberty, transparency and good governance from which all citizens could benefit. The world is looking to magnificent capitals such as Algiers, Cairo, Manama, Tripoli and Tunis as eyewitness of world history taking place.

While a lot of academic attention has been paid to the roots of the revolution (socio-economic factors (in particular the high price of food), the role of social media and Wikileaks), the focus should be on possible outcomes - scenarios for the future and, in particular, how the free world could contribute more efficiently towards a successful transformation. One of the key questions is how the affected countries can return to a urgent needed stability that ensures a stable Middle East. Can, if at all, Turkey serve as a mediator and is Israel's future with new governments in the region secured? A lot is at stake. However, what matters the most is that things change in a positive way that enables the vast majority of people in the volatile region to benefit from a promising change that equips them with the hope, enthusiasm and spirit to improve their lifestyle.

There are considerable challenges ahead, but if people continue to roll up their sleeves and rebuild their societies, the horizon looks bright. The support of North America and the European Union is crucial. Understandably, Japan with the disaster of Fukushima is currently not in a position to assist the freedom fighters in any considerable way. Western democracies, in particular the United States of America, Germany, France and the United Kingdom have a moral obligation to do everything imaginable to support the will of the people in the Middle East to save their own faces as they are associated with the word "liberty". They cannot close their eyes and accept the status quo. A pro-active approach involving all layers of diplomatic and humanitarian efforts is a sine qua non. There is no doubt at all that they have the capabilities to do so.

Due to these recent world events, the Editorial Board of A Different View has decided to devote the fourth issue 2011 exclusively to the Spring of Freedom in the Middle East. We believe that we cannot remain silent while people risk their lives. Therefore, we wish to express our solidarity with those who demonstrate against tyranny, assume leadership and fight for their fundamental right of expressing their views freely and publicly. We hope that their voices are heard, that the world has learnt their lessons from the failures of Afghanistan and Iraq, and that these movements translate into modern democracies.

OPINION ARTICLES

Facebook Revolutions

Miles Collinson

Miles Collinson is a 23 year old final year undergraduate student at the University of Salford, studying contemporary Military and international History. He hopes to go on next year to begin an MA in terrorism and security at the same establishment. His research interests include the Middle East, suicide terrorism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the First World War.

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In recent months disillusionment with authoritarian regimes has spread rapidly across North Africa and the Middle East. In furthering the base of support for this ‘grass roots’ uprising the internet, in particular social networking sites, has played a key role in attempting to spread the message of disillusionment with particular regimes. Whereas previously revolutionary sentiments would have been passed via word of mouth from region to region, the internet has allowed for the revolutionary message and rhetoric to be passed throughout states and the wider disillusioned region alike. Social networking sites have performed two primary roles in these revolutions against authoritarian regimes; firstly, increasing the base of support for the revolutionary sentiment, and secondly, it has aided in organizing mass rallies and protests in opposition of said dictators.

The technological revolution of sites such as Facebook and Twitter have allowed for views to be shared globally and arrange rallies in a short amount of time and form a unified front as demonstrated by protesters in Tahrir square in Egypt. These social networking sites have given large-scale oppressed people a unanimous voice and allowed them to air their concerns. Due to the increase in the use of the Internet across the globe, Facebook has consequently facilitated the dissemination of revolutionary thought throughout the North Africa and the Middle East, something that would have been hard to achieve twenty years ago. In this respect Social networking sites are showing their ability to attract a wide audience and mobilize their effort. Similar examples have been seen in the West such as in Britain in the mobilization of the masses via Facebook to get a song by the band Rage against the Machine to the Christmas number one. Although these two scenarios are totally different in their goals and their political orientation, the method of spreading their cause via the Internet is remarkably similar.

In attempting to quell the rebellion many dictators, such as Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, have cut off the Internet. This desperate method of attempting to minimize the impact of social networking sites demonstrate the huge effect the internet has on the spread of this ideology and the fear it instills amongst dictators throughout North Africa and the Middle East. In the case of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Facebook protests directly moved from the World Wide Web to the streets of Egypt, playing a major role in his removal. In this respect we can see the direct threat which disillusionment manifested on the Internet can have to the regime in power. Directly transitioning an Internet based protest onto the streets of Egypt.

Social networking sites are not the motivation for these revolutions to spread across the region; the motivation is ultimately large-scale discontent with the current government. However, social networking sites are aiding their spread allowing for an increase in numbers and for concerted efforts of protest to be organized. Social networking sites have therefore shown their ability to be a conduit for revolution across the Middle East and North Africa, demonstrating the importance of technology at the present time.

It is clear that a wave of discontent regarding authoritarian regimes is sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa and will continue to spread, with or without, the help of the Internet. However, in some cases such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, social networking sites have directly aided in the dissemination of the protests, and in Egypt and Tunisia highlighted some degree of success. Consequently, as long as this unrest continues to manifest itself social networking sites will continue to harbor anti authoritarian groups and play an effect on any uprising that emerges.

The negative aspect for the revolutionary movement is that social networking sites do not have complete control over the entire populace, rather only those who are able and willing to engage with the Internet phenomenon of social networking. However, to the technically adapted youth, sites such as Facebook and Twitter allow for views to be shared and disseminated amongst people with similar feelings and views, directly sharing views and gaining support as the revolution continues to grow. In this respect social networking sites are useful tools for the revolutionary yet not the primary tool of starting the revolutionary impetus that needs to be harbored from widespread discontent. Nevertheless, social networking sites do have the ability to maintain the longevity of the revolution needed to remove the dictators, such as in the case of Egypt.

Consequently, the role of Facebook in future revolutions, not just in the Middle East and North Africa, is potentially damaging to any kind of authoritarian dictatorship. Largely due to the ability of social networking sites to organize the masses into protests and further develop revolutionary discourse. As a result, it may become a common practice for any dictator feeling under pressure to cut the Internet in a bid to quell the revolution before it can be brought to the streets. Consequently, if

authoritarian dictators wish to maintain their regimes they will have to take control of the Internet and realize its potential in their demise. Ultimately, social networking sites have demonstrated their importance in the dissemination of thoughts and views during the recent revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East and have led to an increase of support for the anti-government sentiment, which has transitioned both the internet and the streets alike.

2011 - A Turning Point for the Arab world?

Richard Ballout

Richard Ballout, 21, from Manchester, is a final year undergraduate student at the University of Salford, studying Contemporary History and Politics (2008-2011). His bachelor thesis was written on the International Brigade's role in the Spanish civil war. He has a particular interest in the Arab world, and during his degree he has studied modules such as "the Arab-Israeli conflict", and "the Politics of Islamism". He is currently unemployed. He plans to study for an MA in the near future.

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The Arab world of 2011 is a different place, and without question a new chapter has begun. The immense volume of anger and protest sweeping the Arab region is unprecedented. Protests in Syria for example would have been simply unthinkable, even two months ago. Poverty, corruption and unemployment have been the three underlying causes to much of the unrest, but the uprisings have had more of a symbolic meaning, of disenfranchised people, who after years of repression have united to demand change. It must be understood that Iraq and Afghanistan are in profoundly different circumstances to other states in the region. Consequently, attempting to link the attempts of Iraq and Afghanistan in implementing democracies to the rest of the region is not wholly convincing.

Of course there is no definite guarantee of genuine democracy arising in the new Arab world, yet what needs to be considered is why not? For Tunisia and Egypt particularly, now lies the opportunity for genuine democracies to be established. Those who risked their lives during the uprisings, particularly amongst the youth, have realized what they have achieved is remarkable. Surely, the masses of people who have courageously protested in the face of brutal repression throughout the region will demand genuine change. This is a unique time for the Arab world, and one must assume that these uprisings will profoundly change the nature of the Arab world, and genuine democracy is one thing, which will ensure that true change will be implemented and sustained. In short, the old system of overwhelmingly powerful heads of Arabs states is severely under threat, and possibly finished.

Yet, it cannot be ignored that radical elements of Islam may well exploit the current situation in the Arab world, and thus genuine democracies may not be implemented. Al-Qaeda has remained suspiciously quiet during the whole of the uprisings. There is certainly a sense of uncertainty in many Arab states currently, and it is in these situations that radical groups can manipulate people and gain support. Many of the ruling elites of the Arab states have attempted to place blame on radicals for the unrest, and whilst it cannot be confirmed that radical elements have had no role in the uprisings, it would be foolish to believe that they have played a major role.

One might suggest that the current unrest is actually a problem for radical groups rather than an opportunity. The cultural side of the uprisings evokes a sense of romanticism - an urge for freedom, liberty and opportunity. This is a worrying trend for radical elements. There will be very little room for radicals in a society where such emotions are held. Furthermore, many, particularly amongst students of the uprisings, are very western-minded. This adds to the difficulties radical elements may encounter in attempting to take advantage of the current unrest.

Only time will tell if Tunisia and Egypt will evolve into genuine democracies, but there now lies a real opportunity for them to do so. Whether other Arab states will implement genuine democratic reforms is open to question too. Western powers find themselves in an uneasy situation. They must allow the Arab people to decide their own destiny without any interference, but they must also encourage democracy. What has been demonstrated in these early months of 2011, above any other factor, is the power of the will. Martyrs have been a plenty, but their lives have not gone in vein; The Arab world has changed, for the better. Very few will have foreseen what has happened, yet it has, and with it, Western policy towards the Arab world will change too. This is possibly the most intriguing consequence of the uprisings, and undoubtedly policies will need to be re-examined as the Arab world enters a new period.

Egypt's Challenging Path from Revolution to Democracy

Simeon Schächtele

Simeon Schächtele, 25, is a graduate who received his Bachelor in International Relations at Dresden University of Technology and went on to obtain a Masters degree in Cognitive Science from University College London in 2010. He currently works as an intern for the German organization "Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit" in Cairo. His interests include economics, political philosophy, development studies and the Mediterranean region.

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Never say there's no hope. Hope disappears only when you say there's none. So long as you come down with us, there will be hope. Don't be afraid of the government. Fear none but God. God says He will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. Don't think you can be safe anymore. None of us are. Come down with us and demand your rights, my rights, your family's rights. I am going down on January 25th, and I will say no to corruption, no to this regime.

- 26-year old Asmaa Mahfouz in her call for people to protest, published on Youtube on January 18, 2011

More than two months ago, Egyptians regained their sense of dignity in an admirable revolutionary uprising against a regime that did not flinch from using violence against their own people. Until the elections for a new parliament and a new president in the second half of this year, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has taken control of the government. While the council has declared its support to the demonstrators' goals from the day it assumed power and a number of positive steps have been implemented under the first civil Prime Minister Essam Sharaf, many remain skeptical of the military's professed support for democratization. Besides, the future role of religion in Egyptian politics is what preoccupies political analysts and many fear growing influence by the Muslim Brotherhood, who is publicly embracing moderate positions and about to found one or more political parties. Even when Western governments desire to support democratization in the region is sincere, their attempts to do so should be very cautious and remain as neutral as possible, focusing primarily on economic development and starting with trade liberalization.

Upon his resignation on February 11, President Hosni Mubarak transferred power to Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Despite the council's immediate public embracement of the goals of the revolution, many pro-democracy activists remain skeptical of its role. Its chairman, field marshal Tantawi, is a familiar figure from the era of Mubarak, serving as defense minister since 1991. Shortly after the successful referendum on nine constitutional amendments on March 19, the SCAF declared an

interim constitution of 62 articles that included the nine amendments but otherwise coincided largely with the existing constitution of 1971. Aside from the fact that many activists had preferred to draft a completely new constitution before the upcoming presidential elections, the procedure of first holding a popular referendum on nine amendments and then issuing an interim institution by decree seems odd. Activists and opposition groups were further alienated by restrictions to the right to demonstrate, insufficient progress in prosecuting corruption, allegations of human rights' violations by the army or tolerated by it, including "virginity tests" of protesting women, and the imprisonment of bloggers, such as the case of Maikel Nabil, who was sentenced to three years of prison by a military court on April 10. At least one person died and dozens were injured when the military enforced the curfew after thousands had gathered on Tahrir Square on April 8 to demand the dismissal and prosecution of corrupt leaders of the former regime, notably of Ex-President Mubarak himself. Despite these grievances, which led some protesters to demand the resignation of SCAF chairman Tantawi, confrontation with the military seems to be a red line for many activists and the general public alike. The military, which generally enjoys a good reputation in the country, is credited for its neutrality in the heyday of the revolution and is seen as a guarantor of a minimum of stability and security, especially in the light of rising crime. "Zeinobia", for instance, one of Egypt's most influential bloggers, emphasizes the positive developments that took place since the military took over power from Mubarak. In fact, Hosni Mubarak, his two sons Alaa and Gamal and other leading figures of the former regime were detained on April 13 and are being investigated for crimes of corruption and abuse of power. Moreover, on April 16, the Supreme Administrative Court ordered the disbandment of the formerly ruling National Democratic Party and the confiscation of its assets. Egyptians living abroad have been granted the right to vote in national elections.

The Muslim Brotherhood, arguably the country's most influential social and political force besides the military, has also taken a favorable stance towards the military transition government. At the same time, the organization is taking ostensibly moderate positions, reaching out to members of the Coptic community and condemning all forms of violence, including the violent attacks on Coptic churches and the demolition of Sufi shrines by Salafist groups. Senior members of the brotherhood have also said that the party "Freedom and Development", which is about to be founded to represent the Brotherhood politically, is open to Christians and women and could also be headed by a Christian, if he were in line with the political agenda. Unsurprisingly, many Christians, secularists and foreign observers remain skeptical of the Brotherhood. Indeed there is a catch, as for instance the party's draft charter deems Christian and women "unsuitable" for the office of the Egyptian president, which contradicts the Brotherhood's assurance that Christians will not be second-class citizens. Another important concern is the question how far the Brotherhood would go in changing the political relations between Israel and Egypt. Many observers believe that the Brotherhood's party platform is likely to win a (relative) majority in the upcoming parliamentary elections, especially given the Brotherhood's organizational advantage. The large majority in favor of the constitutional amendments, which the Brotherhood, unlike many Tahrir activists and the majority of Copts, had actively supported, is widely seen as an indication of their political influence. Meanwhile, there are rumors of splinter parties from Brotherhood members and disenchantment of the movement's youth with the senior leadership. Junior members of the organization recently held the first youth conference of Muslim

Brothers, discussing topics such as internal democracy and engagement with other opposition groups. The name “Freedom and Development”, reminiscent of the Turkish “Justice and Development” party, suggests that the Brotherhood’s party could play a similar role to the Turkish ruling party. As with the Turkish party, opinions are divided about whether these movements represent a moderate, modernizing stream of Islam that the West should engage with or a dangerous wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Whether Western governments like the idea of a ruling Muslim party or not, they should be very cautious with interfering in Egypt’s internal political development. They should certainly demand adherence to democratic principles and human rights, but given the record of Western support to authoritarian regimes, notably to the toppled regime of Mubarak itself, their credibility is limited. In any case, more direct support of secular democratic opposition groups is likely to have counterproductive effects, as many Egyptians will see this as undue foreign interference, which will discredit the organization itself. The 6th of April youth movement, for instance, has accused the New York Times newspaper of libel for reporting that US-American organizations such as Freedom House trained members of the movement in the use of communication technology and social networks. This demonstrates how concerned Egyptians organizations are about the perception of foreign sponsoring and influence. Instead of some of the more dubious “democratization assistance” projects that Western governments are currently rushing to offer, the first thing that the EU should concede to any democratic government is trade liberalization, crucially including all agricultural products, services and simplification of rules of origin.

Whereas in some cases, foreign (economic) assistance may be helpful and necessary, ultimately it is up to the Egyptian people to take charge for the development of their country. The road ahead is steep, long and difficult, but with the unexpected toppling of Hosni Mubarak, Egyptians have forcefully demonstrated their desire for democratic change. For democratization to succeed, a minimum of well-founded trust between the different actors in Egypt is necessary. Fortunately, it seems like the majority of Egyptians are embracing national unity over sectarian divisions and are balancing legitimate demands for democratization and development with patience. In fact, a lot of patience, good faith and determined action are required to achieve democracy and prosperity, and the latter will be necessary to sustain the former, in particular decent employment opportunities for the many jobless youth need to be created. Whereas many reasons to remain skeptical about the country’s ability to achieve these goals in the short term exist, there is hope that the “change of what is in themselves”, i.e. the courageous and ultimately successful demands for the end of the regime, represents a permanent barrier to any relapse into full-scale authoritarianism and a fruitful medium for democratization.

Libya: The Road to Stalemate?

Alexander Warrington

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The highway running east-west along the northern Libyan plain where the districts of Al-Wahat and Sirte meet the Gulf of Sidra might without urgent action prove to be more than just an important transport route; it might also prove to be a road to stalemate.

It has been almost two months since the Arab Spring began to germinate in Libya – with a small gathering outside a Benghazi police station in protest of the regime's incarceration of a single human rights protester. Now, the balance between rebel and government forces is a delicate and artificial one.

In light of neighboring Jasmine and Lotus revolutions, the Libyan people stand divided, their tribal interrelations of heightened importance today to the balance of power, with alliances potentially shifting and uncertain. A stalemate, first established by limited international military intervention, seems to be showing distressing signs of decay. Such decay makes it much less likely that in the current context we will see further tribal defections in favor of the rebels.

A week ago, the western battlefield lay between rebel-held Ajdabiya to the east and Muammar Gaddafi's birthplace of Sirt to the west. The two parallel, arterial highways traversing no-man's-land did so across flat, hard ground with little cover: territory ideal for fast and sweeping mounted-maneuvers.

Indeed, the historical tactical precedence was well respected during early to mid-April with both the major disputed conurbations; the oil port of Ras Lanuf and the town of Bin Jawad, first falling to the logistically over-extended rebels only to be retaken by probing elements of the still considerable remnants of Gaddafi's easternmost combined-arms brigade. This same brigade had only weeks before withdrawn in bad-order in the face of coalition and later NATO airpower when laying siege to Benghazi.

However, there were few major population centers between the above-mentioned prizes and Ajdabiya to justify NATO Close Air Support sorties. Thus in recent days,

without NATO warplanes acting as a Force Multiplier in their favor, the often tactically ill-disciplined, ineffectually trained and commanded, out-gunned and under-protected rebels have fallen back to Ajdabiya.

It is to Ajdabiya that Gadhafi's forces now put siege. Yet this occurrence is more than just another stage in a series of back and forth battles and skirmishes; it is a critical crossroads in the uprising for a number of reasons:

Firstly, it is to the south and west of Ajdabiya that the watercourse of the Great Man-Made River runs, supplying 'Fossil Water' from the deep dessert to the rebel stronghold of Benghazi. Despite being a coastal town, both it and Ajdabiya lack sufficient desalination facilities to supply their population. Should the regime take Ajdabiya, or if they are allowed to assert sufficient freedom of action in her vicinity, an act of sabotage would make the tenability of Benghazi highly questionable. She can only be supplied with drinking water from Tobruk by road. The logistical viability of this must be called into question. If Benghazi falls to siege tactics the character of any remaining opposition in the east would have to adapt drastically. Any quasi-official opposition political groupings, such as the Transitional National Council, would be forced to disappear underground (if they remained at all) and the prospect of a smooth, semi-legitimate transition of power would be greatly diminished.

Secondly, since NATO took command of the enforcement of the arms embargo, the no-fly-zone, and the air-to-ground missions to prevent targeting of civilians, its seeming ineffectuality has brought into question its capacity to substantially disrupt – never mind wholly prevent – Gaddafi's ability to threaten Ajdabiya.

The assault upon the only major eastern outpost of conventional rebel resistance in Misrata demonstrates the inability of NATO to counter armor and mortar attacks on the civilian population when regime-armed elements take cover inside the very cities they are attacking.

It is worth noting that we cannot excuse these NATO failings based purely upon the well-documented limitations of bringing tactical air power to bear in the FIBUA (Fighting in Built-Up Areas) dynamic, as NATO's airpower failings have also been occurring outside of the FIBUA environment.

NATO seems to be unable thus far to prevent the logistical support of the regimes' easternmost combined-arms brigade, despite its reliance on resupply of mission-critical consumables along the open highways and flat terrain. This geographical environment should lend itself very poorly to such ground resupply activities in any asymmetry of airpower, never mind when total air supremacy is in the enemy's favor.

Gaddafi's forces have shown great resilience in countering the presence of NATO airpower and adapting their tactics not only to increase their survivability but allow

freedom of maneuver.

NATO members are concerned about drawing out their somewhat limited involvement into an open-ended commitment. Initially the Obama administration sought to cap US involvement and UK Prime Minister David Cameron categorically ruled out the use of ground forces. Such moderation might play well domestically, but can only embolden the regime. Without a drastic change of course Libya's rebels will not on a road to neither stalemate nor victory, but a situation in which Gaddafi's will in all likelihood win out convincingly.

The idea of authorizing the deployment of further Western ground forces - in addition to the small Special Forces elements that have certainly but deniably been in theatre for over a month, is clearly a nonstarter in Western capitals. Therefore, other options and possibilities much be explored to transform a likely rout into a stalemate.

NATO must rectify their failings quickly, lest the current situation around Ajdabiya deteriorate catastrophically for the rebels. It is the author's opinion that NATO's inadequate performance can be largely attributed to both a quantitative lack of air assets – both strike and ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance) – and domestic political and public concern over mission creep in force-contributing nations. These inadequacies could reasonably be addressed quite rapidly should junior NATO members step up to their responsibilities and provide a respectable increase in airframes.

However, should more junior NATO members be unforthcoming, the UK government has the very real option of reinstating the recently mothballed Harrier GR9 and operating them from the deck of the light-carrier HMS Illustrious. Carrier basing of strike assets would provide for the much-needed utility of greater loiter-time and faster tasking, allowing for more effective prosecution of targets. Indeed such a measure would also serve to alleviate some of the stress on the air-tanker fleet.

Greater participation from smaller NATO members would naturally have implications for Chain-of-Command (CoC) and Operational Command and Control (C2) for the NATO mission, but neither need be insurmountable hurdles. This would certainly be a timely requirement for an organization that is modernizing and reorganizing in a political context in which it is less likely that the United States will implement a programme of interventionism and lead such operations. This will require the creation of more organic European CoC and C2 capacity, as well as a realization that those governments will, going forward, have to look at procuring for a wider spectrum of capabilities, even at a time of budgetary constraint.

If by NATO bringing its airpower to bear effectively and doing massive damage to regime armored elements at and in the vicinities of Ajdabiya and Misrata, a stalemate situation would become a credibly foreseeable future.

If such a future could be so achieved, and with further supranational legitimacy though a widening of the UN mandate being most unlikely, the onus to convert a hypothetical stalemate to a rebel advantage would fall squarely with the rebels themselves, supported by western ‘sneakers on the ground’.

Indeed, there is evidence that rebels, well aware of the asymmetry of their position in relation to the regime's forces, are already adopting the tactics of the insurgent. Such activities need not be confined to rebel strongholds and might even, if actioned with skill and audacity, degrade the regime's ability to lay effective siege to population centers. It could also provide such serious instances of rampageous insurrection in and around the capital and wider Tarabulus Region, that they might distract and drawing away the attention of Gaddafi's only other loyal and wholly trusted brigade from Misrata.

A mixture of a better mounted conventional defense of Ajdabiya and Misrata - orchestrated with the improved C2 oversight of the recently announced deployment of British, French and Italian teams of Military Advisors might well serve to better entrench the uprising and deny the regime a swift victory.

Such occurrence acting in tandem with a well-motivated and funded insurgency might well be successful in widening the rebellion into other towns and regions. If the balance of power shifts in the North West as a result of such actions the pressure for tribes to defect to the rebel cause might reach a tipping point, and a domino-effect of shifting loyalties make Gaddafi rue the day he opened his armories to a relatively impoverished people, at a time when such deadly commodities can command such a high price.

However, unless such a change of course is embraced with the utmost expedience then any opportunity to tip the balance in favor of the rebels will be lost with horrific consequences for many of the Libyan people.

ACADEMIC ARTICLES

Post-Islamist Rumblings: Revising the Role of Political Islam

Emma El-Badawy

Emma El-Badawy, aged 22, is currently a Master student at the University of Exeter, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. She graduated in 2010 from the same University with a BA (Hons) in “Arabic and Middle East Studies”. She is currently completing her Master thesis on the Political Exploitation of Egypt’s State Education System and its sociological impacts since 1952 to present. Her wider interests include the Middle East in particular with particular focus on economic and political development and social movements.

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Abstract

Emma El-Badawy in her academic article puts forward the following queries: Will 2011 prove to be the turning point in academic focus on a post-Islamist future, as 1979 was for Islamism? Is this turn of attention justified? How accurate are those who have attempted to refer to recent events as indicators of a post-Islamist climate? Her essay contributes to this discourse, offering further insight into the possible emergence of a post-Islamist generation. Within its scope, it aims to assess the extent and explain the possible de-politicization of Egypt’s Islamist camp, more specifically the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan). The essay focuses on Egypt primarily, if not to do the topic sufficient justice, but also because the Egyptian Ikhwan in particular has been the center of much academic attention with regards to the political potential of moderate Islamism in the region. Revered as the birthplace of Islamism, and home to the region’s oldest and most organized (illegal) Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt offers perhaps the most interesting and yet fertile ground for any post-Islamist assessment. The real objective of her arguments is to assess whether the recent anti-government uprisings in Egypt is early evidence of the lessening political relevance of Islamist groups. She argues that though terms such as ‘post-Islamist’ are a little premature, as we have yet to see how elections pan-out in the country, there is a certain change in political emphasis in Egypt and the wider region that is arguably steering away from the long-time popular notion that political activism in the region is most likely to manifest itself into widespread support for

political Islam, due to its perceived popularity as an opposition movement, vast organizational capacities and a strong grassroots movement with popular ideology. Emma concludes her assumptions with some perspectives over what impact this may have on Islamist groups in the country who are now currently reorganizing and resurfacing into the Egyptian political sphere: “Egyptians have long been let down by secular governments, but they also look to theocracies like Iran and Saudi Arabia, and are hardly envious. This leaves the political opportunities for either secular, religious or the mediums with equal standing”.

Post-Islamist Rumbblings: Revising the Role of Political Islam

Recent events in the region suggest the emergence of a post-Islamist turn. To what extent is this a fair assessment of the situation, and where might this leave Islamist Groups?

The popular uprisings across the Arab world could indicate that Islamism holds less political potency within Muslim, Arab societies than was once perceived (Roy 2011). Some misguided observers have interpreted the recent demonstrations, reverberating across the region, using an outdated model more than thirty years old; the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. From the 1980s onwards most academic theories have focused on the political potential of Islamist groups with Middle Eastern and Muslim majority societies. The limited achievements of these Islamists so far, according to academic debate, have not been for their lack of support, for this they have, but rather for the repressive measures of the autocratic states they exist beside. When a spark of uprising within such conditions does materialize, it is consequently hard to believe that Islamists are not the driving force, either at the forefront of the mass movement or lingering in wait, ready to seize control. Indeed, the apparent irrelevance of Islamist groups throughout these popular protests has been to the surprise of many commentators. A closer look at the composition of the Tunisian and Egyptian protestors, suggest a striking lack of religious ideology. The vast majority of protestors in both case studies have shown solidarity based on alternative ‘isms’ aside from Islamism. If democracy had an ism, perhaps we would be referring to that. It is a fact that for the vast majority of Egypt’s protestors, Islam or religion played no part in the anti-government uprising. Indeed, one chant sung by the crowds in Cairo’s Tahrir Square on 28th January 2011 was “Our Revolution is civil; neither violent, nor religious” (al Thowratna madaniyya, la Sayfiyya, la Diniyya). Islamic organizations

such as the Muslim Brotherhood (in Arabic, Ikhwan Al Muslimin or al-Ikhwan) were indeed present in the movement, but they made up only one portion of its broad participants. Such images are now leading analysts to refer to a Post-Islamist political climate more than ever (Bayat 2007; Roy 2011).

I. Acknowledging new political opportunities; the Islamists' 'Pass Go' card.

At the time of writing, the Muslim Brotherhood has begun to make moves at establishing its new Freedom and Justice Party in the wake of new political opportunities (IkhwanWeb 2011). But the Muslim Brotherhood is not alone. Other counter-Islamist parties are likely to keep emerging, and we have already seen in the last week the beginnings of authorization for the registration of the al-Wasat, or Center Party (Reuters 2011). While the latter has shown considerable margins for accommodation of Copts and non-Islamists into the party's ranks, if legalized, the Freedom and Justice Party is also likely to offer the most moderate principles seen so far from the Muslim Brothers, so not to alienate their support base.[1] However, until the Freedom and Justice Party can prove itself to be not just a sectarian party, legalization under the Egyptian electoral law is so far not possible.

The Wasat party, though still Islamist, has shown itself to be particularly unique, and with its official legalization could prove to be the Muslim Brotherhood's, or rather the Freedom and Justice Party's biggest potential competitor, despite its absence of strong social networks within society. The party manifesto states that a Christian can become the Head of State in a predominately Muslim society, which is a radical departure from Islamist ideology, and would help to widen its support base ahead of others (Abdelhadi 2005).

Such recent developments suggest the opposite to a post-Islamist turn. The freedoms now enjoyed by once illegal opposition movements and organizations are finally allowing previously oppressed Islamist sympathizers to more openly reorganize and partake in al-da'wa (Islamic call or preaching), as evident in the emergence of al-Wasat and potentially, Freedom and Justice Party. While the lifting of oppressive obstacles are not official, and remain so until the Emergency Laws are removed, there is an indisputably fearless, politically emboldened atmosphere throughout Egypt's civil society and opposition movements. Such a change in the political atmosphere has encouraged the reemergence of a vast array of Islamists to regroup and reorganize

in attempts to solidify existing support, as well as create new support for their political objectives amongst the newly politically conscious Egyptian masses (Perry 2011). Indeed, images and reports of Egyptian cleric Yusuf al Qaradawi returning to Egypt after 30 years in exile, addressing the crowds at Tahrir Square and voicing his support for the protests sweeping the region, strengthens any counter-argument against a post-Islamist rumbling. Rather, at a first-hand glance, the current political atmosphere appears far from post-Islamist. One might even go as far to argue that we are currently witnessing the Islamists' 'golden moment' in politics. Since the birth of the Egyptian regime under Nasser, the Muslim Brothers and other non-such affiliated Islamists in the country have been heavily subjected to state repression and imprisonment, severely curtailing their political capacity as opposition forces to a ruthless regime. In such respects, these days are the most free the movement and its followers have enjoyed in Egypt for a long time. Similarly, the worldwide media attention throughout the last three weeks is a massive development for Islamist campaigners in trying to turn over stereotypes and suspicions, and help portray themselves abroad and within Egypt, as moderates. Indeed, recent developments have served Islamist 'marketing' and afforded it recognition, whether good, or bad. So then, how accurate are those who have attempted to refer to recent events as indicators of a post-Islamist climate? Let us first deal with the absence of Islamist ideology and the relatively minor role Islamists played in the recent uprising.

The following section will deal with the social movement discourse, and will conclude with the understanding that all conditions understood to provide fertile ground for Islamic-led activism have been consistent since Political Islam's revival in the 1970s-1990s. Thus, it highlights the necessity to search elsewhere in explaining the apparent decrease in involvement of Islamist movements in the auspices of political dissent.

II. Social Movement Theory: Apparent Consistencies

The current attention Islamists of all affiliations are receiving is certainly in vogue with the long-trusted and ever-faithful theories that dominated this academic field from the 1980s onwards, following the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the relative electoral successes of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt's national professional associations' elections throughout the 1980s (Wickham 2002:78). Fascination with Political Islam has been ongoing ever since, with theories focusing on explaining the

rise of Islamism and its popularity amongst Arab, Muslim societies.

The puzzle of the successes of the Islamic outreach in the 1980s and early 1990s remains profoundly relevant to the analysis of Egyptian politics, not least because the very conditions that contributed to the so-called 'rise of Islamism', as far as grievance-based explanations of Islamic activism are concerned, still exist today, if not intensified and more exaggerated. State repression within authoritarian rule is undisputed in the Egyptian case, so too is the presence of national socio-economic grievances such as youth unemployment, poverty, and rising food prices that point to an inefficient government, and widen the speculation of corruption at the hands of the country's most powerful elite.

'Cultural identity' models for explaining an Islamic revival in politics would further contend that the rise of Islamism is a reaction to a domination of Muslim societies by the West; a cultural imperialism (Wiktorowicz 2003:18). Similarly, Western influences in Muslim society culture have been increasing and solidifying especially amongst the Egyptian youth. The foreign policies of Mubarak have been just as pro-US and have involved negotiation with Israel just as was the case under Sadat, who faced the wrath of Islamists for similar policies (Heikal 1986). According to such explanations, strong popularity for Islamic activism should be an accompaniment to such phenomenon as cultural imperialism, in efforts to reclaim and uphold the authentic Islamic heritage.

Furthermore, the Egyptian Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood) is more organized than ever, with an even wider outreach socially than 20 years ago. There are now more Ikhwan-sponsored hospitals, schools and social projects for Egyptians to utilize than before, and they continue to dominate positions within the largest professional syndicates in the country. The surprising absence of an Islamist leadership in these recent uprisings that finally ousted clingy Mubarak from his sticky throne cannot thus be explained based on a weakening of the movement's organizational capacity, nor even for the lack of fertile conditions for Islamic activism.

Whether defined in terms of cultural alienation, political or economic deprivation, as the old narratives contend, or explained based on the strong mobilizing capacity of Islamist groups, the rise of Islamism is typically portrayed as a collective protest against the deteriorating conditions prevailing in much of the modern Muslim world. That the recent uprising neither involved anti-western slogans or religious ideology forces analysts to look beyond these dominant social movement theories that have

focused so much on the role of the Islamists in stirring future popular political unrest, and less on the genuine potential of Egyptians, whether Islamic, Coptic, atheist, secularist, or nationalist or anything else that might urge someone to protest; perhaps just genuinely in reaction to years of pent-up frustration, independent of any dominant political entity.

III. Assessing the Popularity of Moderate Islamists: The Muslim Brotherhood

Of course, the best measurement for the extent of Islamist support will come from ballot boxes, which by the end of the year will hopefully become possible through the run-up to elections. Up until now, however, measuring the exact popularity of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has been a near impossible task for researchers and analysts. In fact, any research concerning itself with present Egyptian sentiments toward anything political or related to the Egyptian regime, its opposition, and even more, the Islamist groups, would struggle to collect a sizeable sample of Egyptians prepared to disclose their political leanings, if at all they had any. It has been the bane of many in the field, and has led to nothing but calculated speculation as to the extent of support the contemporary Muslim Brotherhood receives in its homeland. This has meant that those wishing to develop a deeper understanding of the organization's popularity have had to resort to unreliable sources, electoral results that are hardly representative, and personal experiences that could never offer a varied, sizeable sample for conclusive assertions on the topic. The recent uprisings now serve as one more indicator, if not completely scientific, of the potential support the organization receives in contemporary Egyptian society. Indeed, it is far from ideal, yet it is one lost-and-found piece to the expansive puzzle that could help form a clearer picture of the current standing of political Islam in society, even as it continues to transform and adapt, making the task evermore complex.

Before the recent uprisings, analysts were mostly in agreement that the Muslim Brothers held the key to regime change in Egypt, as the strongest and most organized opposition group. Due to regime repression, however, the validity of such assessments is yet to be officially proven, and remain mere calculated speculation. Much of the understanding surrounding the Muslim Brother's popularity within civil society is due to its impressive network of medical, legal, social and charitable services. Where the state has failed Egyptian's, the Ikhwan has helped to support them. Their control over the professional syndicates by the late 1980s, and in student associations in university

faculty clubs in the 1990s, are all considered significant indicators of the Brothers' popularity among professional and social groups and its strong hold on civil society (Abed-Kotob 1995: 321-339).

However, the addition of the recent uprisings, and the new questions they pose about the mobilizing involvement of the most organized opposition body in the anti-government protests, force us to reconsider what was initially regarded an undisputable social force. The absence of religious symbolism and ideology throughout the anti-regime protests should similarly encourage us to reconsider the popularity of political Islam among the majority of today's Egyptian masses, particularly those who have now shown interest in national politics and the shaping of their future.

Thus, the following section will focus on explaining the apparent decrease in political Islamic rhetoric, and so arguably, popularity for Islamist movements as movements for change.

IV. Understanding the absence of Islamic Rhetoric

Accounting for the apparent absence of Islamic rhetoric in the recent uprising is no easy task. For, the assumption that Islamic symbols, ideology or Quranic verses should play any role in a popular anti-government protest in the Arab world is merely the subject of scores of Western stereotypical assertion, that could arguably be verging on paranoia. But it is an obsession that rightly or wrongly has its roots, as outlined above, in social movement theory of the Middle East. It is almost certainly a legacy of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and some short-lived Islamist electoral victories, and while theories explain why Egyptians might turn to Islamism, they do not account for why they should turn away from it, particularly when the factors outlined in such theories are still present in everyday Egypt.

It may seem an obvious remark, but Shi'a Iran is a model for no country, most definitely not for a Sunni Arab society like Egypt. Egyptians have seen the opposing realities of the Mubarak regime and the mullahs of Iran, and neither should appeal as a future for Egypt (Roy 2011). Despite the clear lack of civil and human rights in Mubarak's Egypt, Egyptians have enjoyed considerable communicative freedoms and religious freedom (with some exception). For example, while most Muslim Egyptian women can be seen today to be wearing the Hijab, one can be sure that it has not been

the result of any imposing government policy, but their own private decision. It could be argued that compared to some of their Arab neighbors, Egyptians have been somewhat spoilt. Egyptian youth have access to the same popular culture as those of the same generation in the west, with satellite television airing western programs they have grown to love. Unlike their Syrian friends, Facebook and other popular social networking sites are available to them. Fears of what might happen to these already existing freedoms are very real among the middle class Egyptian youth, many of whom gathered in Tahrir Square for the full 18 days of protests (Zakaria 2011: 16-25).

While Egyptians have enjoyed the benefits of westernization and a globalized economy, the society as a whole has also become more religious. Compared to the 1970s and 80s, the average Muslim Egyptian today shows more signs of spiritual piety. Indeed, this is much the product of years of the Ikhwan's powerful and effective da'wa in the late 1980s that was aimed at Islamizing Egyptian society at its grassroots. Challenged by the grope of political Islamists on society, Egypt's Al-Azhar University for Arabic Literature and Islamic Learning, sent out simultaneous da'wa; its call to 'true' Islam, as well as expanding its institutional and social activities, both to exceed those of the Islamists. The result was the general spread of religiosity (Bayat 2007:137). It was here that the Muslim Brotherhood was able to exert much control over society, spreading into numerous social avenues within civil society, behaving somewhat as a shadow government and through it, creating its version of 'civil Islam'. The failures of the central government helped to raise the respect for the organization's grassroots streams and to further assist the Ikhwan in its quest, many Egyptians began to discredit Al Azhar as it began to lose its credibility as a religious institution autonomous from the state.

In many respects, the Islamization of Egyptian society is the greatest stamp of ownership the Muslim Brotherhood can claim on Egyptian contemporary society, and while it cannot claim to be the force for mobilization in recent stirrings, it certainly is a great claim to have. In more recent years, notably since the 1990s, many of the middle and upper classes in Egypt found much enjoyment in the televised preaching of accountant-turned-preacher, 'Amr Khaled. His weekly lessons became a spiritual staple for thousands of young people (Bayat 2007: 152). His advanced religious discourse, that contained a combination of passion, clarity, relevance and humor, but which left out the highly conservative style of the orthodox preachers, made Khalid a superstar and example of the modest, spiritual piety for modern Egyptians who wished to mix their everyday superficial, non religious enjoyment, with their desire to be good practicing Muslims. This new modern discourse on Islam began to overtake

political Islam. Disassociated with the political realities at home, ‘Amr Khalid’s simpler version of religious discovery served as a spiritual escape to Egyptians under repression, which I strongly feel that it limited the mobilizing capacity of political Islam. Forms and structures of piety have become more individualized. The utopia of an Islamic State is beginning to be abandoned by the majority of pious, but self-discovering Muslims. Roy (2011) has even argued that other religious currents once believed to be in the decline, such as Sufism, are flourishing once more. Such diversity of faith does not support many of the concepts of political Islam.

However, the success of Islamism in changing certain social and cultural codes, institutions, and ethical moral structures, as well as helping to create a stronger Islamic pride among Egyptians, cannot go unnoticed. However, it did not translate into Islamist activity to the proportional successes its da’wa would suggest. This perhaps seems unusual, because logic would suggest that on the contrary, the more religious an individual is, the more supportive of political Islam he or she is likely to be. This is undoubtedly the rationale the Brothers acted upon when investing heavily in the religious education and exposure to Egyptian society. To explain this distortion, Robbins suggests that a distinction should be made between support for political Islam as an ideology- the ideology that is characteristically promoted by the Ikhwan and support for Islamist parties. While supporters for the concept of political Islam support such principles based on their religious belief, they are also able to have multiple other political sympathies, whereas support for an Islamist party requires support for the party and its principles above all other competing parties or candidates (Robins 2009). Thus, while an individual may sympathize with the principles of the Islamist movement and perhaps an Islamist party, this will not necessarily translate into active support, or a vote, for the party.

Furthermore, it was long understood that the mosque provided Islamist movements including the Ikhwan with a key advantage over the state and other organizations wishing to monopolize their ideas onto society. The mosque as political space, private from the state, was increasingly seen as a safe-house for political activists and their sympathizers to meet and discuss politics of the day and such like. Young boys often became accustomed to socializing at the private mosques, many owned by the Ikhwan. Islamist tendencies and support for political Islam was therefore made easy by this unique political space enjoyed by the Islamists alone. However, the spread of technology to Egyptian society, and more specifically, the Internet, have provided political activists and frustrated youth with an alternative political space to vent frustrations and meet others alike. The people they meet on social networking sites will not necessarily be Islamists in this case, and so the role of Islamism as the main

venting release for frustrated, angered Egyptians has become ‘diluted’, particularly among the middle class and upper class young men, who once provided its greatest support base. The introduction of ‘Ikhwanbook’[2], set up as an alternative social networking site, is not only an indication of the Brotherhood’s realization of a problem, but also demonstrates the ways the Brotherhood’s younger generation members are trying to keep the movement politically and socially relevant, at least for the so called ‘Facebook Generation’.

V. Conclusion and Perspectives

It is apparent that a great deal more work needs to be done to fully understand the place of Islamism in society. Anyone pretending to know what the future holds or guess outcomes for the future elections is being foolhardy. The political uncertainty of the next months is the product of decades of a regime that has ceased to represent its people and prevented the emergence of alternatives.

Indeed, the recent uprisings have shown that Egyptians can, indeed, be mobilized by a force other than political Islam. With the scent of Jasmine spreading across the region, we may begin to see a resurgence in Arab nationalism that may then begin to dominate academic discourse. The strong sense of Arab solidarity in the last six weeks of political protests, have certainly struck a cord. The waving of flags and the revival of old traditional Arab literatures, poetry and song are common images across the region now.

However, any mention of a turn to Post-Islamism does seem overly premature. We have yet to see how Islamist parties, al-Wasat and potentially Freedom and Justice, bode in the coming elections.

What can be concluded with some confidence, however, is that it is not just analysts who are beginning to feel the change in the political climate toward more democratic, and religiously moderate rhetoric or even secular rhetoric. The Islamists themselves are also feeling its effects. For sure, the degrees to which they are prepared to be flexible and more diverse in their policies will determine their relative successes in the very near future. Typically Islamist rhetoric such as ‘Islam is the Solution’ will no longer be enough to win over Egyptians.

However, it is important to offer more credit to the Muslim Brotherhood. Knowing their own society well, they are aware that ideology carries little weight within them. Learning lessons from a repressive past and the surge of violence by the generation of militants in the 1990s, as well as from the successes of the Turkish AK party, Islamists have grown to understand that revolution is not the best means to attain power, but rather, reconciling democracy, electoral success, economic growth and national independence with the promotion of values that are if not Islamic, as least ‘authentic’, are far more sustainable means to an end, or rather a beginning (Roy 2011).

If there is one thing Egyptians have learned in the last 3 weeks, or indeed 50 years, it is that ideology and rhetoric alone produces very little. Pragmatism is what dictates success, and this is what most Egyptians will be looking for in their next government. Grand gestures will fall on deaf ears without sufficient demonstration that a competent government that meets the needs of ordinary Egyptians can be the product of future political Islam. If Islamists can incorporate these demands into their political objectives, then it is definitely possible Islamists could enjoy their ‘golden moment’ in Egypt.

Egyptians have long been let down by secular governments, but they also look to theocracies like Iran and Saudi Arabia, and are hardly envious. This leaves the political opportunities for either secular, religious or the mediums with equal standing.

What is hopeful is that future research as to the political leanings of Egyptians will be made easier by a more enriched, freer and tolerant political atmosphere than before. Maybe then we will be able to make more confident conclusions as to their political leanings.

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[1] It is important to note that al Ketani has stressed that the party will be autonomous to the Muslim Brotherhood, and should be considered separate.

[2] See: <http://www.ikhwanbook.com/>.

Democratic Transition in the Middle East and North Africa - Should Europe stop the Democrats?

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Summary:

In this article Tim Glawion aims to answer the provocative question, whether the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa are to the benefit of Europeans. Explicitly avoiding any moral justifications he explains the European Union's rational interests in the region and shows how they are affected through the revolutions. He concludes that in the short run the EU will have difficulties pursuing its aims while after successful transitions its rational interests will become decisively advanced.

Democratic Transition in the Middle East and North Africa - Should Europe stop the Democrats?

Time to cut the two-faced talks. Every politician, who cares just a smidgen for his reelection will answer my question with an outraged: „No!“ and hail the democratic principles that sow seeds of peace, prosperity and freedom. They praise the Libyan rebels as martyrs in our universal fight for human rights, while at the same time denouncing Mubarak, Qaddafi and Ben Ali as devils reincarnated. Still, I don't believe them. Why all of a sudden is Mubarak a despot while for decades he was a peace loving „moderate“ of the Middle East? Why were Arabs with weapons – let alone with beards and turbans – until just a couple months ago unmistakably terrorists and yet now soldiers at the forefront of democracy? Europe has accepted the suppression of democratic voices in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for decades because of its own self-interests. Either it has erred in its foreign policy for half a century and now finally realizes its mistakes, or the change in policy is simply another move to gain voters' approval. If the latter holds true, support for democratic movements will not survive the smallest bump in the road. Whether rational interests of European Union member states in foreign policy are better or equally realizable through, and after, a democratic transition in the MENA region is the topic of this article.

The European Union's interests in the MENA region

First topic on the agenda whenever discussing the Middle East and North Africa is energy security. While dependency varies widely from state to state, the EU in total derives 27.3% of its raw oil imports from the MENA region (European Commission, 2010, 1f). Libya led the list in 2010 contributing 9% of all raw oil imports to the EU! While Germany only receives about 11% of its oil imports from the MENA region (U.S. Energy and Information Administration, 2011a; hereafter USEIA), Italy relies heavily on this region with almost 50% of its oil imports coming from there (USEIA 2011b). Half of these from Libya. A complete stop in these flows would devastate European economies, indirectly even relatively independent countries such as Germany, through strong burden sharing mechanisms in the EU, as the controversial debate on the European Stability Mechanism has once again shown.

Another important issue springing to policy makers' minds is the Global War on Terror (GWOT). To suppress terrorist movements, the EU, in strong cooperation with the United States, has strengthened security structures, increasing their ability to detect and break up terrorist groups. Officially, at least, democratization is seen as an effective method to undermine radicalization. But a strong military and security sector for the purpose of confronting terrorists can be, and is also used, to suppress democratic opposition groups. Without democratic control it had to be clear to European policy makers, that in strengthening state security structures, they were upholding dictatorial regimes.

One of the first outcries of European policy makers following the events in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya didn't concern effective measures to support legitimate aspirations of the Arab people, but rather demanded strong measures to confront an increase in migration flows. Europe and its border control program FRONTEX put great value on keeping out as many migrants as possible, as long as they cannot prove a legitimate call for political, religious or social asylum. Paradoxically the refugee and asylum seeker population of those countries who are complaining the loudest is low – Greece 50,000 (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2010a; hereafter UNHCR) and Italy 60,000 (UNHCR, 2010b) – compared to those, that seem and act as not primarily affected – Germany 540,000 (UNHCR, 2010c) and Sweden 100,000 (UNHCR, 2010d).

A solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is widely respected as a key to reducing tensions, and thereby terrorism and migration, in the Middle East. The EU is a member of the Quartet on the Middle East along with the US, Russia and the United Nations. Few impulses have been initiated directly by the EU though. Mostly they simply (dis-)agree with the American stance and try to find their niche of creative innovation in the space provided by the American administration. While most European countries don't hesitate in criticizing Israeli actions, Germany strongly supports Israel with its no-matter-what-comes policy, based on a reluctance to criticize a people to which it committed a horrific genocide during the first half of the 20th century. Due to the strong position of Germany in the inner EU debate and the need for consensual agreement on foreign policy a strong counterpoint to the pro-Israeli American policy was never, and in the short run will never be, intended by the EU.

Two other, less central, interests are economic interests in the region and keeping Iran's strength down. Arms trades are the most controversial in the economic field and have flourished in the guise of anti-terrorist and border security cooperation. Iran's nuclear program is the most threatening to European security interests, but its economic and political influence is viewed with concern as well.

What changes with a democratic transition?

Who knows what will happen tomorrow? Will Qaddafi fall and the Egyptian transition prevail? Are demonstrations just beginning or is rebellion fatigue already setting in? Next to all the uncertainties concerning the democratic spring in the MENA region one thing is for sure: Nothing will stay the same. A continuation of European policy therefore is not an option if the EU wishes to pursue its above mentioned goals. The question must be answered whether a democratization of the MENA region will advance or hinder European interests.

Expecting positive results for Europe in the next couple months is simply utopian. Democratic transitions are always paired with times of increased conflict as individual and social actors regroup and redefine their position in an open environment. Before the power vacuum left by the toppled old regime can be filled by legitimate security forces of a new government, many groups will strive for the biggest possible piece of the cake. This means instability. And instability means nothing good for Europe's interests.

As we can see in the case of Libya, oil prices are soaring due in large parts to the conflicts unfolding and the usual level of supply cannot be upheld. Yemen shows that democratic protests can always be abused by violent groups. Significant to European security interests is that no state control in a country on the brink or worse in the midst of a civil war signifies a safe haven for terrorist groups. Border control standards as negotiated with the EU by many MENA states cannot be met in a time where control per se is lacking a common and clear aim. The Israelis have been anything but exhilarated by the events unfolding as their policy focuses only on the short term impacts of multiplying terrorist attacks. Iran's relative strength increases with every falling adversary while no one wants to do business in a region where any investment could literally burn down the next day.

It seems thus as though we should answer our question whether to stop democratic aspirations in the MENA region with a definite: "Yes! Stop now!"

But what if we look past our short-term interests? What ever happened to the theory of democratic peace? Can it not hold true for the Middle East and North Africa as it does to once repressive and despotic East Europe, Latin America and many countries in South East Asia?

Oil production might not increase under the supervision of a democratic government. But it will not decrease either, because a new government will need all the money it can find to gain voter support from a very demanding population. But wasn't Europe's plan to withdraw from dependency on oil anyway? With a responsible partner on the

other side of the Mediterranean Sea, plans such as the humongous renewable energy project “Desertec” will finally be implementable. Democratic regimes are likely to invest in necessary infrastructure, such as roads, electricity lines, housing, health and education instead of sticking all income into the pockets of a small clientele. The huge costs can be legitimized to European voters as developmental assistance – jobs and infrastructure – for the “new” neighbors and as far reaching plans to curb carbon emissions.(not a sentence here at the end...is it part of developmental assistance?)

The terrorist threat might increase in the short run. But no matter what horrifying picture of terrorists is presented in Western media, there are still reasons for their grievances. Two of them being a lack of alternative possibilities and a common enemy. Democratic regimes will have to bear fruit for the entire population and thereby in the long run hinder radicalization due to a lack of prospects. At the same time a friendly West, supporting Arab and Islamic interests in their strive to form their own democratic political structures just doesn't do that well as a picture on the wall you like to throw darts at. Of course it can be argued, that fundamentalists will always find a way to demonize the West. But compared to simply pointing at Afghanistan, Iraq or dictators such as Mubarak and Qaddafi, they will have to find very convincing arguments. It has long been said that democratic reforms are necessary for long-term protection against terrorism (Steinberg, 2009, 22). It is time for actions to follow.

It is difficult to ascertain the impact the revolutions will have on migration influxes to the European Union. While most refugees originate in Afghanistan and Iraq (UNHCR, 2009) many migration routes from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia lead through countries affected by the current uprisings (International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2007). Faced with internal problems new regimes will not focus as much on external issues such as migration to Europe. But three things must be kept in mind: First, as living conditions increase the will to migrate will decrease. Second, improved living conditions in the MENA region will make these countries more attractive compared to European countries as the cultural difference for refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan and Sub-Saharan Africa is not as large. Third, and most important: Europe must seriously reconsider its immigration policy, as I will describe in my concluding words.

After Israel has overcome its first shock in losing its special position as “the only democracy in the Middle East“ it will quickly realize, that the forced peace Arab “moderates” ensured for decades was always just a prolonged cease-fire. With everything changing, the cards are reshuffled and Israel will be able to finally find its well-deserved peace, if it doesn't miss its chance. A democratically elected government in the key state of Egypt will certainly produce a harsher stance towards Israel on a rhetorical level. On a pragmatic level on the other hand it won't dare to jeopardize its relations with the West in an era of increased dependence on Western aid and investments. But discussions will become more equal, as Hamas and Fatah will find stronger supporters of their cause from their neighbors and the Gaza blockade is unlikely to last. Decades of on and off fighting have shown, that weapons always find their hands through even the tightest strangling of terrorist groups. The answer can therefore only be a fair settlement of the Middle East conflict. This might have been possible before the democratic transitions, but only after the balance in the dispute shifts at last a bit towards Palestinian interests will they perceive a negotiation as implementing their aims and not just succumbing to an almighty opponent.

Iran might feel strong at first, but when its population sees that a democratic revolution can prevail without an Islamic state arising, the ideologically legitimized regime in Tehran will be quick to tumble. Economic relations with the MENA region have never been a great issue to Europe, as they weren't with Eastern Europe before the end of the cold war. With purchasing power spreading and increasing Europe will find a close and growing export market on its front steps to the benefit of both.

Looking far ahead!

It is not simply our moral obligation to support democratic transitions all over the world and specifically in the MENA region. It is also in our rational self-interest.

Our energy policy should radically be rethought so that we need not abide by dictators' wills. Our oil hunger must be reduced to a level, where we enable ourselves to choose only those trading partners that respect human rights at home. This can be achieved through a gigantic project such as "Desertec", which will at the same time fuel investments in partner states in North Africa.

As we realize that one killed terrorist always radicalizes at least two new ones, we must begin implementing what we have long discussed: Only sustained political, economic and social modernization can uproot the seed of extremism.

While migration policy only focuses on keeping as many people out, we need to seriously reconsider letting even more people in: For humanitarian reasons that will arise with transitional conflicts as well as for pragmatic reasons to keep an unconsolidated democracy from toppling. Europe has too few qualified young workers to meet its market demands while the MENA region produces more university graduates than it can create positions for. At least for a short transitional period, while foreign investments and government programs create job opportunities migration to Europe can act as an outlet for socio-demographic pressure on both sides. A win-win situation if combined with extensive integration policy and open dialogue in receiving countries.

Israel is at a point in time where its desire for peace could finally be achieved. While Western governments must clearly state that a breach in peace agreements from the Arab side will not be tolerated it must make clear to both conflict partners, that insisting on old positions in a changing environment will not be tolerated. Now is the time both sides can prove that peace is the true and only goal.

Finally, a new and important issue can be put at the top of the agenda: Economic cooperation. This means, on the one hand, to reduce or stop subsidizing agricultural produce and on the other hand, a new and hopefully growing market for European export products. If aided with extensive developmental and investment programs as was seen in the former Soviet Union states, Europe could quickly bring prosperity to

those countries and increase its own wealth through trade.

Should Europe interfere with the forward march of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa? Taking into account my analysis of European interests in the Middle East and North Africa, we can answer this provocative question with a definite no. Without having recourse to a controversial normative stance, I conclude that far-reaching political, social and economic support of a quick and peaceful transition in the MENA region will in the long run advance Europe's rational interests of achieving energy security, demobilizing terrorist groups, advancing peace in Israel and Palestine and enhancing economic cooperation.

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The Failing of US Peace-building

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Abstract:

This article aims to concisely describe efforts of international peace and nation-building made by the US government and tries to elaborate on its failure. During the ongoing upheaval in Arabia, a major historical fact was not given an adequate attention; a fact which is of tremendous significance for the future of international relations. After the US declared the War against Terrorism, it also decided to approach the European nation- and peace building ambitions, which are mainly constituted by the European peace initiatives formulated within framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership since 1995 and the neighborhood policy. Under the term Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), and in 2004, the US declared the aim of promoting democracy and good governance, hence building a knowledge-based society and expanding economic opportunities. (Jünemann, 2005, 19) In accordance to this, NATO established the Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. (Aitan, 1) The G8 adopted these peace initiatives in June 2004 (Al Aitan, 2005, 17). The Greater Middle East Initiative, which is based on United Nations human development reports, encompassed the Arab world (North African states, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and the Arab peninsula), but also Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Central Asian as well as Caucasian states (Jung, 2005, 17).

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At this point of recounting related events, we have to recall back the fact that the Greater Middle East Initiative was planned and declared without including relevant Arab states. Instead, Arab states came to know about American's ambitions towards foreign democratization through press. Furthermore, the concept of a Greater Middle East did not recognize the diverse cultural, ethnic, political and economic characteristics of the region. On the contrary, the whole region was constructed as a homogeny Islamic Middle East (while countries such as Lebanon do not consider

themselves as „Islamic“). (Jünemann, 2005, 115ff)

After an unfortunate start, the GMEI was revised and reformed into a Partnership for Progress and a Common Future of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) in June 2004. In terms of political theory programmes such as the GMEI and BMENA follow liberalism, a direction of thought which assumes that national as well as international politics are created by societal actors and structures and that the inner political consistency of a country is relevant for its foreign policy. GMEI and MENA follow the liberal theory of a democratic peace, which expects that democracies are not going to be at war with each other. Thus, a democratic Middle East would be a warrantor for security. (Beck, 2005, 451) While the 20th century was determined by political realism, events of the 21st century, such as September 11th 2001 in New York and Washington or March 11th 2004 in Madrid, brought a break to US foreign policy. (Beck, 2005, 466)

The political change from realism to liberalism could be interpreted as a consequence of preceding European peace initiatives. In contrast to European peace-building concepts, US follows a culture of war. In accordance to this, US wars are only legitimized when military victories are followed by democratization. (Jung, 2005, 15-16) Because of its geopolitical importance, it is the Middle East that is being put into focus of international peace building policy. A fortiori, it is crucial that no significant advancement can be stated – even after several military interventions in the region (Afghanistan 2001, Iraq 2003).

In order to explain, why democratization failed in Egypt, a country that is known as a key player in the Arab world, it is crucial to understand the political background: As a matter of fact, main political structures have not changed since the military coup in 1952. Jamal Abdel Nasser's, Anwar Sadat's as wells as Hosni Mubarak's regimes were characterized by military dominance. As Dietrich Jung further explains, since the putsch the state was ruled by a shielded national elite that was characterized by their absolute loyalty towards the president. President's power is secured by a circle of armed forces, and patronage network. Because of its in-transparency, the Middle East expert Eberhard Kienle has called it a "black box". Function of the patronage system was to manage adjustments to the changing international context where the Peace Treaty with the Jewish neighbor-state, Israel, was a core element. Furthermore, it was responsible for stabilizing a regime that is president-centered. Crux of the matter for a democratization of the Middle East, is the involvement of foreign states: Since the Peace Treaty with Israel was established this system was partly financed by so called "peace bonuses" („Friedensdividenden“), that were mostly provided by the US government. (Jung, 2005, S. 23) Finally, the state-centered character of international politics led to the stabilization of Middle Eastern patronage systems (Jung, 2005, S. 27)

Already in 2005, Martin Beck raised the question if the objectives of the BMENA are going to be successful in consideration of the difficulty of the task and the growing cooperative relationship between the US, the EU and authoritarian actors in the region. (Beck, 2005, 467)

Today, we observe a democratization movement that is not based on international peace building agendas. On the contrary, people claimed a victory over their own

leaders without international interventions. This clearly can be used as an evidence for the international policy that went past Arab societies and their key issues. The focus on terrorism led to the ignorance of a whole set of issues, such as unemployment, migration, denial of the right to speak out, civil and human rights violations, the constant use of martial law by various Arab states, and so on.

With the War on Terrorism transatlantic alliances with Arab states became win-win situations between governments. (Arab states such as Yemen received financial benefits for their War on Terrorism. Jung, 2005, 26) Moreover, special democratic situations in countries such as Lebanon, were not taken into account by US policy. Current events also show that the state-centered approach in international policy has to be revised. Another consequence of the revolutionary changes in the Middle East is the weakened standing as a world leader. This is especially true because military interventions have failed to achieve their goals.

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