



MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS

TRANSFORMATION
& CONFLICT

FRIEDRICH
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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

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Conference (14-15 November 2013)

Middle Eastern Politics: Transformation and Conflict

Day 1: November 14, Thursday

METU Culture and Convention Centre, Hall C

13:00 Welcoming Speeches

13:30 Panel 1: **Domestic Politics: Contentious Transformations**

Chair: Serdar Palabiyik, TOBB University, Turkey

This panel will focus on transformations that have been taking place in three cases where the political leaders were toppled by uprisings and in Libya also with the help of external intervention. What are the problems of transition? How do the domestic and external contexts influence these problems? What are the possibilities of managing them?

Egypt's Troubled Transition

Ewan Stein, University of Edinburgh, UK

Tunisia: Possibilities of Inclusive Transition?

Wafa Harrar-Masmoudi, Faculty of Legal, Political and Social Sciences of Tunis (FLPSST), Tunisia

Libya: Transition in a Rentier State

Larbi Sadiki, Qatar University, Qatar

Algeria: Democracy and Transitions

Youcef Bouandel, Qatar Transitions University, Qatar

15:00 Coffee Break

15:30 Panel 2: **Syrian Crisis and the Regional Repercussions**

Chair: Meliha Altunışık, METU, Turkey

The uprising that turned into a stalemated civil war in Syria has become one of the most important challenges for the region. This panel aims to discuss the problems in Syria and the challenges that exist for their resolution. The regional countries are not only affected by what happens in Syria, but they also have an impact in the evolution of the crisis. This panel will focus on Syria and Iran and the Gulf Region as regards to the Syrian crisis and will ask the question of possible ways of reducing the tension.

Syria: Challenges of the Opposition

Wael Sawah, Executive Director, The Day After Project

From the Uprising to a Civil War: Is there a way out?

William Harris, University of Otago, New Zealand

The Gulf: Is there a common policy?

Luciano Zaccara, SFS in Qatar, Georgetown University, Qatar

17:30 End of Day 1

Day 2: November 15, Friday
Bilkent Hotel, Ceyhan Hall

09:00 Panel 3: **Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Region: Change and Continuities**

Chair: Michael Meier, FES Turkey

Turkey began to actively engage in the Middle East in the 2000s. In addition to developing closer political and economic relations with most of the countries in the region, Turkey mediated in regional conflicts, adopted a visa free policy, worked for the establishment of free trade areas. As a result of these policies Turkey's acceptance as a regional power increased. When the Arab uprisings erupted Turkey seemed to be well situated to benefit from these developments, and yet two years on Turkey faces significant challenges and its previous policies have largely been abandoned. This panel will focus specifically on Turkey's Egypt and Syria policy as well as general trends in Turkey's foreign policy since the Arab uprisings. What are the changes and continuities? How Turkey's policy towards Syria and Egypt are affecting Turkey's perception in the region?

From the Inclusive Paradigm of Turkish Foreign Policy to an Exclusive Approach?

Bahadır Dinçer, USAK, Turkey

What is New in Turkey's Foreign Policy?

Meliha Altunışık, METU, Turkey

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Panel 4: **Regional Actors and Issues**

Chair: Gülriz Şen, METU, Turkey

This panel will focus on issues of conflict and peace in the region. Through a discussion of Iran's regional role and the Palestinian conflict, there will be a general discussion on peace and conflict in the regional context. How have the transformations in the region affected the traditional conflicts such as the Palestinian conflict as well as relatively new ones as in the case of Iran? What are the possibilities of constructive engagement with these conflicts?

Changing Iran in a Changing Region: What are its possible roles?

Kayhan Barzegar, The Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies, Iran

Confronting Conflict in Palestine in a Transforming Region

Nida Shoughry, Bilkent University, Turkey

A Region in Conflict and Aspiring for Peace

Esra Çuhadar Gürkaynak, Bilkent University, Turkey

13:30 Panel 5: **External Actors: Intervention**

Chair: Oktay Tanrısever, METU, Turkey

Middle East has a long history of outside intervention of various kinds and the last couple of years were no exception. The role of the external actors is not only relevant in regard to their impact in the future of the region but also in the roles they played in contributing to the current set up of the regional issues. This panel will discuss the role of the key actors, US and Russia in the region. Have these actors changed their previous attitudes towards the region after 2011? Will their new roles in new conflicts such as Russia's position in Syria signal a newly found place in the region? Is the United States able to deal with political and military repercussions of transformation in the Arab World?

EU Response to the Arab Uprisings: Is it changing?

Eduard Soler i Lecha, CIDOB, Spain

Obama Administration and the Transformations in the Arab World

Marina Ottaway, Middle East Program, Wilson Center, USA

Is Russia Back in the Middle East? The Russian Role in Syria

Irina Zvyagelskaya, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

- 15:00 Coffee Break
- 15:30 Concluding Remarks
- 17:00 End of the Conference

**Middle Eastern Politics:
Transformation and Conflict**

We would like to thank Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for their wholehearted support in the preparation of this publication as well as in the organization of the whole project. We also would like to thank Kübra Oğuz, Research Assistant at the Graduate School of Social Sciences, Middle East Technical University for her help.

Meliha Altunışık and Derya Göçer Akder

Introduction

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık and Dr. Derya Göçer Akder

Analysing forces of transformation and conflict in the Middle East has never been an easy task. This task is even more complicated today when the ever-present dynamics of change in the region have become increasingly overt and transformations of different varieties are at work at once. These transformation processes are born out of and gave birth to new conflicts across the region. Although each transformation process is unique, they still have common themes such as state building and renegotiating social inclusion mechanisms, which tie the domestic, regional and external actors involved in these processes. The conference “Middle Eastern Politics: Transformation and Conflict” brought together scholars and experts who emphasized these common themes as well as the specificities of different cases.

The conference had three main underlining themes: Firstly, the conference covered both *domestic* sources of conflict and processes of transformation as well as the role of *regional* and *extra-regional* actors in these processes. Several presentations focused on “Arab Spring” countries and discussed the challenges of change in particular localities. Others focused on more traditional locations of conflict, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian one, and questioned the impact of recent developments. Still other papers discussed the policies of regional and extra-regional powers underlying the theme of change and continuity. Overall, the conference emphasized the necessity of combining these three levels of analysis, domestic, regional and international, in order to have a better understanding of the dynamics. Secondly, the conference acknowledged the autonomy of the domestic agency whether it is the government or the social movements but also recognized the influence of the international political structure and the role of external actors in shaping the outcome. Thus, although started as indigenous uprisings, the papers underline the external dynamic in determining the possible outcomes. Yet, the impact on the external was clearly negotiated and modified at the local level. Thirdly, it emphasized both the positive outcomes of transformation such as national reconciliation efforts as well as the devastating effects of violence that is at the core of key conflicts in the region, such as the Syrian civil war and the post-revolutionary Libyan struggles. As such, the conference papers underline the *heterogeneity* of the transformation processes and the inability to explain them with one theoretical paradigm such as the literature on transitions. Instead most of the papers are a call to consider the changes in the region as cases that

contribute to theory building instead of cases for existing theories. Fourthly, the papers differentiated between revolutionary processes, overthrow of authoritarian regimes, beginnings of a social upheaval and the outcome, which varies hugely and is never straightforward democratization. They all had an emphasis on the process of transformation as opposed to a moment of transformation and the changing attitudes and responses of actors during that process. All the papers evaluated the shifting strategies of domestic and external actors as the transformative events of the last couple of years unfolded.

The conference covers firstly, major domestic transformations. *Ewan Stein* asks a critical question: If Egypt was undergoing a democratic transition process how come was an elected president overthrown by the army? As opposed to most accounts that look to the army's power in society and its role in Egyptian history, Stein demonstrates the sources of failure on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood. Stein also hints at what sort of strategies may be at play in the future of Egypt. *Wafa Harrar Masmoudi* discusses the literature on transitions and how the Tunisian case challenges this literature. Masmoudi looks at the formal procedures of the Tunisian transformation such as political alliance building and constitution making. She shows where transitology fails in understanding Tunisia as it cannot explain why democracy does not come out of a process where authoritarianism is overthrown. *Youcef Bouandel* looks into Algeria, where there was not an uprising, as a case of transformation from below and through reforms. Are the most recent concessions on the part of the regime really steps toward transformation or an appeasement of potential demonstrators? Bouandel also assesses possible scenarios for change in Algeria through elections. *Larbi Sadiki* refers to criticisms of the 'transitology' literature when explaining the Libyan predicament. Agreeing with others, he acknowledges how transformation does not mean an automatic democratization and the build-up of democratic knowledge. He also questions the uniformity of 'democratic knowledge' across the world and the region and asks whether we really know of the specific content of Libyan democratic aspirations, especially in issues such as religion or transitional justice.

Apart from tackling the larger issues of transformation and conflict, the conference had selected itself the conflict in Syria and focused deeply on it. In the panel on Syria, *Wael Sawah* presents an eyewitness account of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of the Syrian opposition. He also evaluates future scenarios, a difficult task given the multiple regional and external actors involved. *William Harris*, on the other hand, discusses the strategy of the regime so far, analysing its rationale in the harsh crack-

down of all sorts of opposition. Harris also makes comparisons between Syria and other Middle Eastern conflicts assessing the possibilities for internationally managed conflict resolution. Then *Lucciano Zaccara* offers a picture of the foreign policies of the Gulf countries towards the region and particularly to Syria. Given the more recent divisions within Gulf countries in their attitudes to Syria and Egypt, Zaccara's insights about these divisions reveal a great deal about the future of the Syrian conflict. The Syrian issue continues to be discussed under different panels, particularly the one on Turkey's foreign policy and the policies of extra-regional powers.

The panel on Turkish foreign policy featured both an extensive account of change in Turkish foreign policy during the AKP governments by *Meliha Altunışık* and Turkish foreign policy towards Egypt as an Arab Spring country by *Bahadır Dinçer*. *Meliha Altunışık* evaluates Turkish foreign policy before and after Arab Spring. She offers an account of AKP's agency in international politics within the structural constraints imposed by regional and extra-regional actor constellations. She also emphasizes the two-way influence between domestic and foreign policy, an emphasis proven right by the recent developments in Turkey with the Syrian conflict taking a centre stage in domestic contentious politics and vice versa. *Bahadır Dinçer* provides a case study for Turkish foreign policy during and after the Arab Spring by evaluating the nature and impact of Turkish government's stance in Egypt. Sharing the findings of his fieldwork in Egypt, he gives examples of AKP's mistranslations and misreading of the Egyptian political scene.

After discussing the Syrian conflict and Turkish foreign policy in detail, the conference moved to the analysis of the conflict management and transformation in the post-"Arab Spring" era. In this respect the panel focused on two conflicts in the region, namely the Iranian nuclear crisis and the Palestinian issue. *Kayhan Barzegar* offers a translation of the discourse of the new Iranian president, by highlighting its difference. The implications of these changes for the nuclear issue constitute an important element of the discussion. He also offers an assessment as to what the changes in Iranian domestic politics and Iran's engagement with the US will mean for regional issues such as Syrian conflict and for regional politics in general. He also offers a list of challenges in front of the new president as he sets out to accomplish his electoral promises in regional and international politics. *Nida Shouqry* undertakes the task of evaluating the impact of the "Arab Spring" on the Palestinian conflict and how regional transformations may affect the course of the Palestinian issue. She looks at the international, regional, as well as the local levels, including the divisions within the Palestinian authorities and territories. *Esra Çuhadar* at the end gives an analytical read-

ing of the existing negotiations in the region, offering not only an account of long standing negotiations such as the Palestinian issue but also how the “Arab Spring” brought about a new type of negotiations: discussing mechanisms of social inclusion and national reconciliation. She also touches upon Turkey’s role in the regional negotiations as well as in domestic negotiations such as those in Yemen.

The last panel was a discussion of the involvement of the extra-regional actors in the regional transformation and conflict. Here, three actors were included: the EU’s role was presented by *Eduard Soler i Lecha*, the USA’s role was analysed by *Marina Ottaway* and, finally, Russia’s stake in the region was discussed by *Irina Zvyagelskaya*. *Eduard Soler i Lecha*’s analysis is at multiple levels at once. Soler presents a critical reading of the attitudes and responses of the EU institutions, the member states and the European societies towards the “Arab Spring”. He emphasizes both changes and continuities in these actors’ attitudes towards the region before and after Arab uprisings. Soler also pictures their changing responses during the Arab Spring as events unfolded, underlying the interaction between the region and the European actors. *Marina Ottaway* emphasizes the changing frameworks or lack thereof of foreign policy in the United States and gives a critical reading of what these mean for the region since the end of the Cold War. She then goes on describing the Obama Administration and how the legacies it inherited from previous administration influence its day to day decisions in the region and the changes that can be observed in Washington’s policies towards the region. *Ottaway*’s differentiation between the different actors in the United States is also explanatory of some of the puzzles of US foreign policy. Finally, *Irina Zvyagelskaya* compares Russian attitudes towards the region before and after the “Arab Spring” offering the regime’s rationale behind some of the critical decisions and also in tandem with the themes of the conference, highlights the role of the interaction between domestic politics in Russia and Russian foreign policy. She gives the end of the civil war in Tajikistan as an example of successful negotiations and underlined the importance of good faith and an appropriate constellation of regional and extra-regional actors in such negotiations.

The papers in this edition converge in the need to analyse the transformation and conflict in the region from a perspective that is sensitive firstly, to the historical context as it was employed in almost all of the papers; secondly to the heterogeneity in the region and the singularity of different transformation processes across the region; thirdly to the constitutive role of the interaction between international and domestic politics and not analysing international’s role at the expense of domestic agency; fourthly, to

the importance of process-based understanding of domestic and regional transformations and allowing for different outcomes out of similar processes as well as changing actor attitudes during the processes. Most of the papers ended with a note arguing for the need for a multilateral approach to peace building in the region, which is getting only more urgent with each passing month in critical conflicts such as the Syrian civil war. The complex linkages of this conflict with the rest of the region is a case in point for the need to rethink conflict resolution in the region.

Domestic Politics: Contentious Transformations

Egypt's Troubled Transition

Ewan Stein
University of Edinburgh, UK

As everyone knows, President Mursi, Egypt's first freely elected Islamist president was deposed by a military coup that came in the tails of a large scale popular mobilization organized by the Tamarod or Rebel campaign. Former president Mursi is now on trial in Cairo, Egypt and the Brotherhood itself is subject to an on-going repression. Much of its senior leadership has been arrested and imprisoned. Most of the media that was sympathetic or in line with the Brotherhood has been closed down and over 1300 people were killed during the protests. The prospects for democratic transition are fairly dim as the military is asserting itself as the country's primary political actor once again. How could a president that apparently represented the country's largest and most popular social movement coming to power with the support of a huge popular revolution, be pushed aside, apparently pushed so with a fairly widespread?

I think it's important to look back at the Brotherhood's history and its background as a movement, and how it conceptualized its political strategy within Egypt in the past. In this respect, I do find Mona El-Ghobashy's idea quite useful. A few years ago, she described the Brotherhood as playing dual games. So it has two orientations. On the one hand, it plays an *electoral game* in which it tries to increase the support for the Brotherhood in society, and on the other it plays a *regime game*. The regime game is solidifying and institutionalizing its presence and obtaining incremental gains to its own position vis-à-vis the regime itself. We can see that trend through the post-January 2011 election. The Brotherhood was hesitant to join the initial mobilization on the 25th of January, eventually joining them a few days later. Then it sought to hedge its bets among the revolutionary movements and to keep channels open with SCAF, trying to negotiate for a position for itself in the emerging order. This dual game continued later and ended up with the presidency. Initially there was no desire to run for the presidency but they ended up with a presidency that wasn't supported by the parliament and which was dissolved by the SCAF. They ended up with what had become a quite weak office by that point. I think even when Mursi became President, the Brotherhood was still acting like an opposition movement and continued to play these two games while trying to ingratiate itself of the regime which largely remained in place but also trying to es-

establish itself as a credible, legitimate player in society. However, I think what became different after Mursi became president was the realization of how tenuous and precarious that position was. The Brotherhood became more interested in consolidating its own base instead of what had been the case in the 1990's and 2000's, namely broadening it by trying to appeal to the people and attracting more supporters for the movement. It became more interested in consolidating its core support. So if the Brotherhood has been playing these two games, the regime game and the electoral game, what are these games?

What was the regime like, after January 2011? Obviously Mubarak was gone on February 11. Within the regime's structure, this represented a tangible game for the military component of the regime. Hazem Kandil has written persuasively about these dynamics. So the military leadership gained some primacy over the other components of the regime, such as the security apparatus, the police; and the political apparatus represented by the bureaucracy and the Party. In addition to consisting of military and security forces, the regime also consisted of Mubarak era officials, still in place in various ministries such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in the bureaucracy, along with a large section of the judiciary hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood, and the 'new' media, which was actually a continuation of the old media structure, again hostile towards the Muslim Brotherhood in particular. That was the regime that the Brotherhood was playing at.

Who was the electorate? What was the electoral game? The electorate was primarily the Brotherhood itself. In fact, some had the view that perhaps the Brotherhood was in the process of evolving into a new version of the National Democratic Party, which was Mubarak's vehicle for structuring support within society. Beyond the Brotherhood you had the broader Islamist movement, most importantly the Salafi networks. The Gama'a al-Islamiyya, the former Jihadist social movement powerful in the 1990's, disappeared largely from the scene in the 2000's and returned again to mobilize society after the Revolution. And I think this broader Islamist Movement started to play a similar role for Mursi as the Brotherhood used to play for Mubarak. This was the role of a loyal opposition, criticizing certain actions, criticizing certain stances, but broadly supportive of the legitimacy of Mursi as president. It is not purely acquiescence; one cannot say that it was just a tool of the Brotherhood regime. Anyone could have said that for the Brotherhood under the Mubarak regime as well: a loyal opposition.

We need to look at the reasons. Salafis and the Gama'a al-Islamiyya had an interest in an Islamist president, even if they objected to the chauvinism of the Muslim Brotherhood vis-à-vis other Islamist actors. Despite what

their ideologies might say, they had an interest in sustaining the democratic opening. Surprisingly, the Salafis proved that they were able to gain a quite significant electoral support in a very short time. So in a way, despite the ideological opposition to democracy as an imported system, they have a lot to gain from sustaining the democratic transition. However, at the same time the presence of this Brotherhood base for the Salafism and the Gama'a al-Islamiyya resulted in a fragmented Islamist camp.

Beyond the Islamist movement, beyond the core of the Muslim Brotherhood itself and then the Islamists, we have the broader society. Mursi and the Brotherhood were quite unsuccessful in their appeal to this broader Egyptian society. There are two primary reasons for this in my opinion. The first was beyond their control; namely, their inability to repair the Egyptian economy and to realize tangible gains in the ordinary Egyptians' standard of living; the second reason I think was their decision to pursue a Mubarak-style leadership to essentially continue the modes of operation that the previous Egyptian regimes had maintained. I think here is where they were playing a regime game. They wanted to show that they were going to play by the existing rules, which consisted of a dictatorial leadership, on-going censorship, intimidation of opposition, seeking to increase the powers of the presidency, forcing through what was perceived to be a partisan constitution. These were all the hallmarks of the presidential leadership in Egypt before Mursi and Mursi inherited and maintained them all. As a result, as was always the problem with this dual game, you ingratiate yourself too much with the regime, you alienate the electorate, thus alienate the people. I believe this is what happened. Mursi's strategy was vested in trying to behave like an authority as the president in order to reassure those parts of the state that remained thus enabling a position where the Brotherhood would not rock the boat too much. That turned the wider society against him, played in the hands of the secular opposition that incidentally would hope to compete with the Islamists in electoral terms. But I want to highlight the shortcomings of the Muslim Brotherhood and the results of this massive mobilization, the Tamarod campaign, which pointed to the failings of the Muslim Brotherhood and ultimately enabled General Sisi to step in, overthrowing the President and claiming that if this is a democracy, it will not work with the Brotherhood.

As elsewhere in the Middle East, authoritarian rule in Egypt has depended largely on external support. This took the form of primarily US support since the end of the 1970's. As a result, when looking at any kind of regime change or regime continuity in the region, this external support is very important and cannot be overlooked. The Brotherhood knew its his-

tory; it knew the history of the Egyptian Revolution, and it knew in order to take control, it would need a green light from the US, to which end they worked very hard. They travelled to America, to Europe and engaged in fairly intensive public diplomacy and PR campaigning, in order to obtain a green light from the US. It also had support from within the region, namely from Turkey and from Qatar. Even Israel was reasonably happy for the Brotherhood staying in its place; it knew that ultimately the Israeli files would not be handled by President Mursi as long as Mursi did not do anything to upset them. That was more or less fine.

So how did it all unravel? The other thing is that at the end of the day the Brotherhood sustained a very moderate foreign policy position which was a sign of recognition of not only the placate parts of the regime but also the regime's international support, indicating the willingness to keep Egypt within the Camp David security framework, which formed the framework of stability in the Middle East since the end of the 1970's.

A key issue for the Muslim Brotherhood was actually the need to increase the popularity of its leadership. Mursi barely made it into office with 51% of the vote. He had some work to do in trying to convince the other 50% of Egyptians that he actually deserved his position. It would have been difficult for the military to kick him out without the massive disillusionment with the regime that had evolved over the year. So Mursi and the Brotherhood had enemies embedded both internally and externally that wanted to see them fail in two ways: they wanted to see the Brotherhood fail in governance, fail to lead Egypt out of its economic morass which was pretty much inevitable. Moreover, they wanted to see it fail to lead Egypt in its transition to democracy. These enemies as we know of, were the surviving elements of the regime, the police, parts of the judiciary and the media, business lobbies and the military. Because the Brotherhood may threaten their own corporate interests -and democracy by definition would threaten the corporate interests of the Egyptian military- along with the secular opposition that couldn't match the electoral base of the Muslim Brotherhood, these actors preferred to delegitimize the Brotherhood as a democratic agent.

Just as important were the external enemies of the Muslim Brotherhood, primarily Saudi Arabia and other GCC states who were very nervous about this model of a Sunni Islamist democratic system in Egypt. Israel, on the other hand, was happy to deal with Mursi, and was content that Mursi sustained the old security arrangements and actually in many ways enhanced them, probably considering an unpleasant future projection where Hamas institutionalized itself in Egyptian politics. Unsurprisingly, Mursi basically failed to build up enough support either internally or externally to offset

these hostile forces that would have been happy to see him fall or at least, aspired to see it. There was a difficult international environment.

Back to the current situation: The Brotherhood as we know it has been forced underground again, which is nothing new to them. The military hopes to return to some kind of an authoritarian status quo after the split of 2011 and 2013 dies down. However there is one difference. I don't think we're going to go back to how things were under Mubarak. I think the idea of playing these regime games, these dual games is becoming less and less plausible unless the local society they aspire to represent see actual proof that their interests are indeed being represented. This idea of accommodating yourself to the regime, which I think the Tamarod mobilization displays, will become less possible, and not plausible enough as a strategy. However I think playing such a regime game, it's easier said than done. I think that the Brotherhood managed to survive so long as an opposition movement precisely because it didn't cross the regime's red lines. However, movements that come along and cross these red lines may potentially generate more popular support, albeit also attract a more aggressive reaction.

Tunisia: Possibilities of Inclusive Transition?

Wafa Harrar-Masmoudi
Faculty of Legal, Political and
Social Sciences of Tunis (FLPSST), Tunisia

Within the context of this conference, which is concerned with domestic transformations, I have been asked to discuss the theme of the possibilities of an inclusive transition in Tunisia. This expression “inclusive transition” falls within the framework of transitology, which is a specific field in transition studies. It represents a field in academia concerned with guiding policy accommodations in a process that ten years ago aimed to democratize¹ and liberalize post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. Scholars have transposed this concept to the Arab Uprisings. The issue at stake here is whether transitology implies a one-way road towards democracy. Is transition a shift from one system to another with no connections but with an empty gap in between? The Tunisian transition is more complex than this and here I will only be able to cover a part of it.

To do so, I need to emphasize one point; namely that the crucial and core template for the secular state that conducted Tunisian politics from independence onwards is to be transcended. Transition in Tunisia is taking place within a new paradigm. It is what Alfred Stepan² labeled as the template of “the twin tolerations”: “*The first toleration is that of religious citizens towards the state*³. *The second toleration is that of the state towards religious citizens*”⁴ (Stepan, 2012), allowing them to freely take place in politics as long as religious organizations respect other citizens’ constitutional rights and the law. It seems this has been admitted during the 2003 meeting of the main actors in Paris called “the call for Tunis”. So once this has been admitted, one moves from the template of secularism to that of “twin tolerations”.

It is worthy to inquire into how Tunisia carries out an inclusive transition process that first won the approval of all parties but that is -today- strongly put into question. As you know, the Tunisian transition has taken lon-

1 Four waves of democratization: the 1848 revolutions, the 1989 collapse of European communism, 1998–2005 post communist color revolutions, and the 2011 Arab uprisings.

2 Alfred Stepan, “Tunisia’s transition and the twin tolerations”, in *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 23, Number 2, April 2012, pp.89-103.

3 It requires that they accord democratically elected officials the freedom to legislate and govern without having to confront denials of their authority based on religious claims-such as the claim that “Only God, not man, can make laws”, *Idem*, pp.89-90.

4 Alfred Stepan, “Tunisia’s transition and the twin tolerations”, *op. cit.*, pp.89-90.

ger than expected with elections postponed and a growing political division. How can secular and religious actors negotiate new rules and form coalitions in order to ensure an inclusive transition and build a new framework?⁵ This will be our first point; mainly the quest for an inclusive transition template in Tunisia. It is about the bridge between circumstances that prevailed during the old regime and the constitutional arrangement that will govern the new state. The Tunisian transition has gained from the comparative approach of previous transition experiences in order to tackle its own transition.

These experiences can be summarized as follows: The first approach empowers the existing authorities to implement the transition. This route has the potential benefit of expediting the transition process by placing the responsibility on the actors who have the capacity for implementation and can be held accountable by the international community. This, however, runs the risk of transferring legitimacy to the old regime without diminishing its control. Historically, this was successful in the first phase of the South African transition. However, the popular movements have loudly rejected this approach during the Arab Spring, and particularly in Tunisia.

In contrast, the second approach, known as the power-sharing approach, refers to the immediate participation of factions previously excluded by the old regime in government. This approach places a priority on immediate and visibly inclusive interim institutions with the parties generally forced to take a part of responsibility for managing the transfer of power⁶.

The third approach would insist on the expulsion of the incumbent leaders and severing the ties of the government bureaucracy to the former regime. This approach places the responsibility of implementing the transition on entirely new, neutral or even insurgent leaders aiming clearly to provide a “clear-cut” break with the past. Tunisia followed this approach in the first phase of its transition⁷. Indeed, new authorities in Tunisia followed the route of seeking to remove the old regime most closely. In Tunisia, the decree number 35 of 2011 dissolved the former President Bin Ali’s party and banned former members of his government from running in the 2011 parliamentary elections. Individuals who had publicly asked the former President to run for presidency in the 2014 elections were also banned. The quest for the ideal template for an inclusive transition follows a specif-

5 From the secular pattern to the “twin tolerations” template?

6 This type of transition may be immobilized because of the need to arrive at consensus in decision-making.

7 The first phase is ranging from 14th January till 23rd October 2011.

ic model that has been set up by the doctrine. According to the doctrine (J. Linz and A. Stepan), four requirements must be met in order to achieve a successful inclusive transition. The *first* of these requirements is the “*sufficient agreement on procedure to produce an elected government.*” The *second* is that the government comes to power as “*a direct result of a free and popular vote.*” The *third* is the government’s *de facto* possession of “*the authority to generate new policies.*” And the *fourth* requirement is that “*the executive, legislative and judicial powers generated by the new democracy do not have to share power with other bodies de jure*”⁸ (Stepan, 2012), namely the military or religious leaders. In the case of Tunisia, the first two requirements for an inclusive transition are met. Actually studies show that the core of any successful transition is to draw a distinction between the authorities that will govern, that is to say implement the transition, and the authorities that supervise those who are governing. This can be addressed by providing for an inclusive supervisory committee comprised of a broad range of actors. Such an inclusive supervision mechanism can allow for necessary amendments to the agreed arrangements – an important point of consideration.

This supervision mechanism was successfully accomplished in the first phase of the Tunisian transition through the creation of the “High Commission for the Realization of Revolutionary Objectives, Political Reforms and Democratic Transition” with Professor Yadh Ben Achour as the chair. It consisted of major political parties, civil society, participants in the Revolution, and non-voting experts and technical advisors. The first requirement is hence embedded by this new entity which represents one of the most effective consensus-building bodies in the history of “crafted” democratic transitions. Approximately 155 members of this commission voted on a package of measures. First, there was a consensual agreement that the electoral system will be one of pure proportional representation and this decision was correctly understood to have crucial democracy facilitating and coalition encouraging implications. Second, there came a consensual agreement on the creation of the Tunisian’s first independent electoral commission. Third, a consensual agreement on male-female parity in candidates by having every name on the candidates list be woman was reached, but the actual outcome of the elections unfortunately did not produce the result it hoped for parity⁹.

8 Alfred Stepan, “Tunisia’s transition and the twin tolerations”, *op. cit.*, p.90.

9 Although all parties ran slates that were 50% female, most of them (with the notable exception of Ennahdha) failed to place any women’s names first. In many constituencies, only a single candidate from the party won, and thus many more men than women won seats. Nevertheless, about a quarter of the members of the National Constituent Assembly are women.

The second requirement is a government that comes to power as “*a direct result of a free and popular vote.*” Indeed on October 23, 2011 Tunisian voters chose 270 members to the Constituent Assembly. Tunisia’s Ennahdha Party won 41% of the seats in the Constituent Assembly. Ennahdha politicians joined in a Troika coalition with the Ettakatol party and the Congress for the Republic, both center-left groups. Ennahdha also decided to support the nomination of the secularist Moncef Marzouki for presidency. Despite the presence of free parties with ideological differences, the coalition had held together for almost two years now. All this stands as a testimony of the inclusive approach that most Tunisians have chosen as a route for transition. The electorally victorious Islamist, Ennahdha Party, entered initially into a coalition government with non-Islamist parties and showed willingness to compromise. Concerns about inclusiveness in the constitution-making body have also been addressed by requiring super-authorities to approve the draft of the Constitution, 2/3 of the votes, rather than a simple majority. This second requirement relates to the issue of legitimacy. Indeed the fact of having the constitution process conducted by an elected body provides a substantial boost of popular legitimacy and accountability to the drafting process. This route assumes a substantial sense of national responsibility on the part of the government that comes to power out of the elections. But after the assassination of Chokri Belaïdin in February 2013, Ennahdha was sharply criticized by Tunisian secularist leaders for not seriously addressing the security threat posed by hardliner Salafi insurgents.

To insure the logic of popularity and legitimacy under a strong pressure from civil society, the elected National Constitutional Assembly had undertaken a process of broad consultation, informed deliberation, patient negotiation and inclusive agreement. It sought to overcome gridlock on a certain number of issues through a series of national dialogue meetings. And indeed there was not a single national dialogue. One was put forward by the country’s Presidency and one by the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT). Together the two tracks included more than 60 political parties and 50 civil society organizations. The principal axes of the consensus were the following: First, to reach an agreement on the type of political regime, second to accelerate the implementation of the independent electoral commission, third to set a timetable for the completion of a constitution and for holding general elections, and finally to set up an independent judicial body and an independent high commission to regulate the media. Following these, the National Dialogue Platform provided by the UGTT was designed to bring together the major actors of the political class and of civil society. But if it can be admitted that Tunisia succeeded in complying with the two formal

requirements set forth by the transitology template, the core requirements, mainly the third one regarding the government's *de facto* possession of "authority to generate new policies" and the fourth one banning the sharing of power with other bodies, are far from being complied with. Hence the template for an inclusive transition in Tunisia suffers from key points of contention.

The second part will address these key points for the transition template. In Tunisia, temptation to monopolize power eclipsed the government's faculty of generating policies. Election winners tend to limit democracy or slide back toward outright autocracy. Today, contrary to what was observed in the outset of the transition and despite the alliance between moderate Islamists and moderate secularists, the sharing of power is very unequal. This is because Ennahdha was pulling the strings of government. The tendency of these temporary institutions to become permanent is explained by the need to ensure their own survival. Indeed while the interim period was limited *de jure* to the drafting of the constitution within a lapse of one year, the decree relating to the Provisional Organization of the Public Powers adopted in December 2011 granted from the outside an unlimited power to the National Assembly. In addition, 87% of the appointments performed by the government between December 2012 and February 2013 across all positions and ministries, from the corps of governors to parks and forestry and the security apparatus, were done on a partisan basis. Of those 87%, 93% were connected to the Ennahdha party¹⁰. Hence, this tendency is a prelude to the lack of independence of all branches.

Concerning the last requirement, i.e. banning the sharing of power with informal bodies, the preeminence of the *de facto* institutions over *de jure* institutions deepens the crisis of the interim institutions. Often eschewed by the misleading reading offered by transitology, the preeminence of the *de facto* institutions is highly perceivable in Tunisia's transition. Concretely this means that it is less the prime minister than the President of the ruling party who governs and that it is more the Consultative Council of the Islamist Ennahdha party, wielding extra-institutional veto power, than the National Constituent Assembly that deliberates¹¹. Moreover, Ennahdha brought its full weight to bear in order to gain control over the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice, which has been the backbone of the former authoritarian regime. The issue of control over the apparatuses of power as well as the distribution of ministerial portfolios was founded neither on a politi-

10 Lilia Weslaty, « Nominations dans le secteur public : 87% pour la Troïka dont 93% en faveur des partisans d'Ennahdha », in <http://Nawaat.org/portail/2013/03/22/>.

11 The period ranging from October 23 2011 till December 2013.

cal pact nor on a common agenda uniting the three members of the Troika. To conclude with, the transition process in Tunisia is not as “clear-cut” as it should be more than two years after the holding of democratic elections. I took transitology as a paradigm for the interpretation of the Tunisian situation as suggested by the organizers of this conference. But transitology fails to differentiate between transitions from authoritarianism and those leading to democracy. It fails to recognize that the construction of a democratic regime has nothing to do with the collapse of an authoritarian regime. Democratic regimes do not necessarily, usually or naturally emerge as an “outcome” of transition¹². The outcome could be either instability, which may result in a new popular uprising, in authoritarianism or in a transition called democratization, or an emergence of a hybrid regime that is neither truly democratic nor fully authoritarian.

12 Now, on November 15, 2013, the government in Tunisia is expected to resign according to the roadmap. If things do not change in the coming days, Tunisia would simply have shifted from an authoritarian democratic regime to an authoritarian democracy.

What to Make of Libya's Revolution and Transition?

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I will talk about the constraints and challenges of the Libyan democratization process. There may be a bit of theory. Some speakers have alluded to democratic transition or what is called 'transitology'. I tend to disagree with a few colleagues who have spoken here today. Specifically one point comes to mind: the field of areas studies, especially in reference to the Middle East is very much drenched in Orientalism. Take the question of democracy and how it is 'narrativ-ized' by the 'gurus' of transitology everywhere. We are told, time and time again, in a non-nuanced manner across various geographies and cultural topographies that democracy cannot come from the 'East' – that is, the 'Orient' (whatever that means today). It has to come from the West. For the word top-down means from the 'West to the rest' in the sense that democracy and what I call "democratic knowledge" (currently editing a special issue of the *Journal of North African Studies* on this topic) itself are conceived within the Western-Euro-American paradigm. This is really problematic. I would like to pinpoint here that democratization and transitology carry within themselves a big epistemological question. Alfred Stepan is someone who does not read, write or use Arabic. In his fieldwork in Tunisia he 'parachutes' a radical concept on the Tunisian context ('twin toleration'). I think after spending two weeks in Tunisia, he becomes an expert on Tunisian democracy. When you look at his previous work, you hardly find a mention or interest in the country. Turkey is the only Middle Eastern country thought to have the building blocks of democracy. Bernard Lewis, more or less, views it as the bridge for transferring knowledge to the East, such as modernization, democracy, and democratization. So I have a problem here with this proposition too.

We are in the midst of a paradigmatic crisis when it comes to rethinking democracy and democratization. What are we really talking about? I refer to it as 'Electoral fetishism' in my OUP (2009) book entitled *Rethinking Arab Democratization*. I guess we are ultimately talking about American transitology which is a kind of a fad, diffused in a truly top-down fashion: from the democratic 'West' to the authoritarian 'East' – and then to the rest, the 'other', Africans, Latinos, etc. Take the institutionalist path to democracy and democratization: Does it really account for specificity? Does it really speak to the Arab context, for instance? So far, even 'democratization by invasion' (as the Neo-Cons assumed and planned) has atrophied.

No one cares to mention the local heritage, the indigenous repository of knowledge, practices and values of justice, power-sharing, inclusiveness, etc. So the region is 'represented' as an 'empty space,' and its literati generally seem to reify this by ignoring the indigenous repertoire. We ought to learn about our own knowledge repertoire because neither does a nation develop overnight, nor does it upgrade to a democracy through the knowledge repertoire of another nation – even if that nation is America, the country with perhaps the most established and entrenched democratic norms as Alexis de Tocqueville tells us in his famous magnum opus. Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, etc. once had a brush with the Tanzimat, where all kinds of thought-practice that albeit ephemerally, captured the local passion for political renewal. I state this because it is not really a coincidence that the Revolution erupted in Tunisia and was consolidated in Egypt. Nor is it a coincidence that Turkey has partially succeeded along the path of political reform. There is a heritage, which remains, unfortunately, under-researched, hidden, forgotten, and may be even suppressed by the advocates of 'EU-nization' and the like, lest the old disparages the new, and lest 'West' and 'East' clash – as goes one oversimplification. In the Arab context, one can answer the question of why revolutions emerged in Tunisia and Egypt by invoking the repertoire: It has been 150 years since the first attempts had been launched to institute good government.

Then we have the question of agency and structure. The knowledge we conceive of, that is, democracy and democratization, do not always mirror the 'discourse' of the agency of the 'Oriental other' – part and parcel of 'the wretched of the earth' as Fanon calls them. Colonization brought the discourse of democracy as did the invasion of Iraq when democratization littered everything one read at the time, about a big happy family called 'the Greater Middle East.' The dichotomy is inescapable when such ideas do not reflect local agency and rather are brought to bear upon indigenous peoples by dint of the existing structures of power that govern relations between the former 'colonized' and 'colonizers.' So is the tension always between the local and the global? All of us are familiar with the phrase "think globally, act locally" or vice versa. How much of the global input, know-how can be actually transferred to Tunisia, to Egypt, to Libya? Whose terms govern such a transfer of knowledge? To what end? By what medium and through what type of elites is democratization facilitated? And what role do preconceived ideas about the so-called '*ikwan*' (by the way, it is not an 'innocent' word), '*thuwwar*' or 'revolutionaries' or 'lefties' play in engaging the region in the Western world's 'game' of democracy and democratization? I guess since we are really navigating in Area Studies, the real problem

is gathering under one (the 'Middle East' – middle of where? East of what?) totalizing label. As if Libya, Tunisia, Turkey, Algeria are all one and the same chips off the monolithic 'bloc' we call the Middle East. Democracy and democratization enter the fray of geography, history, culture, language, religions and sects, and even genealogy, presented as the ideal glue for linking these collectivities, with always a blank page awaiting the onlookers' inscriptions!!!

What is striking about the current historical moment is primarily the 'death of the hegemon.' The usual dichotomies that have for so long perturbed the Arab psyche may be finally coming unstuck – namely the colonizer-colonized power relations that have structured the Arab-Western geo-strategy for so long. I mean by this that to use the totalizing terms popularized by Orientalism, the 'East' – a generalizing term to refer here specifically to the Arab Middle East – is no longer a 'workshop' or a 'laboratory' where experimentation with the ideas and theories invented in, and by, the 'West' takes place. The polarities that litter the 'narration' of democracy's global travel should not be framed in either Orientalist or Occidental terms. I see a new journey that calls for synergy, partnership, and co-learning. The democratic moment North African revolutions have heralded has necessitated cross-pollination: the ethos of pluralism, good government and democratic identity defy being 'boxed' into a single location, paradigm of knowledge, ethnicity, region, religion or civilization.

I think we can all bid the 'clash of civilizations' farewell.

Today, this region pulsates with the ethics and values of democratizing becomings. Democracy itself continues to be contested, making room for temporal, spatial and cultural difference and specificity as well as for shared spaces and commonality. Indeed, these newly emerging spaces spell 'in-between-ness,' negating democratic mentoring from the 'West' to the rest, singular and top-down democratic knowing and 'civilizing' from without.

You all no doubt recall that 'democracy' is intrinsically pluralist: it negates a surrender to singular thinking, or single authors. It is a value system that opens up ways of mapping out democratic routes, reifying democratic identities and of building democratic institutions in a multicultural fashion. This historical moment – as far as the Arab Spring is concerned, may be labelled 'the moment of agency'. We all recall the iconic cries of the Arab public squares: '*Al-sha'b yureed*' [The people will].

Thus agency is repositioned in public consciousness as not simply the mantra of the still unfurling Arab Spring – with all its fluidity, bright and dark spots – but also as an ethos. This underpins the normative dimension which comes to the fore, hinting at the democratic futures and communities be-

ing re-imagined across the vast Arab geography. The gist of the ideas above is that through the Arab Spring, bridges are being built to reach to the West but this time on Arab terms: seeking democratic futures is no longer the figment of remote policy-making communities detached from unfolding events, struggles, and communities.

The deluge of agency in the context of the Arab Spring – including in Egypt or Libya – has yielded democratic voluntarism. Arabs willingly seek democratic futures – discarding the need for systematic ‘class-room’-type induction such as through the now defunct ‘Greater Middle East Initiative,’ itself the by-product of power relations engineered after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In other words, the time has never been more opportune for partnering voluntarily with the rest of the world on the basis of mutuality, reciprocity and equality. This matters not only to the youths of the Arab Spring, but also to the youthful leaderships emerging in the Arab region.

Today an arch of possibilities is emerging within the democratic ‘stories’ and struggles that accompany agency. Democracy exists in a fluid sense requiring constant ‘renewals’ and more importantly in the Arab context, reference to the Arab youths whose inventiveness and cries for freedom and dignity have opened up such an arch of possibilities in the first place.

Therefore, Arab-Arab and Arab-Turkey democratic co-learning cannot ignore the demography of the Arab Spring and primary citizenry – which, in this regard differs from transitions in the 1990s in Eastern Europe, for instance. Plus, we all know that the transition in Eastern Europe was from one ideology to another. The Arab Spring was not catalysed by the quest to unhinge hegemonic ideologies – but more appropriately dynastic republics in whose hands were conflated the means and resources of political, economic, informational, and coercive prowess.

So what about knowledge and democratization?

The Arab Middle East (AME) has historically featured as a contributor to Euro-Med cultures and civilizations. Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Phoenicia all at one point in time or another mediated processes of infusion, inclusion and diffusion of ‘learning’. The flow was not one-way. The ‘travel’ of ideas left lasting inscriptions on AME’s cultural map. As the Arab Middle East enters its ‘democratic’ and ‘revolutionary’ moment, it is apposite to address the question of democratic knowledge and trans-democratic exchange. This question is noted by glaring omission in most accounts of the Arab region since the eruption of the 2011 uprisings.

Now we turn to revolution. No one really mentions that it is also really about a revolution underpinned by knowledge. What is really the knowl-

edge basis of Arab revolutions? Does the revolution begin now? Do we start with the revolution to realize democracy? Or do we acquire freedom and dignity to achieve revolution in law, morality, industry, toleration, co-existence with the rest of the world and each other? What has really happened in places like Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and was it really a revolution? Maybe it is the onset of a process of an ethos of protest. Yes, the existing hegemony is deposed and the long process of self-reconstruction begins and this is really important. This is ideally what revolution should be. That is for me as fundamental as describing the mechanisms and mechanics of democratic transition. A revolution in how we think about revolution should yield a revolution in how we understand transition itself. Because what is really 'transition'? Is it like the ethos, the norms and the attitudinal know-how? Is it longitudinal? What knowledge underpins it? Is it what Huntington and Western scholars talk about?

There was a discussion earlier assuming 'the failure of President Morsi'; but can we actually talk about a failed president? Remembering Michel Foucault and language, the nexus between language and power, we should ask the following question: Whose language are we actually utilizing to talk about Libya, to talk about Algeria etc.? So from the onset if we utilize non-indigenous and imprecise concepts to frame our lines of investigation and inquiry, we are not going to succeed in knowing *how* to know democracy and revolution and *what* knowing is needed and *where* to find it. Sometimes this exercise, I keep reminding my students, and myself is actually more fruitful and useful than trying to describe fluid transitional processes. So I refuse to talk about Libya in this way. Whatever we describe here today about Libya will make no sense tomorrow. I am interested in the big picture, as it were. I can tell you, as you may already know, there was fighting in Libya three days ago. There is actually a national general conference in place. So what?

Does this really tell us something about the mechanisms of transition? A mechanism minus knowledge: a delivery system without actual power to project. That is how I would describe it. Lacking democratic knowledge is where I see a problematic here because we know that democratic knowledge does not really land from the moon. It is incubated within a matrix of ethics, knowledge, language and all of them are really important for us to understand the nature of the 'beast' when talking about democracy and democratization. I guess all of you are very much versed in the various arguments surrounding Orientalism. It is really related to how we historicize and contextualize these 'events', 'images', 'protests', interpretations, discourses and 'reporting' of the Arab Spring, of Libya, etc. It is in a way about Spivak's original question (or 'sin') about whether 'the subaltern can speak'.

NGOs and experts land in Libya's cities, in Tunis or go to Tahrir Square. I think experts want to say "I have been there in Tahrir Square when the revolution erupted." It is incredible: this is what one Egyptian more or less called the 'Arab Spring tourism'. So you have got all of these issues, that we think we know, and we make claims to know, but we do not know one thing: in a fluid space where the indigenous peoples are yet to engage their own revolutions through their own knowing, it is difficult to be talking about the actual state of democracy or democratization in Libya – or anywhere else. The Libyans have to speak first, and we as scholars have to be sensitized to one fact: the old ways of bending narratives of the Middle East so that they fit our theories are over. Grounded theory – may be! However, that still means allowing for the 'other' a great deal of self-representation and the disciplined modesty of the international scholarly community towards learning. We all know that most books rushed in a rash way through all kinds of presses about Egypt's revolution made little sense after July 3, 2013. Egypt is yet to say its final word about the 25th of January revolution. My humble suggestion, colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen, here today is to try to frame the problematic 'anew'. I think a good problematic can instigate the right questions that can provoke critical thinking about a phenomenon that defies crystal reading and deconstructing.

So when it comes to Libya, there is this descriptive literature on what is going on in Libya; we have got still a process in place. It is really at the core of the Libyan miasma that scholars descriptively cement revolution and transition either to fighting inside Libya or to new and fragile institutional manifestations – such as the national general congress. We are often given numbers, facts, and names along the same wavelength of 'narrativizing' the 'Libyan revolution' or the 'Libyan transition'. However, when it comes to engineering democracy and democratization, is there really much happening, especially when Libyan agency stumbles upon the power relations - the structures including NATO? Plus, the knowledge mediated is not innocent: from the International Crisis Group to the UN along with endless NGOs squeeze out the local agency to stretch the local imagination, pause, ponder, parley, and know democracy autonomously. This is not a call for cultural autarchy. However, the global is suffocating the local – not exactly partnering with it. Do we know how Libyans would like to produce their own democracy and democratization? The parameters, the contours of democracy and democratization in Libya are not decided only by the formal structures of the emerging system aspiring to replace the Gaddafi regime, but also parallel to that there is society, a society that must act, be and think 'civic'. I guess all of you are familiar with the Hegelian understanding of

what is really civic – it may not stretch the imagination enough to accommodate the Libyan ‘locale’. What is really civic in Egypt? What is really civic in Tunisia? What is really civic in Libya? Do tribe, family, and religion feature in the Western understanding of what is ‘civic’. I doubt it. This is one instance how we bend Arab Spring societies to fit Western theories of the ‘political’ and the ‘democratic’. This is not good enough if we are to have an intelligent conversation about democracy at a time of revolution.

What is the place of religion when we talk about democracy and democratization? What do you do with it; do you oppress it? Do you sideline it? Do you go the Tunisian way and invent a hybrid situation? Or do we go the Egyptian way – we regress by aiding the army to take over the state whilst we think about our democratic theories? So it appears very difficult to really pin down Libya, Tunisia or Algeria to a single process of transition even if the ‘glue’ that we utilize is basically derived from the ‘Western’ body of scholarship we call democratic transition or transitology. It is very hard to talk with precision about these processes.

So when we come to the constraints of the democratization process I guess this has been alluded to in the case of Algeria and Egypt. Tunisia has the problem of lustration – what transitologists call lustration: how do you deal with former people associated with the structures of power that oppressed the people under Mubarak, Gaddafi, and Bin Ali? Do you exclude them? Do you punish them? What form of punishment is that going to be? Is it like the punishment that is facilitated by juridical processes – ‘truth and reconciliation’-type justice? Or is it actually vindictive? You have got all of these debates that are really important and as you know there is not a single, fixed model on how to do transitional justice, for instance. There might be the tendency to become over-enthusiastic, vindictive and punitive; not corrective – which I favour. I think people aspiring for new democracies should set their differences aside and enter the political realm as equals – that is true ‘purification’ of the psyche and people, in my view, and not through ‘lustration’ or exclusion. There is also the type of ‘umbrella punishment’, used to punish anyone that had any association with the former regime. So it is really selective because you really end up in a situation of a brain-drain with the people who can actually help the process of democratic construction being excluded from the newly established systems. There is global know-how (South Africa being one of my favourite transitions); and there is local know-how (using local traditions of conciliation and dialogue). So it is problematic to think about democratization and not think about what the locale can offer in terms of knowledge.

On transitional justice, again is the question really which model to employ? We prioritize, we valorise and prefer the South African model because it is

essentially, fundamentally about truth-seeking. The healing that goes with it is bottom-up, giving voice to the people. So it is completely opposite to what went on in Algeria or what happened in Morocco. You make the country forget, but this is the process where the country actually needs to and must remember in order to forget or at least forgive. There is also the process of collective healing, and it is not really intended to punish as much as it is actually designed to be a medium to expunge the pain, as there is a collective pain: the pain of the defendants and of their victims conflate.

Then comes the dimension of who actually facilitates this process and also engages in the top-down process. This is really important: from the West to the rest. It is something that repeats itself with a regular frequency. I think this is one of the problems of how to think and reflect very critically about these processes. And there is this dilemma, which is the legal dilemma about constitutional framing. How do you actually go about it? Of course the Tunisians and the Egyptians had the first constitutions dating back to the time of Khairuddin Pasha, who was actually a grand vizier here in Turkey. When you had the first constitution etc., it actually introduced the idea of a Muslim Constitution (the case of the Prophet's Medina Constitution must be invoked here). When we sometimes try to occlude these practices from any discussion of good government altogether, it is as if these countries do not have a history. But we are not really talking about peoples without histories, living in empty spaces. These are actually peoples with agency; they have histories, they have their own repertoire and repository of knowledge. That knowledge is often not utilized for the purpose of helping the current process of democratization. In the Libyan case, the mechanical underpinnings of how to go about transitional justice are discussed but really to the occlusion of the people's traditions of conciliation. I do not want to get into the cliché dimension of violence, because everyone seems to associate Libya with violence. Actually violence is a ubiquitous problem, it is universal. It is not culture or country-specific, Arabs and Muslims are not born violent (as the late Edward Said teaches us in his magnificent book on Orientalism). It is the circumstances within which people find themselves – like the Palestinians – that may lend themselves to the utilization of violence. Because in the absence of a state, especially a state that takes good care of legal regulation, distribution, justice, and freedom and dignity, any country could end up with violence. Let's not – ladies and gentlemen – forget the provenance of the Western world for violence but great revolutions: France, America, Russia, China, and Iran. So there is no 'exceptionalism' that should be attributed, on this account, to the Arab World.

I'd like to finish by saying that Libyans are caught between two imperfect

revolutions: the first came and left them with the scars of the brutal revolutionary committees that downsized society to the point of nadir; the second, is crying for completion driven by fissiparous narratives, discourses, and forces all of them into the vortex of new politics in which society – as opposed to the state – is at its zenith in terms of the unruliness and lawlessness that govern the behaviour of many a group, party, ideology, region and elite. I would not generalize that ‘democracy cannot come from the East.’ I’d wager, however, that specific to the current context and the happenings that are tearing the North African polity and society in all directions, ‘democracy in the foreseeable future cannot come from the Hobbesian “state of nature” that some groups are trying to ‘routinize’ in Libya. This is only a phase in shaking off the ghosts of Gaddafi ‘*mukhabarat*’ state – a ‘learning’ journey that is testing Libyans’ hunger for freedom and dignity. Eventually, they will prevail and so will democracy.

Algeria: Democracy and Transitions

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Algeria provides a very interesting and unique case study for transition to democracy in the Arab world and the Arab Spring. Unlike what has happened in Egypt and Tunisia and obviously what happened in Syria or in Yemen, Algeria's so-called transition to democracy has followed a top-down model. The reforms that have been undertaken in Algeria over the years have not necessarily been from the pressures from the street, nor have they been results of pressures from outside. Obviously the Americans, the French and others are very happy with the regime in Algiers.

I would argue that the changes that have been taken place in Algeria have been initiated to give the appearance of a democratic regime where in essence, at least as far as the system in Algiers is concerned, nothing happens. Anybody who goes to Algeria, watches Algerian TV and so forth, observes at street level sees so many newspapers, some freedom of speech, some political parties and hundreds of civil society organizations, but the regime itself has remained the same. Algerians would like to say, "but the transition to democracy in the Middle East or in the Arab Middle East started in Algeria." The Arab Spring in Algeria took place in October 1988. This is the first point that I would like to mention. Obviously I would also like to argue that the particular experience of top-down reforms, at least as far as the international academic communities are concerned, did not get the attention I think it deserves for many reasons. In 1988 there was no Facebook, there was no Al-Jazeera. So the experience was not covered properly. The second one is that the Europeans and Americans were much more interested in what was going on in their own backyard. Thirdly, at the beginning the transition to democracy in Algeria was sort of dismissed simply because it introduced an Islamic government or one of the Islamist parties took power because of the elections. The reforms that were undertaken at that particular moment were results of a fight within the system; there were basically two wings, the reforming wing and the conservative wing. The reforming wing sped up the process of transition and this resulted in 61 political parties coming to the political scene. Elections were held at the end of December 1991.

Against all expectations it resulted in the winning of an Islamic party. Obviously certain groups in the regime, especially the military supported by

some Western powers, France in particular, was not happy to see an Islamic government in Algeria for several reasons. Hence the army basically intervened to put an end to the electoral process, namely the democratic process. Thus Algeria in 1990's was cast into a civil war. There were certain lessons from Algeria that can be perhaps useful to the rest of the countries that are now experiencing a transition to democracy.

The first one is that Algeria experienced what I would refer to as conflict resolution or attempts to resolve that particular conflict or transitional justice. There are several problems with this issue. In one word, conflict resolution in Algeria is basically a peace by Decree. It was not inclusive so the government decided who to deal with and who the perpetrators of those atrocities were. Parallel to that there were also attempts to go back to the democratic process and hence some refer to it as second transition, I do not want to spend time to discuss it, I just want to concentrate on one particular aspect that is close to my point as far as that transition is concerned, which is the electoral system.

Giovanni Sartori argues that electoral systems are the most manipulative instruments in politics. In Algeria over a period of 8 years we see three different electoral systems. In other words, every time the results did not match the governments' expectations they changed the rules, hence there was a view of democracy that was left to *inshallah*. What I argue is that the authorities in Algiers have never been serious about a proper transition to democracy that establishes institutions and respect for the rule of law. They produced reforms mainly addressing a Western audience. So long as the outside world perceived the Algerian democracy as a legitimate democracy, this was enough for the authorities. They have been doing that for the last 15 or 16 years, until very recently.

The second point that I would like to talk about is the impact of the Arab Spring on Algerian domestic politics and the transition to democracy. When demonstrations started in Tunisia in December 2010, everybody, every expert on the Middle East and North Africa suggested that Algeria would be next and that the Arab Spring would move westward towards Algeria. Unfortunately I was one of the few people who said, no. Algerians obviously have discovered a hobby in the 90's and over the last fifteen years, which are public demonstrations. In 2011 something like over 23,000 demonstrations were recorded in the country. So there is nothing new. For over 20 years or so, the authorities in Algeria have been dealing with demonstrations by introducing certain laws, and have learnt how to reinvent themselves.

Why did the Arab Spring not catch up with Algeria? There are several reasons. The first one is fatigue. When you speak to Algerians in interviews,

they will tell you that we are very tired. In 1990's over 250,000 people were killed. We know the Algerian military's history of shooting at its own people, an example of which is the events on October 1988. No, we fought very hard to achieve peace and we do not want to demonstrate. The second reason is propaganda. Algerian newspapers, TV and so on and so forth presented the events in neighbouring countries, the revolutions as being simply anarchy. That is the word that Algerian officials use to describe what has been going on. They also add that these movements are brought by the international powers in order to divide the Arab world. The third one is money. Algeria has over 200 billion dollars, and it was able to buy social peace. In other words, there were increases in salaries, subsidies for the basic staff, etc. So there has been lot of spending, without paying any attention to the economic consequences. Finally in terms of corruption I always say Algeria is an exception. When we talk about the system in Algeria, there is lots of corruption but unlike the neighbouring countries, the corruption in Algeria is not identified with one person, as was the case with Mubarak, Bin Ali, or Qaddafi. It is not identified with one political party like Egypt and Tunisia. What happens in Algeria is what I call vertical and horizontal corruption. To a large extent it depends on what level you are at in administration or in the political system. If you are at the bottom your commission is 5%, and if you happen to be the President's brother your commission is 35%. So depending on the status everybody is somewhere between 5 and 35. So when it is shouted that "the people want to bring the system down" what system are you talking about? It will not change anything in the Algerian political system.

For now, the system has been able to make some sort of concessions, and here again, democracy is uttered with *inshallah*. A number of reforms were undertaken. The state of emergency, which has been the system for over 20 years, was removed. This is a very big concession to the so-called opposition. Many political parties were legalized, and the elections of May 2012 were held to be the elections that would give birth to a second republic. The President in a speech in May of last year said that our generation has passed its expiration date. In other words he implied that we have been around the country for long years, now we are too old and we should give the new generation a chance to run the country. However as I argue, these reforms were completely devoid of meaning in the sense that these reforms' role was to pacify certain sections of society, all the while insuring that the status quo continues.

Over 21 political parties were legalized before the elections, i.e. in February of last year. As you all know political parties need time to develop their

strategies, their structures, etc. away from the pressure of a general election. The electoral system is a party list, and for a party to gain representation in the parliament it has to surpass the threshold of 5% at the constituency level. When one has so many political parties without any popular base, the results were a complete tragedy. When you look at the general votes, you can find parties getting 600,000 votes winning just five seats. Yet some parties that received even less votes won more seats in the House of Parliament. I argue that this is simply because the system encourages parties with regional representations. So if a party has national representation and does not enjoy regional support, then it will not get there.

What will happen next? The constitution that the President promised about 16-18 months ago is still in the making. After the elections in May last year we were supposed to have the Parliament that will make the constitution that will stray the foundation for a second republic. Nothing has happened yet. The President had a stroke last April and has not been seen in public, with two exceptions. There are basically three scenarios at the moment in Algeria. The first one is there will be normal elections in April. But who will stand? Will the current president run for office? If he runs for office none of the serious candidates will stand because it is the foregone conclusion. The second scenario is that he will not run in the elections but will nominate somebody. This is a very high possibility. In this case, no serious candidate would run again. There is a third option, which is extending his current term in office for an extra two years. This is a circulating rumour. So there will be no elections next year. The next elections will be in 2016, given his age, a little over 76, and his condition, the biological factors may be at work in the next two years before April 2016.

Syrian Crisis and the Regional Repercussions

Syria: Challenges of the Opposition

Wael Sawah

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I will start with just a quick reminder of the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, because I owe it to my country and to my people. In the end of February, beginning of March 2011, a small group of school students in the 6th and 7th grades in a neglected city of Southern Syria, Dara wrote on the walls, slogans that read, "People want to overthrow the regime". They were literally kids. The eldest was maybe 12 or 13 years old. The security officer of the city that happened to be the cousin of Bashar Assad ordered the arrest of these kids and his people literally tortured them. They savagely, brutally tortured them. The fathers of these kids went to meet Atef Najib, the security officer, and they approached him, begging him to release their kids. Instead of listening to them he insulted them in a way that people generally cannot accept, especially in Syria, and especially in this province of Syria. So he told them you will never see your children, go make your wives bear more children, and if you cannot we will help you on that.

On March 18, people in Dara took to the streets and they called for freedom, dignity and equality and justice; no one called for the overthrowing of the regime. The security forces shot live bullets directly at these people, killing a significant number. The following Friday a bigger number in other towns and provinces took to the streets and again, a number among who participated were killed. It took weeks and weeks for Syrians to understand that the regime will never listen to them. Thus they started to raise the slogan "The People Want the Fall of the Regime". At that time I would like to think that President Assad could have changed history if he had done very minor things. If he had visited the city of Dara and paid condolences to the families of the people who were killed, and said a few good words to the family of the children who were tortured, and dismissed and sent his cousin to court, and then make a couple of other minor reforms, things would've changed for the better.

The people really did not want to topple the regime. The people did not want to push things on the ground beyond what they first said they wanted, which were dignity, freedom, justice, equality and equity. Their slogans expressed their wish of national unity over and over. They raised the slo-

gan “The Syrian people are one body” and other similar slogans where they really wanted to express that they are not talking on behalf of a certain group, community but as a whole. From day one the regime portrayed the opposition as a Salafi-Sunni extremist revolution. The regime did everything in order to push the protestors to take that position. The regime used live bullets; had their security kill, arrest and torture and displace people. Then a group of protestors thought that they could not continue this way and ever since then, situation has shifted. The entire story of the Syrian Revolution shifted.

What is the situation now? Some 150,000 people have been killed. We have a similar number of people who have been missing or are in prison now. We have a bigger number of people who have been wounded and have become handicapped. We have diseases that are spreading across the country. We have real hunger. I am talking about areas that do not have bread, milk or basic clean water; no electricity, no telecommunications, and no medical services; no medications, no drugs, doctors or whatever. People are dying from starvation if they do not die from being shot or being targeted by snipers. They die simply from the lack of antibiotics or the lack of proper clean bandages or the lack of milk for children. The infrastructure is destroyed; the economy is destroyed. What is worse and more important is the social context. The social relationship has been broken. We need generations and generations to rebuild this internal societal understanding and relationship between different Syrian communities.

Now I will move on to the challenges facing the Syrian opposition. In fact, the Syrian opposition has multi-layered challenges. First, there is the challenge the regime faces. The regime will not accept any kind of compromise with the opposition. It keeps on pressuring the opposition inside and outside of Syria. Most of the opposition members in Syria are in prison now and are being tortured. Many of them have disappeared. We do not know what happened to the opposition leader called Abdul Aziz Kheyer. He is a peaceful non-violent politician, and from the Alawi community. So he is from the community that the regime claims to be defending. We do not know anything about Khalil Maatouk, the leading human rights activist and lawyer, kidnapped last year. He had been in a very critical medical health situation. He is Christian, again from a minority that the regime pretends to be protecting from the Islamist fundamentalists Sunni groups. We do not know anything about Yahya Shurbaji who was arrested in 2011 because he had led the campaign to present water and roses to the soldiers who were besieging his town Darya. He and a group of young women and men went to these soldiers in summer time, offering cold water and roses for every-

one. He was arrested and we have not heard anything of him since then. These are mere examples to show that the regime does not differentiate between Sunnis like Yahya or Christians like Khalil or Alawis like Abdul Aziz. There are other examples, examples of Druzes, Ismailis and Kurdish minorities or communities in Syria. This is the major challenge in front of the opposition. And the opposition has to find a way to solve it.

Another challenge is the opposition itself. As you all know it is fragmented, divided and unfortunately is driven by the sense of competition rather than the sense of what is good for the entire nation. So both the internal opposition and the external opposition are divided. The internal opposition is divided among groups. We have the National Coordination Commission on the one hand while on the other, we have the Building the State current. In addition, we have groups that are part of the regime but pretend as if they are part of the opposition, which is actually quite a unique case. In every part of the world, if you are in the government you are part of the government. So you cannot be in the government and opposition at the same time except in Syria. We have figures like Qadri Jamil who is the deputy of the Prime Minister but who also portrays himself as a member of the opposition.

The external opposition is also divided. On the one hand, we have the National Coalition. On the other, we have the Syrian National Council, which is part of the National Coalition but has a different platform, a different agenda. The Commission itself has wings and bits and parts put together and do not speak in unison. In a recent meeting I spoke with the Coalition leaders. Unfortunately every single leader spoke about everybody else. So it's only me, so it's only "I" while talking about the situation in Syria. It's only "me" who has the magic solution for the Syrian problem.

There is also the third challenge between the opposition and the radical Islamist groups that were imported from outside the country and now they are recruiting big numbers of the opposition groups, members, and fighters because they have the money. For some reason they have an under the table agreement with the regime that they will not fight with each other. So the regime launches scud missile from the countryside of Damascus to Aleppo, Ar-Raqqah or Deir Ez-zor and hits exactly the target it wants to hit. But it never hits any location where Daesh, the Islamic state in Iraq and Al-Sham is located. Two weeks ago, the regime's airplanes flew over Al-Raqqah and devastated Al Kuhn where school children were learning and just a couple hundred meters away there was the headquarter of the ISIS, this Islamic radical group and it was never damaged. These groups do not fight the regime but they fight with other opposition groups. Two days

ago Daesh killed six military leaders of another Islamist group, a moderate Islamist group. In other cases they do things that are simply illogical. For instance, in a small town of Northern Aleppo they took the civil registries where marriages and newborn babies are registered. They took them and threw them in the garbage. They just wanted to be in the media. They just wanted to scare other people.

The fourth challenge is between the opposition and the people. The people in Syria, particularly elderly people like myself started to feel depressed, despaired, tired, exhausted, disgusted, whatever term that comes to your mind because of the continuous, everlasting fighting between whichever parties are fighting in Syria. We believe that we took the streets in order to achieve certain goals and these goals are now further away from us than they were in March 2011.

Then there are the regional challenges. We have the involvement of regional powers. Turkey has a certain agenda in Syria and Saudi Arabia has a certain agenda, and Qatar has a totally different agenda. We can see clearly how the Saudis and Qataris for instance fight in Syria. We can also see how the Americans and Russians fight in Syria. We can see how Iran and Saudi Arabia fight in Syria. We can see how Sunnis and Shia fight in Syria. On top of that, we have a lenient international position towards Syria. No one in Syria understands why for example, the US administration or the Western governments have turned their back on the Syrian people. And they are now very happy with their victory that they have deprived the Syrian regime of its chemical weapons.

This is the situation and these are the challenges. No military solution is feasible. There is no way the Syrian people can achieve victory against Bashar al-Assad. If the military action continues, the war will be solely between Bashar al-Assad and Daesh and we as the ordinary people will be victims on both sides. I, for example left the country because of a direct threat from the Muhabarat, from the security agencies last year. I cannot go to Damascus. But now I cannot go even to Aleppo, which is supposed to be a liberated area because I will be targeted by Daesh. No political solution is feasible. We do not see any political solution on the horizon.

We have different positions vis-à-vis Geneva, whether we should go or not, and two days ago the Coalition decided to go but under certain preconditions that no one ever really understood because they change from one day to the next. On the other hand, we cannot afford not to go to Geneva. We are also not optimistic about obtaining anything from Geneva. What is the solution then?

I believe that we in Syria need a miracle and this miracle unfortunately cannot and will not come from inside the country. We are incapable of such a miracle because of ourselves and the regional interventions, the international interventions and because of the pressure by Saudis, Qatar and Turkey and the two sides in Lebanon, and in addition to that the Russians, Iranians and Iraq, the US etc. So we are not capable of coming up with a solution from inside Syria. Whether with the UN or outside the UN the international community has to come up with a solution and has to find a way in order to impose that solution on both sides. Otherwise Syria will turn out to be the loser. If that happens, it is not only Syria that will be affected. I am really surprised and I cannot understand and I wish somebody here would help me understand why it is in the interest of Israel to turn Syria into a loser country. How will this be in the interest of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey or Europe? Who will stop the death boats crossing from the Mediterranean to Europe? Who will stop the smuggling that has become a big business in Turkey of which the Turks know better than all of us? Who will stop the smuggling business from Turkey to Greece? The Syrian person now sells him or herself or his family for a couple of thousand dollars. They work day and night and they borrow those or sometimes those steal that in order to pay it to the smuggling person who will take them to Europe, to Greece. At the end of the day no one will be in peace, if Syria fails.

From the Uprising to a Civil War: Is there a way out?

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I am also pessimistic about the Syrian crisis, and I do not think anything will come from the international community. The international community is entirely incapable regarding this issue. Whatever comes will come from within Syria; the internal course will be the predominant course. Different members of the international community have tried to influence events, but the internal array will be the major factor. We are dealing here with a militarized situation. In North African countries at least there is talk about constitutions and political processes, which might have been a possibility at an earlier stage in Syria, but cannot be conceived at present. We are in a completely different arena here. Unfortunately, the responsibility to protect died in Libya. And that is due to Russia and China feeling that the West got away with things that it should not get away with, which is not going to happen again. Geneva II cannot produce a serious compromise and the behaviour of the external powers will be a continuation of what we have seen. There is no point in discussing direct Western intervention. It is not going to happen. I just want to deal with where the evolution may be heading in realistic terms and what I see is very pessimistic I am afraid. I believe there will be an end as the natural course of events. It will probably involve uprooting the Assad family, but the process is going to be a very prolonged, meandering, and destructive one.

The opposition has been from the peripheries of Syria, which some people highlight to denigrate or downgrade the phenomenon. What I would like to emphasize is that these peripheries are big peripheries, the large provincial towns, the suburbs of Damascus and most of rural Syria. When you add those so-called peripheries together, they easily make a majority of the population of Syria. This is the bulk of Sunni Arab Syria. The regime insisted on shooting down protestors, mocking them in speeches, and offering no serious reform. As Bashar al-Assad's ally Vladimir Putin himself has acknowledged, this is where it all evolved from to the point we are at now. The human rights reports (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the UN Human Rights Commission) after three months of the protests were unanimous and absolute in putting the exclusive responsibility on the regime for the atrocious crimes against humanity that have been committed.

The regime's behaviour seemed clearly oriented to provoke sectarian breakdown and inflame Sunni radicalism. Sectarian sensitivity and Sunni reli-

gious assertion were both latent in the Syrian structure, but the regime worked relentlessly to make the latent actual. Why would the regime do this? The answer is easy. To justify the maximum use of force, to legitimize the regime's narrative of fighting "terrorists" and fanatics to the outside world and to keep the minorities caged in their camp. Of course we need documentation of such sectarian thinking. One significant item is the transcript of the April 2007 meeting between Bashar al-Assad and the UN Secretary General in Damascus. Here Bashar al-Assad raises the threat of a Sunni-Shia breakdown across the Middle East – "from the Caspian to the Mediterranean" no less – if he were faced with a UN Chapter 7 implementation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. So he was already thinking in terms of a Sunni-Shia breakdown back in 2007.

Around July/August 2011 the armed resistance began after four months of almost entirely unarmed protests. Week after week, protestors were indiscriminately fired upon and sooner or later there was bound to be an armed reaction, as the regime plainly calculated and very much desired. Remembering this critical period is important for judging the pros and cons of having the regime as part of any settlement/negotiation. Can the source of the problem be part of its solution? Given its brutality, its will for absolute power, and its refusal to acknowledge that opposition or alternative possibilities for Syria might even exist, can it ever be realistic to conceive the regime and the ruling family clique accepting notions of pluralism and partnership? Is there anything other than simply a fight to the finish?

Let us move on to the position of the Obama administration. The US in some respects have chosen to be absent from the scene except for humanitarian aid to the vast scene of refugees and devastation, which the US effectively chooses to treat as a natural disaster that does not have human agency. Yes, they are putting hundreds of millions of dollar into relief and in some sense, disgracing the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, but otherwise there is no longer a tendency to engage seriously with this crisis. We have to take that as a given. So we have to forget about humanitarian corridors, no-fly zones and safe zones, unless of course Turkey, for example, chooses to implement some limited version of such measures on its own. So on the opposition side the main external input has been from Arab oil principalities to Salafis and Jihadists. Elements in Kuwait and Qatar have buttressed the most vicious Jihadist groups, thereby assisting the Syrian regime, helping its narrative and giving the main part of the opposition a second enemy. On the other hand, the Saudi monarchy has tried to exert a counter-weight, channelling weaponry to serious opposition armed factions in southern Syria.

On the regime's side we can say that there has been an absolute Iranian determination to keep this apparatus afloat. It is a core strategic interest of Iran. This is Iran's westward extension in the Mediterranean for whatever reason they have. It is the Iranian regime's connection with the Shi'ite Hezbollah in Lebanon, Teheran's strategic outlier in the heart of the Arab World. Russia is there as well of course, but I believe it is the Iranian position that is the decisive one in backing the regime. The Iranian input exceeds that of anyone else on any side, including budgetary subventions of billions of dollars annually, a continuous flow of military expertise and supplies and mobilization of Shi'ite cannon fodder for Bashar al-Assad from Lebanon and Iraq. It raises the question whether some sort of victory of the regime is at some point the most likely outcome. Certainly Iran and Russia will only accept arrangements where the regime has the upper hand no matter what the transition process entails. According to the track record we have of the regime's rigidity and abuses, if it has the upper hand it will only seek to destroy any opposition "partner."

For the *longue durée*, neither a Jihadist state nor a lasting victory of the regime is the most likely outcome. The Jihadists have no political coherence, no capacity to manage a state and there is a good chance they will begin to deflate as soon as their main stimulus – the violence and manipulation of the Syrian regime – is removed. The danger, however, is the possibility that the suffering and despair of Syria's Sunni Arabs is prolonged to the point of engendering deeply entrenched radicalization in the younger generation. The consequences will be the responsibility of the West and the international community. As for the regime, I don't see it seriously winning either. It is visibly overstretched and has not been able to deal a conclusive blow to its fragmented and poorly armed opponents. Still, it has the firepower and mercenary support to keep it going in a rounded-out core zone into the foreseeable future from Damascus to Homs to the coast.

What about Geneva II and the political solution? Assuming that the external powers are neither willing nor able to compel the local parties, is there a political solution that is not preceded by a decisive military shift? I believe the answer is negative. Is there a new game that does not entail a negotiated settlement? I believe the answer is affirmative. That is probably where we are heading. Situations in Lebanon, Algeria and Libya ended effectively with military solutions. I think there are differences compared to Syria, but these do not actually look good for the Syrian situation. The big difference between Lebanon and Syria is that in Lebanon, the regime was not a party in the war. So the Lebanese could fall back on what was a submerged state structure in the 1990s, a structure that still had legitimacy amongst the bulk

of the population. In Syria we do not have this situation. The state machinery itself is a party to this conflict. The big difference between Algeria and Syria is that the regime's position in Algeria in the 1990s was stronger than the regime's position in Syria. The Algerian regime did not have to lean on an entity like Hezbollah to hold itself up and to achieve victory. The visible evidence into the foreseeable future is that there is no basis for a compromise between the Syrian regime and the opposition forces. One fallacy in Geneva II is the idea that you can disaggregate the regime. The Americans are pushing the concept of "put Bashar al-Assad aside but bring elements in the regime into a settlement". You cannot disconnect Bashar al-Assad from the rest of the regime. He and his security apparatus will make sure that anyone who offends any of their tight red lines will disappear promptly. So the notion of bringing parts of the regime into a settlement is a fantasy. There is the idea that when conditions of exhaustion reach a certain point, the diplomats can pull off a convergence. The problem is that the real world characteristics of both the regime and opposition do not lend themselves to this sort of outcome.

I would like to finish with two points. First, the psychology of the ruling clique and the personality of Bashar al-Assad are very significant and are not given sufficient emphasis when looking at this crisis. Sometimes in history, personality becomes a decisive factor. With Bashar, we are talking about a man who displays a patronizing arrogance that no-one can dent, a rigid ideological streak and a gambling tendency, as well as a disturbing disconnect from the fate of the Syrian people. His choices through mid-2011 determined the trajectory of the crisis. The whole ruling circle, including Bashar, cannot conceive any Syria beyond itself. It resembles how the most extreme Islamists not admitting any world-view apart from its own. It also has the survival imperative and its sense of entitlement to power and plunder. If it wins it will continue as before, and down the track there will be another explosion. Its clear goal is the shattering and crushing – the evisceration – of the Sunni Arab majority. This regime can only reap the permanent, sullen, deep hatred of the majority of Syrians. This is what the continuation of Bashar al-Assad will mean. Second, the regime has a disadvantage of manpower that will probably count decisively against it in the end. On the one hand, there is still a segment of the Sunni Arab population in loyalist areas that the regime can overawe and, thanks to Iran, pay-off. Also, opposition isolation and fratricide may threaten the opposition's support base. On the other hand, the regime really has only the Alawite one-eighth of Syria as a serious military mobilization reservoir for the rump of the regular army and the paramilitary auxiliaries. The Christians and whatever cowed Sunnis

the regime has in its pockets have negligible military value. The youth bulge – poor, desperate, and ferocious – that the opposition has on its side is much bigger than that of the regime. In the long run, Hezbollah and Iran will not likely be able to fill the gap.

The Gulf: Is there a common policy?

Luciano Zaccara

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Concerning the Gulf and whether there could be a common foreign policy agenda, I think it would be apt to add Iran into the equation. It is impossible to understand the foreign policy of GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries towards Syria without analysing Iran. So the answer to this question is that there is no common policy among GCC countries because of their conflicting interests regarding Syria. Perhaps the only common element is the perceived threat that Iran's involvement in Syria represents for the GCC states. I also include Iran because I assume that the main actors in Syria are Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Because they have their own conflicting interests and agendas, I think it is very difficult to see the end of this problematic situation in Syria.

First of all, when comparing the policies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar towards the Syria conflict, we have to remember that there is a history of confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Qatar since Sheikh Hamad's succession to power in Qatar in 1995. They previously harboured different approaches to regional politics. However since 2008, the situation changed. Before, there were diplomatic problems between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, such as the Saudi support to the deposed Sheikh, father of Hamad, and a border issue that was not solved until very recently. In 2008 there were several meetings between high-level officials, members of both royal families in which they decided to reduce the tension between Saudi and Qatar. Paradoxically, the son of Hamad, the current Sheikh of Qatar, played a significant role in this rapprochement between two countries. Consequently, it is difficult to explain how these changes affected the Qatari foreign policy since the Arab Spring started. On the one hand Qatar had relatively good relations with Iran even during the period of Ahmadinejad, which is considered as a very problematic period in Iran-GCC relations. You will recall that Sheikh Hamad of Qatar invited Ahmadinejad to Qatar for the first time to a GCC meeting in December 2007.

So what happened when the Arab Spring started? The Arab Spring represented both internal and external challenges to all the actors including these three major regional actors. But the way in which these countries reacted to these challenges differed a bit. On the one hand Qatar has been more proactive, though some scholars call this policy as more aggressive

and assertive, mainly because Qatar was the only GCC country that did not have any internal constraint in implementing an active foreign policy due to reduced internal contestation. Qatar was the only country that did not suffer from any anti-governmental demonstration in the first year of the Arab Spring. As a result, Qatar was able to directly engage in regime changes in Tunisia and Libya as the UAE did too. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was more cautious due to its own problematic internal situation in the Eastern provinces and also to its reluctance to accept a drastic change in the regional status quo. So Saudi Arabia had a more passive or defensive role, although both Saudi Arabia and Qatar agreed in supporting the Khalifa ruler in Bahrain. Both also sought to topple the Assad regime in Syria. However the way in which these actors, with the addition of the UAE, reacted to this situation in Bahrain and in Syria differed also. While Saudi Arabia and the Emirates sent troops to Bahrain, Qatar refrained to do so, although they showed their support to the Bahraini Khalifa ruler.

On the other hand there was the Syria issue. Qatar systematically supported the Muslim Brotherhood, which conflicted the government in Saudi Arabia, as well as it did it in Egypt by supporting the Mursi government. The Emirates also clashed with Qatar. The Emirates is another actor that wants to have a leading role in the region. It is rather unknown fact, but a Qatari citizen alleged to be a member of the Brotherhood is in jail and the trial is presently going on in the Emirates. Even though the two countries were traditional allies in the GCC, since the Arab Spring their relationship suffered from their differing support to the Brotherhood among other bilateral issues. While Qatar does not have any problem with the Brotherhood -in fact there is a tacit support to one of their most outspoken preachers, al-Qaradawi, through his sermons on Al Jazeera- on the other hand, Emirates is using the Brotherhood as an excuse to chase and eliminate any kind of internal opposition. This is the case of the trial where more than one hundred activists are accused of being members of the Brotherhood. As a result, the foreign policy initiatives are affected by the internal policies of both these states.

We have to bear in mind that the experiment of Qatari support to Mursi was not very successful because the people in Qatar started to worry about the aggressive foreign policy and the unconditional support to the Muslim Brotherhood by many countries, without having a clear idea of the benefits that such a support may bring. In Syria, Saudi Arabia supports different groups inside the opposition to the Assad government. Although there is a lot of controversy surrounding the arms support and financial aid to different groups inside the rebel front really exist or not, there are several reports that provide substantial evidence of this support.

What is interesting here is to realize that while Saudi Arabia was trying to be the most moderate country in the GCC by trying to preserve the status quo, on the other hand Iran was also supporting the Bashar al-Assad government to maintain the status quo in the region. Moreover, Qatar was the main actor in the region and shifted its earlier diplomatic policy to a more interventionist policy in regional conflicts in order to accelerate changes at the regional level. Qatar tried to align itself with the policy of democracy promotion and human rights protection by promoting the no-fly zone in Libya and also supporting the legal process in Egypt, which finally gave Mursi the leadership, and the Muslim Brotherhood the electoral victory. Qatar did the same in Syria. This “regime change” oriented foreign policy in Qatar represented a drastic shift from its previous policy but also mainly from its position towards the Syrian government. We have to bear in mind that al-Assad and Sheikh Hamad visited each other several times before the Arab Spring started, and that the Qatari investment in the Syrian economy was very important for the Syrian economy in the last decade. Both countries were considered a counterbalance against the axis formed by Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and UAE. We have to recognize that Qatar changed its foreign policy drastically based on the conditions available after the Arab Spring. Qatar was the only country that had no internal constraints. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran had internal constraints to reply to the Arab Spring.

Recently we have witnessed two big changes in Iran and Saudi Arabia. This summer, the head of state of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad, was succeeded by his son Tamim, after a smooth and long planned generational transition. Although since the beginning, his foreign policy demonstrated a change towards a more low profile approach, it is unlikely to be continued in the future in the same way. Moreover, we must also consider Tamim’s necessity to reassert his legitimacy as a strong regional leader. Qatar realized that they were playing a big game and the requirements of the game went far beyond the capabilities they possessed prior to Tamim’s arrival to power. Also, it seems that even before al-Tamim took office, Sheikh Hamad reduced the profile/visibility of Qatar’s involvement in the Syrian conflict. However, when Tamim appointed the former deputy of the Foreign Minister as his new head of Qatari diplomacy, it seems that no drastic change would be seen, although less assertiveness is expected in the coming months at least. From the GCC side, the leading role in the Syrian case was allocated to Saudi Arabia, reducing the Qatari role. I think this is a reflection of the failure in supporting Mursi’s government in Egypt. This relative withdrawal on the Qatari side was also implemented to reduce the reaction of the Qatari population. There is a survey conducted by an institution in Qatar in which

70% of the young population was against the active foreign policy implemented by Qatar. These opinions caused concern and debate among the Qatari ruling elite.

On the other hand there is also a change in one of the countries of this triangle represented by Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. In the summer of 2013, Rohani was elected as the president in Iran. I have to add that during the last two years of Ahmadinejad's presidency, there was no full consensus in Iran on their foreign policy toward Syria. Even the interviews that Ahmadinejad gave at the time showed that it would be possible to talk about a future without Assad. Although the president mentioned it, the most conservative factions would never accept it. But from that point of view, inside the Iranian regime there was also an agreement to a certain degree on the possibility of accepting a political solution without Assad. This is something that may be discussed in Geneva. The change of presidents in Iran did not change the main goal, namely Iran's pursuit to regain the influence lost in the beginning of the Arab Spring. Iran could neither influence the events taking place in Bahrain or in Egypt, nor prevent Saudi involvement in Bahrain and Syria. The success in preventing the fall of the Assad regime was not due to the active Iranian policy in Syria, but due to the US' willingness to accept the deal on chemical weapons and the Russian support to Assad. This deal gave enough room for a makeover in Iran, to start nuclear negotiations and to accept a new deal on inspections in nuclear facilities in Iran.

So I do not want to be optimistic about this picture. I do not think a political solution is possible. However, the three countries involved in the Syrian situation may coordinate agendas to guarantee saving their own faces in Syria.

Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Region: Change and Continuities

Understanding Turkey's Policy towards Egypt

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The Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey used to criticize or blame the former administrations for being exclusionist in their approach to foreign policy in the Middle East. In this presentation I would like to question whether or not AKP has also become an exclusionist actor in its approach to the Middle East, particularly with respect to the last couple of years.

Up until the Arab Uprisings, Turkey, particularly under the AKP government, had been pursuing a truly inclusive and constructive approach to foreign policy not only towards the Middle Eastern countries but also towards all her neighboring countries. Consequently, Turkey, being able to speak with both Western and Eastern actors simultaneously began to positively interact with every single actor in the region such as the countries in which there is a Sunni or Shia majority at the same time, thereby creating a multidimensional approach. This newly emerging balancing power of Turkey was not limited to interstate relations but also helped to build links with different actors within states.

This proactive understanding of foreign policy has turned Turkey into one of the most important actors of the region. In other words, the application of this approach, which distances itself from ideological affiliations and prioritizes economic interests in establishing dialogue, has been a positive aspect of Turkey's approach to foreign policy. As a result Turkey has become a figure that could be taken as a model for different actors in the Arab World such as the Islamists, secularists and others.

When the Arab Uprisings started, Turkey seemed like it could take advantage of the political transformations in the Arab world. Yet, ironically in time Turkey has turned out to be the country facing the biggest challenges that have emerged due to the turmoil in the Arab world.

In fact one could state that in 3 years' time, the so-called Arab spring has brought about serious challenges and disturbances to Turkish foreign policy. Due to the foreign policy rhetoric pursued during and subsequent to the Arab spring, Turkey has, in certain cases as in Syria become a country

that cannot deliver its promises, while in other cases such as in Egypt it has been depicted as a country that follows an exclusionist policy or that pursues a strategy that doesn't reflect the realities of that country, often citing Turkey's approach following the post-revolutionary elections as evidence. One could contend that both situations arose due to Turkey's inability to accurately assess its own position, its abilities and the realities in the region. So these policies conflicted with Turkey's capacity and understanding in foreign policy.

Here in this presentation I mainly focus on Egypt and try to deliver a reflection of how Turkey is perceived in Egypt. I have conducted more than 30 interviews with the Egyptian elite in January 2013 including scholars, politicians, journalists and activists from different ideologies. I tried to capture the changing dynamics of how Turkey is now perceived. The interviews I conducted took place before the coup, thus it was interesting to observe that Turkey may become an obsolete loser in the region if a coup were to take place, which in the end, did occur with my premonition coming true, at least in the case of Egypt. I will begin by briefly giving you the main approaches to Turkey within the Egyptian elite.

The interviews indicate five different approaches towards Turkey among the Egyptian elite. Before and during the Arab Uprising, Turkey's approach was welcomed by most of the political fractions in Egypt. After the revolution though, this attitude has changed suddenly and completely towards another pole. What are these different approaches towards Turkey?

The first group is the Islamists as an organized movement, or a political formation. It is possible to state that this tendency views Turkey and particularly the present government more in the light of what it defines as the Turkish Political Islam Movement. This tendency could be separated into two groups: The first group consists of leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement who still evaluate Turkey through their relations with Necmettin Erbakan. This older generation still has the Erbakan period or Erbakan's ideology in mind when evaluating Turkey and even the JDP.

On the other side we have the second group, composed of the younger generation in the Muslim Brotherhood. The second group looks at AKP as a party that has drawn lessons from mistakes committed during Erbakan's era, and they think that they can make use of AKP's experience.

Generally speaking then, we can assume that the tendency of both groups is to approach Turkey positively and support it, due to a shared ideology. Yet, at this point, we can also observe about a gap between young generation and the old leadership cadres within the MB. The fault lines between

the two generations have already emerged at certain points and whenever pressure is applied on the young generation, separations from the MB has occurred. We can say that the young generations form a parallelism between the old generation filling the leadership cadres and Erbakan's line. We can also say that the leadership cadre continues to see AKP's experience as an Islamist political attempt. In this sense, the young generations and others taking an alternative stance, continue to expect that they can get ample support from Ankara due to the ideological position they share. However, Ahmed Ben, a name that left the MB says that, "Mursi is perceived to be continuing Erbakan's line. Erdoğan separated from Erbakan yet supports Mursi. This is perceived in Egypt as a step back." So we can easily see that among the Islamist circles there are different approaches to Turkey. Even the older generation of the Muslim Brotherhood does not have a monolithic approach either. There is the memory of Erdoğan's speech focusing on secularism, which took heavy criticism from the older generation of the Muslim Brotherhood. So we are not talking about a monolithic approach from the Islamists towards the Turkish Islamists, or AKP for that matter.

The second group possibly represents Islamist nationalists. Here, I am referring to individuals like Tariq al-Bishri and Mohamad Imara. They come from a leftist background but now bear a huge influence among Islamist circles. They have the tendency to view Turkey generally from a civilizational or strategic perspective. Their priorities lie in technical and economic cooperation between Turkey and Egypt. They are also aware of the fact that there are different factions within the Egyptian political scene. So their argument also follows that we have to take all these actors into account simultaneously.

The third tendency could be summarized by the perception of civilian actors who are traditionally critical of the Islamists. For instance Tareq al-Khuly, one of the leaders of the 6th April movement, in an interview with me, criticized the Muslim Brotherhood. He continued that the Turkish experience is regarded as an Islamist tendency/movement by the Muslim Brotherhood and they are making advertisements of AKP/JDP in Egypt as an Islamist party. On the other hand, some fractions that position themselves within this tendency also emphasize that Turkey too is inclined to be in similar lines with the MB. For instance Fouad Es Sayyed, one of the moderate Islamists or liberals said to me that: "I came together with the Turkish ambassador in Egypt and told him that it was wrong to only support MB", In a similar way, Es-Sayyed also stated that "The rising liberal powers has not yet demonstrated themselves well, but they will get to an important power position in

the ensuing period. For that reason, Turkey should notice the regional role that it has in the region as a lighthouse for the secular, Islamist and democratic model that does not contradict with the international parameters of modernity.”

So there is a tendency in Egypt to view Turkey as only focusing on the Muslim Brotherhood. I am not concluding that this is the final statement on the matter but in the end, this is one way in which Turkey's perceived. Another person from the Baradei group, Ahmed Zahran, who had an active political life in the aftermath of the revolution and then withdrew from politics, said to me that Erdoğan was welcomed for his stance after the revolution and even some anti-MB groups stated that the MB should take Erdoğan and his party as a model. However, Zahran remarks that this perception has changed: “AK party could no longer fathom what was happening in the country after it started to align itself with one group. For that reason, it lost the consideration and sympathy of many secular and liberal groups.” To put it in another way, the perception that Turkey puts emphasis on Islamist rhetoric gave way to claims that other main segments of Egyptian society were excluded. Mustapha Al-Labbad for instance, argues that Turkey's emphasis on political Islam has resulted in a decrease in the support to Turkey given by the liberal, nationalist and leftist political segments in Egypt.

The fourth group consists of members of the military. Especially after the military coup, it became obvious that they are mostly against Turkey's position and have been criticizing the AKP government from the very beginning. They also blame Mursi for being so close to the AKP government.

The fifth group is composed of pragmatic statesmen such as Amr Musa. I conducted an interview with him and with some other statesmen. Amr Musa and similar politicians occupy an important place within Egyptian politics thanks to their power over the media and experience, even though they do not have widespread public support. It is possible to notice an emphasis on multi-layered communication in these pragmatic statesmen's approach towards Turkey-Egypt relations. While commenting on the future of the bilateral relations between the two countries, he makes the following statement:

“If the relations are maintained solely between leaders and governments, a successful or productive result can not be obtained. This is not a recipe for success. This is because this approach will only remain to be temporary, and will not be endorsed by people. On the other hand, relations that will be established by taking Egypt as a whole at the levels of both state and society will bring success.”

Let's analyze what went wrong for Turkey? Before the uprisings, Turkey's approach to the Middle East had been rather bold. Despite the general satisfaction and the gratitude towards Turkey, this transformation showed that the country is also experiencing a process whereby it needed to be more cautious. In fact, while things are going well, it is difficult to see the shortcomings; as the situation turns more complex, the possibility of encountering problems increases and the shortcomings turn into obstacles. Turkey was unable to assess what was really taking place in the Middle East. For a long time Turkey had put a distance between itself and the Middle East and even though they started to cooperate with the Middle Eastern countries in the AKP period, they could not solve the problem of capacity. We still have deficiencies and an emerging gap between expectations and capability. So the basis of our confidence, a national outcome of the attention that Turkey has received during the eight years of AKP mandate, has on the one hand increased the expectations but due to the lack of capabilities these rising expectations resulted in disappointment. There was also the possibility of repeating the mistakes of other governments who were previously been accused of being exclusionist by the AKP. They were blaming the previous governments in Turkish policy as being exclusionist towards the Middle East but now unfortunately AKP is also blamed for being exclusionist.

So why could Turkey not understand the reality in Egypt? I argue that Turkey could not understand who the main actors were in the Egyptian scene. When we look at the period prior to the revolution, the last ten years bore witness to lots of conflicts and rifts in the Egyptian context both within state institutions and society. We observe that there are lots of opposition groups and moreover, there are rifts and conflicts within state institutions, the army and the ruling party. For instance, during the elections in 2008-2010 there arose a conflict among the party circles. In 2002 rumors circulated that Gamal Mubarak was going to be the leader, succeeding Hosni Mubarak. So this also had a negative impact on the military and even on some other elites within the ruling party. We are not only talking about an Islamist political movement in Egypt before the uprisings. We are talking about different and unsatisfied elites and also opposition groups like the Kifaya movement. Additionally there were protests from within the judiciary who were demanding the full supervision of the electoral process. In 2008 there was the El-Mahalla El-Kubra protests and also the 6th of April movement. In 2010 the parliamentary elections were one of the main turning points. In essence there already were lots of problems before the uprisings. So assessing the period before the uprisings merely as a period of political Islamist movements is a mistake that Turkey made.

During the uprisings, beyond the debate on when the Brotherhood joined the process, the dominant movement during the 18 days of the uprisings showed the fact that Islamists, Coptic Christians, liberals, seculars were all on the streets. This was not a movement solely of the Muslim Brotherhood. We should also underline the fact that the military had a very important role in the Egyptian Revolution. It was their support that led to the outcome of the revolution. Nadia Mustafa, known for her Islamic affiliation, stated in an interview with me that without the support of the military they could not have successfully toppled Mubarak down. There are also lots of differences in the judiciary. We are talking about the military and the judiciary as the main actors. Turkey misunderstood what was really going on in Egypt during and after the uprisings. Turkey paid unnecessary attention to the Muslim Brotherhood, but they ignored the role of the army and other actors. Turkey also alienated many other groups that supported the revolution. I am not arguing that all these perceptions are realities, but I argue that if there exists such a perception, it is possible to conclude that Turkey is unsuccessful at managing these perceptions well. If these perceptions are based on realities, then we have a situation that does not comply with the macro-perspective of Turkish foreign policy, which claims to be constructive and inclusive.

What is New in Turkey's Foreign Policy?

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After looking at Turkey's Foreign Policy concerning the Middle East in the 2000's, I would argue that there have been two periods. The Arab Uprisings constitute a turning point in defining these periods. One can categorize Turkish Foreign Policy towards the region as policy during pre-Arab Uprisings and policy during post-Arab Uprisings. Now we are at a time when we are discussing whether we are entering yet another period in Turkey's Foreign Policy in the region, whether a third period is emerging and I will end my presentation by asking what could some of the characteristics of this third period be? The second point I would like to make is that throughout this period, Turkey's Foreign Policy has been influenced by structural constraints and opportunities in the region and by regional actors' constellations, as well as extra-regional actors policies towards this region. Thus, Turkey acted in a structural context that sometimes constrained its policies and sometimes provided opportunities. In addition to the structural context, AKP as an agency has been quite important in affecting Turkey's foreign policy, particularly the AKP's sensitivities, its worldview, how it defines itself as a political movement in Turkey's history, how it defines Turkey's identity, and thus how Turkey relates with the world particularly with the Middle East, have all been important in this regard. Thus, both structural factors and AKP as agency have been effective in determining foreign policy outcomes in these different periods. And finally, a third point is that we have seen a very strong articulation of domestic politics and foreign policy throughout this period. The relationship has been in both ways. Sometimes foreign policy was used to structure domestic politics in Turkey and vice versa.

Arab Uprisings came at a time when Turkey had deepened its engagement with the Arab world and did so especially since 2007. Turkey was very much engaged with the region diplomatically and talked about using soft power rather than hard power in its engagement with the region. Ankara became a third party in regional conflicts and even in some domestic conflicts such as in Lebanon. So Turkey tried to mediate all the conflicts in the region though not necessarily with success, but this showed the extent of its involvement with the region and its acceptance by regional actors. Economic relations, as has been widely documented, developed significantly. Visas were lifted with several countries. Just before the beginning of the Arab

Uprisings, Turkey was about to sign an agreement for a free trade zone in the Levant with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. As a result of these policies Turkey became quite popular in the region. For instance, a study that I conducted in 2010 on Arab elites' perceptions of Turkey as well as public opinion polls that were conducted by TESEV demonstrated Turkey's attractiveness in the region before the Arab Uprisings. What was interesting was that Turkey was attractive for the opposition in most of the Arab countries regardless of who the opposition was, liberals, Islamists or leftists. All these groups found something positive in Turkey's engagement with the region. Of course, the regimes were a bit more ambiguous. Nevertheless, for their specific strategic reasons - or for the Gulf States to balance Iran, for Syria to end its isolation or not to just rely on Iran - regional states also favoured Turkey's activism in the region. Thus, during this period there were opportunities for Turkey in the post-2003 Middle East structural context. The US influence was declining. There was a strategic vacuum in the region. Iran was rising; therefore other states were eager to get Turkey involved to balance the rising Iranian influence.

I believe AKP took this opportunity because it was in line with the way it was trying to build its own and Turkey's identity by focusing on the Ottoman past, on the importance of history, culture, active engagement with the region, and using this foreign policy to criticize the former foreign policy of Turkey, which was largely characterized by - especially ideational - disengagement with the Middle East. It was also useful to focus on soft power in foreign policy and decreasing the role of the military in foreign policy making. So the foreign policy served to certain purposes domestically as well. And that seem to be working on different levels for the AKP.

The Arab Uprisings changed most of this. It is rather ironic, because when the Arab Uprisings started Turkey mostly expected to be the possible winner of all. Looking back now, in two years Turkey has lost most of its lucrative economic relations with the region, began to experience crises in its relations with several regional countries including Syria and Egypt, and most significantly, so far it has failed to achieve its foreign policy objectives. So the impact of the Arab Uprisings is a rather curious case.

How has Turkey reacted to the Arab Uprisings? After a brief hesitation, Turkey reformulated its strategy towards the region and decided that it would construct itself as a pre-democracy actor. Democracy promotion would become part of its foreign policy agenda and basically it tried to differentiate itself from the other regional and extra-regional actors by consistently pushing the "democracy-promotion agenda". So it was decided that Turkey would be supporting the opposition movements. A sec-

ond strategy that came right after this was the decision to support the Muslim Brotherhood movements. Again, this was seen as strategically important because it was believed that the Muslim Brotherhood was going to win as a result of the Arab Uprisings. They were the most important actors everywhere, thus, it was hoped that Turkey would expand its influence via its relations with parties of the Muslim Brotherhood. Of course there were other underlying factors beyond strategic calculations. After all, the National View Movement, which AKP had come from, historically had ties with the Muslim Brotherhood movements. For instance, their representatives used to be invited to the party congresses of the National View parties. Historically there have been some institutional and individual links as well. Overall, focusing on the Muslim Brotherhood was thought to be a good strategy by the government.

When the Syrian crisis started, things became much more complicated. Yet as an extension of this general strategy Turkey eventually got involved in the Syrian crisis. The strategic calculation was that Turkey should be proactive and should be involved deeply in this. The Iraqi experience after 2003, where Turkey was outside of the game for a long time, probably also affected the response. So the government clearly wanted to be proactive. In fact, this involvement was really unprecedented. When you look at Turkey's foreign policy history, even during the AKP period, this was unprecedented. Turkey actively not only supported the opposition but also helped to organize the opposition, even the military wing. This created a lot of controversy in Turkey. This was a novel aspect of Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey also tried to internationalize this issue, as can be seen in the Friends of Syria initiative.

There were strategic calculations. It was thought that there was a structural opportunity emerging in the region. The expectation was that through this kind of engagement Turkey could further develop its regional power status, could get ahead of other regional powers in the regional game, and also improve relations with the EU and the US as a result of its role in the Arab Uprisings. Moreover, in Syria there were also direct interests. Thus, basically this was seen as a structural opportunity that the government wanted to exploit.

What about AKP? Was it just about structural or strategic concerns? Or was there something about how AKP defines itself and domestic politics? I think there were some implications for the domestic politics as well. AKP tried to reconstruct itself through external policy internally and internationally as a pro-democracy actor. This came at a time when AKP's democratic credentials were increasingly questioned. There were accusations both within and without about increasing authoritarianism of the AKP government and so

this was seen as an opportunity to reconstruct AKP as a pro-democracy actor. I think this was one of the objectives.

One of the mistakes was the ideological reading of the Arab Uprisings. This became very clear in the Egyptian case. The reading was through AKP's own reading of Turkey's history with Islamists and what happened to them, and employed very broad categories of Islamists versus seculars in trying to understand what was happening in Egypt in a way that hindered seeing nuances within both groups. Some of the analyses that came out of the circles close to AKP were very surprising. One asks whether the analysis is about Egypt or about Turkey itself. For instance, there was no mention of the fact that the seculars were not in opposition to Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution, which states that Sharia was one of the sources of the Egyptian political system. The debate in Turkey was transplanted to Egypt. Thus, the division between domestic and foreign policy was completely blurred at that time. The Egyptian case helped AKP to consolidate its constituency.

It is really interesting to see how domestic polarizations influence public opinion on foreign policy. Initially when the Syrian crisis erupted, all public opinion polls showed that there was not much support for AKP's policy towards Syria. Most of the polls showed about 30% support to the government's foreign policy towards Syria which meant that many voters who normally support AKP, - AKP did get 50% of the votes after all - did not support AKP's Syria policy. But this changed recently because of this consolidation of the constituency. Basically reframing the issues through domestic policy and domestic polarization created more support to AKP's policy in Syria. This shows the linkages with the domestic politics.

Despite all these benefits of the new policy soon it became clear that this policy faces important challenges. In Syria it is clear that Turkey has not been able to achieve its foreign policy objectives. The stalemate situation is continuing in Syria and Assad is still in power. Moreover, the refugee issue has become a big problem for Turkey. There have also been negative economic consequences. The Syrian crisis has also affected the fault lines between the Alawis and Sunnis in Turkey and in some cities has affected the very social fabric of Turkey. The instabilities right across the border of Turkey have already spilled over several times. So it has been quite detrimental. On the other hand, Turkey's position towards the coup meant that Turkish-Egyptian relations are in crisis. There is no Egyptian Ambassador in Ankara right now. And this is from a position where Turkey and Egypt were talking about a strategic partnership just before what happened in Egypt. So again there are important problems there.

Thus increasingly it became obvious that this foreign policy was unable to achieve its objectives and was criticized heavily both domestically and internationally. One of the consequences of this policy was that Turkey was cornered in being a part of the fragmentation in the region, which was not the case before. One of the strengths of the Turkish foreign policy before was locating Turkey above regional fragmentation and fault lines whereas in the post-Arab Uprising period, whether it wanted or not, Turkey was dragged into this fragmentation and was increasingly seen as a part of what is called the Sunni block. So this was also one of the consequences.

Recently there are signs that Turkey maybe slightly shifting its foreign policy. The first example is the opening to the Maliki government in Iraq. The Foreign Minister was recently in Baghdad, and he also visited Najaf and gave messages that Turkey is not acting on a sectarian basis in its foreign policy. Moreover, some sort of rapprochement with Iran was also uttered. The coming of Ruhani to power provided an opportunity for that. President Gül said that they are talking to Israel behind close doors. We may eventually expect some kind of an opening to Egypt as well. So I think we entered a period where Turkey is trying to rebuild its relationships with the regional actors and trying to develop better relations with the region. Of course, the changing regional context has facilitated this, along with the criticism, US-Iranian talks and US-Russia understanding over Syria, contributing to the change in the regional constellation. Even though this points to a shift in Turkish foreign policy towards the region one should not expect an easy turn to a pre-Arab Uprising era. I would argue that Turkey's involvement in this new period with the region would be less extensive. Turkey will mostly focus on its immediate neighbourhood, mostly coloured with the Kurdish issue and how it is going to play out, rather than reaching out to the entire Middle East, and will focus on domestic implications of this issue, putting aside its previous aim of trying to transform the region. So it would be a more limited engagement at least in the medium term in this new period.

Regional Actors and Issues

Changing Iran in a Changing Region: What are its possible roles?

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The issue of change in Iran is exciting and today I want to talk about the new political discourse inside Iran. I would like to mention three points: First, there is the characteristic of the new way of politics inside Iran, namely, the pragmatic centrist way. Then I would like to turn to the implications of this discourse on Iran's foreign policy. Lastly, I would like to touch upon some implications of this new discourse on Iran's international relations.

Dr. Rouhani has come to power as a kind of pragmatic centrist President. He is different because he tries to generate a third way of doing politics inside Iran. There are two traditional and major political figures and trends in Iran: the conservative principlist and the moderate reformist. Principlist discourse relies on believing in preserving the ideals of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, trying to connect with the ideological and traditional part of the Iranian society. They would like to embed ideology and the ideas of the Islamic Revolution inside Iran's foreign policy. The second discourse is one of the Moderate Reformist, which aims to connect Iran with modernity, trying to expand Iran's interactions with the international community and the West. The first discourse is more focused on the traditional-ideological aspect of politics. The second discourse is more focused on modernity and political reform. These two trends have shaped Iranian domestic politics and subsequently Iran's foreign policy for a long time. Each has tried to impose themselves on each other and Iran's power structure but neither has ever been completely successful. And that brought the third current discourse in Iran's domestic politics, namely the pragmatic centrist position.

Dr. Hassan Rouhani represents this new discourse. Dr. Rouhani is a special person in terms of personality. He is different from the previous president of Iran. He has been part of a think-tank for many years. I had the privilege to work with him for a long time at the Center for Strategic Research. At that time he had the chance to bring together different aspects of Iran's intelligentsia and moderate academics in order to develop this third way of politics. This third way of politics is focused on institutionalizing a win-win situation in domestic politics and in conduct regarding foreign policy. He be-

believes in political reform of course but not in the way that the reformists put it, that is, very quickly. He would like to instigate reform slowly, in a step-by-step approach. Dr Rouhani knows very well how the conservative sections of Iranian society will react, as it happened at the time of President Khatami who couldn't instill much moderateness into Iranian foreign policy, due to the fact that the conservatives of Iranian society weren't happy with the way he wanted to open up relations with the international community and especially with the United States. That was a rather unsuccessful attempt of its time, which functioned as a learning outcome for Dr Rouhani in developing the new approach. He is trying to balance the domestic forces so that he can go ahead with his new approach in the conduct of foreign policy. He has already worked in the Iranian Parliament, and was elected 2 or 3 times as an MP. He was the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Council, with close connections with security and political forces in Iran. This is important because it indicates his familiarity with the Iranian political system.

Some might ask what has changed in Iran. I would say that this is a new kind of political development because this president knows how to deal with the political system and the system knows him well. At the same time, he has a great deal of support from the conservatives. However, the challenge now for him is that the two political trends would like to take him on their own side. The reformists would like to expedite the political reforms inside the country. Simultaneously the conservatives would like him to take their side focusing on the traditional and ideological ideals of the society, trying the overnight political reform. All in all, Rouhani is a pragmatic person. He has technocrat elites surrounding him; he believes in political reform albeit administered with caution. I would not label him as a moderate reformist, but as a pragmatic moderate who tries to increase Iran's international interactions with a moderate foreign policy, all the while dealing with internal political reforms gradually.

Therefore my first point is that this new discourse is different. Rouhani would like to strengthen Iran's relations with the countries in the region, the international arena, the US and the West. To achieve these goals he needs "stability" in the region. That means he will immediately lead us to think that Iran's approach will be accommodative and very constructive because any instability in the region will somehow challenge this newly adopted discourse. If he wants to institutionalize this kind of moderate discourse in Iran's domestic politics and if he is going to somehow improve Iran's economy, he needs to engage with regional countries that will help in trying to establish stability and security in the region. He needs to open up Iran to the international community and mostly the West to integrate Iran's economy to the wider global economy.

My second point is about the challenge he might face. This challenge follows the fact that as he became Iran's president a new discourse has immediately taken over Iranian politics, namely, the belief in globalization. This discourse has been in Iran's foreign policy discourse but had rather weakened in the last eight years during the previous government's mandate. Now there are new technocrats in office who believe that Iran should be integrated in the international energy security by attracting new investment, as well as establishing good economic relations with the West. This discourse believes in a world of globalized, interdependent security, and that the sophistication and technology to realize this aim stems from the West. Of course this kind of discourse has its own challenges from the conservative and traditional sections of society, as it connects Western liberalism with the fact that Iran theoretically needs to connect itself with the global powers and the US. During some of his speeches, Dr. Rouhani stated that we need to establish relations with the US, as it is the village chief, as it were. That brought a lot of criticism to his interpretation of the global political philosophy, with objections ranging from America not being the end of the world or that the West is not only composed of America; there are other significant powers such as Europe, China, Russia, and of course regional powers such as India, Brazil, etc. that Iran can prioritize relations with. Although this discourse has been present in Iran's politics for some time, it has also been strengthened with the new political developments in the country. Of course it has its own challenges which are mainly posited by the conservatives who believe that the value of Iran's foreign policy lies in Iran's active role and close relations with political-ideological movements such as Hezbollah with respect to regional issues. In my opinion, Dr. Rouhani's imminent success depends on bridging these two discourses related to foreign policy, namely regionalism and globalization. It is important for Iran to engage with the international economy attracting foreign investments and exporting its energy sources with maximum capacity that require good relations with the West. At the same time, there is this belief that Iran's active role will add value to Iran's political weight in a way that makes it attractive for the West to seek good relations with Iran. Therefore, sticking with the regional issues by an active presence in the region is something that is presently very prominent in Iran's foreign policy. I would say that the same is true for Iranian intellectual and academic circles as well.

I can tell you that Iran's current policy in Syria has somehow become popular, especially among the academia. It was not the case at the beginning but now that the situation has turned into a case in which terrorist and violent groups have become more prominent, the dominant discourse in Iran

suggests that Iran is acting correctly in terms of preserving its national and geopolitical interests by tackling terrorists and extremism. Whether it be a civil war, ethnic rivalries, a Sunni-Shia divide, Iran should support the system in Syria, keeping the nation-state in Syria intact by not letting these violent groups come to power as Iran has seen how any instability in the region can damage Iran's security interests as was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is also quite clear that violent, ideological groups would like to monopolize power. Moreover, as they conceive the world as black or white, they do not believe in a coalition government. So it is not a matter of a moderate opposition group coming to power in Damascus. It is the prospect of extremists coming to power that sets the tone for a gloomy situation in the post-Assad regime. So Iran acts in the way as we discussed. This is coming from the deep strategic understanding of Iran to support its strategic ally in the region. I don't think Rouhani's administration will change this. So between regionalism and internationalism, I think his government needs to balance the situation in a kind of win-win arrangement. Establishing immediate stability is a must for the new Iranian government as this is what Iran requires for Iran's economic development. He needs stability in the region in order to institutionalize his discourse inside the country. He needs stability to isolate the hardliners who are likely to challenge his discourse sooner or later. So it is really important how his foreign policy plays out because I believe there is a need for a win-win situation in Iranian domestic politics for any foreign policy approach that attempts to open the country up, be it concerning relations with the US or Iran's policy in Syria. So my second point is on how Dr. Rouhani's challenge could be to establish a bridge between Iran's discourses on regionalism and globalization in foreign policy. He will try to address both and he has already done so by forcing the Syrian regime to move towards disarming its chemical weapons. That was a critical role played by the new Iranian government where they also addressed matters of international security. This shows how constructive Iran can be and how influential Iran is in forcing the Syrian government to change its course.

My third point is about the implications of Rouhani's foreign policy regarding the region. Let's start with Turkey. I think relations between Iran and Turkey are profoundly influenced by their geographical attachment and the need for economic and political interactions, as well as exchanges on visions of security. They have 100 reasons to cooperate, whereas only a few that would lead them not to. Dr. Rouhani will try to strengthen Iran-Turkey relations. Of course they experienced some rifts in the Syrian crisis but I hope that this will change in the near future. They have reached some kind of understanding on how to handle the situation. I have written an article

two years ago saying that Iran and Turkey have a role to play in and should cooperate on the Syrian crisis. They should have worked together and in the end I think they will come together again on how to solve this crisis.

Regarding the Persian Gulf states, Iran has always wanted to have good relations with them. The problem here is Saudi Arabia's position in the context of the GCC. Iran would like to build a friendship with the Arab states for its own strategic aims. However Saudi Arabia has another take on this; I do not want to go into the details but the Saudi response to Iran's support of the Syrian chemical weapon disarmament process is one example. These days Iran and the US are restoring their relations and Saudis aren't very pleased with that. So in terms of Iran's GCC relations, Iran traditionally wants to have good relations but the problem is the other side. I think Saudi Arabia is not ready to do that because this will change the entire architecture of presenting Iran as the so-called main source of the threat in the Middle East. That is the problem that the Obama administration should handle. I think President Obama should muster the courage and appreciate Iran's role and place in regional issues. Having the Saudis and Israelis influence US foreign policy in the region in the end will not benefit regional politics.

In terms of relations with China and Russia, I think Iran's relations with these states will also strengthen. With China, Iran traditionally has had economic and political strategic relations. While the West had lost interest in economic exchanges, Iran went to the Chinese and they were very quick to take the opportunity. We see the shift of Iran's economy towards China not in daily life, namely in imports or exports, but in China's deep involvement in Iran's economic activities like construction, pipelines and developing gas routes in the Persian Gulf. The Chinese are deeply involved in Iran's economy. When we come to Russia, Iran traditionally wanted to increase relations with Russia to balance its relations with the West. Now I think Dr. Rouhani will try to strengthen the relations with the West to balance the relations with Russia. I think the Russians are also aware of the fact that Iran's relations with the West might benefit them especially in areas such as removing sanctions, which can increase Russian economic exchanges with Iran. The fact is that the Russians would like to preserve their own interest as well, thus I think bilateral relations between the two countries will also strengthen. Russia is a big country and it has a place in Iran's foreign policy. So I believe that these relations will strengthen.

On top of all these, there are Iran's relations with the West. I believe that it is too soon to think that we can restore relations with the US in a way that makes Iran a strategic ally in the region. There is no need to rush in that direction. The relations are loaded with stereotypes, ideological bag-

gage, which results in each party blaming the other for many things. So it is very unwise to try to restore relations in the context of Iran-US relations. However, there is one opportunity. I think Iran-US relations can be better strengthened in the context of the Iran-P5+1 nuclear negotiations. This is important because it will establish the first confidence building measure, at least on the part of Iran. I mentioned that Iran's reformists would like to open up to the US. But the conservatives, still a powerful force inside Iran that dominates key positions of power, still distrusts the US. According to this view, attempting talks with the US is useless because the US sees things with a top-down approach and there is no guarantee that they will accept Iran as an equal power in regional politics. They might be right. So the way Iran should deal with the issue gradually, by trying to build confidence in the context of P5+1 and to see what happens in the negotiations on the nuclear issue. We know that the US is the driving force behind the sanctions against Iran. So confidence-building with the US matters for both sides. If we proceed gradually here we can isolate hardliners in both countries. Neither Iran nor the US is completely prepared at the moment. Some say that Iran and the US should engage in a kind of grand-bargaining which basically means that they should bring all things within one package and try to solve them all. Some say that grand bargaining will only complicate the negotiations and that we need take the step-by-step approach that mainly deals with regional issues. I believe that the regional issues are too complicated; there are too many interests and values involved. I do not think Iran is going to change the substance of its regional policy. I do not think Iran is going to stop its relations with Hezbollah and other political factions because Iran believes that these are key strategic factors in Iranian foreign policy. But on the nuclear issue, which is an urgent and purely Iranian issue, there is a political consensus amongst different groups inside Iran. Iran and the US can direct the talk so that they can find common solutions on the nuclear issue.

To conclude I think that the new discourse that has appeared in Iran is very significant and is the starting point of change in Iran's approach to foreign policy. I believe that sanctions are not the only reason behind the emergence of this new discourse. Sanctions no doubt are hurting Iran's economy and its' people. But there is a political will that aims to bring change in Iran. Historically, Iranians have been pioneers of change in the region. They have experienced the Constitutional Revolution (1906), the Islamic Revolution (1979) and then a lot of political developments after the 2009 presidential elections such as the Green Movement. The Iranian democratic movement in the course of contemporary history has had its' ups and downs but has

never fully stopped. Now, it is reaching a balancing point; the political will to force the political system to undertake some urgent changes, and even to open up relations with the US, is very strong. Iran's current regional policy will persevere and I think Dr. Rouhani will continue in this vein. After all, why should he change it? Persevering will strengthen his hand in dealing with the US so why should he? In terms of relations with the US, I think this is a long-term issue. Right now solving the nuclear issue is the priority and matters a lot because it is in the context of the IAEA polity and there is a consensus amongst different Iranian political groups on the issue.

Confronting conflict in Palestine in a transforming region

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I will try to highlight some of the main issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Before we can start to talk about the effects of the regional transformation, we should look at the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prior to the “Arab Spring” (and I use the term Arab Spring with critical lenses). We also need to look at the effects of the events of the Arab Spring as well as other events and developments that happened. Then we should look at the current situation.

So, the situation before the Arab Spring within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the following: the failure of the peace process and the failure of the Annapolis Conference. In Israel there was a leadership change from Olmert to Netanyahu, and the implications of such a change were seen. We also have the Fatah-Hamas division, and again this divide within Palestinian society was becoming more and more problematic. We also have the continuation of the Israeli siege on Gaza. Then, the Arab Spring arrived, and we had protests and uprisings in various countries in the Middle East.

One of the questions normally raised is how come we did not have a Palestinian Arab Spring? Now we can only speculate about the answer, but one way to look at it would be to ask: Why would the Palestinians need an Arab Spring? Their main grievances were different from those of the rest of the Arab world. They are under occupation. It is a different kind of grievance and a different kind of mobilization. Another argument that could be raised is that the Palestinians have already had several Arab Springs. One was the Palestinian Legislative Elections in 2006 in which the Palestinians realized that the international community was not willing to accept or respect their political will. What else? Again there is the issue of the Hamas-Fatah conflict in Palestine, the lack of unity and the lack of an alternative leadership for the Palestinian population. So these are just some of the few issues that are talked about in the Palestinian context and highlighted as possible reasons for the absence of a Palestinian Arab Spring.

Now, I would like to move to the beginning of the “Arab Spring”, when concerns were raised that the events of the “Arab Spring” would divert the attention away from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some even called the

“Arab Spring” a Palestinian Winter, suggesting that it will only have negative consequences for the Palestinian case. In fact we did witness this in the context of media attention and coverage, as well as in the political attention given to the Palestinian case. At times the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was pushed aside and even ignored.

One thing is for certain; the “Arab Spring” created a new feeling and a culture of hope and the freedom to criticize. However, within the Palestinian context, these were not necessarily new improvements. I.e., Palestinians have already been voicing their dissent for decades while of course paying the price. The culture of dissent, criticism, and resistance is not new to Palestinians and freedom of expression was not the issue that they grieved.

It is important to highlight that, for decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been used by leaders and dictators in the Arab countries as an excuse to suppress dissent, justify repression, and restrict freedoms. Liberating Palestine, uniting against the Israeli enemy, together with national security taboos, were all used by authoritarian regimes in the Arab countries to keep their nations de-politicized and to create a culture of fear. But then, during the “Arab Spring” we actually saw a change. We started to see some positive effects.

Before going into details and talking about the effects of the “Arab Spring” on the Palestinian context, I would like to talk briefly about Israel, an aspect of the issue which is largely ignored. I want to talk about the effects of the Arab Spring on Israeli society and officials. One of the things that the Israelis feared when the “Arab Spring” started was the possibility of a wave of hostile anti-Israeli movements and Islamist groups that will surround Israel. Then the feeling of isolation within the Arab Middle East region would become even more of a reality for Israel. This is on the negative side, but on the positive side, the “Arab Spring” left its print on Israeli society and affected it. Following the “Arab Spring”, we witnessed the development of Israeli social movements and the emergence of civil society groups demanding better social rights. The 2011 Israeli social justice protests involved hundreds of thousands of protestors who were highly inspired by the “Arab Spring” protestors. Yet, it was interesting to notice that, even though the Israelis were protesting against the deteriorating social and economic circumstances and injustices, the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestine was absent from the public or media discourse. And despite their “social justice” demands, protestors did not even make the link between decades of Israeli occupation to Palestinians’ territory and economy, not to mention calling for the rights of Palestinians for freedom and self determination.

Now, let us go back to the Palestinian context. Bearing in mind the division between Fatah and Hamas, the “Arab Spring” witnessed the development of new relations between Gaza authorities and other neighbouring states. We witnessed the regional role played by neighbouring states like Turkey, Qatar and Egypt, which formed links with the (Hamas) Gazan authorities while ignoring the (Fatah) Palestinian authority in the West Bank. On the positive side, these links gave the Gazans a feeling that they are not isolated, that someone is trying to break the Israeli siege and reach out for them. However, on the negative side, these bilateral moves involving only Hamas served in fact to reinforce the division between the two Palestinian factions. Furthermore, it was reinforcing the dangerous disengagement of Gaza from the rest of Palestine, and encouraging its introduction and treatment as a separate Palestinian entity or even as an alternative state. Separating and isolating Gaza from the rest of Palestine does not serve the Palestinian cause, and it is something that the Israelis have attempted to do.

In this context, we should note the diplomatic and official visits of Hamad bin Khalifa, the Qatari Emir to Gaza, or the possible plans or reports of Erdoğan visiting Gaza soon. While these diplomatic missions and the accompanying humanitarian aid reached Gaza and were celebrated as breaking the Israeli siege on Gaza, the reality is that than no one can enter Gaza without the approval, or sometimes even the blessing of Israel. Can one really establish that all of these missions entered Gaza without Israel’s knowledge, if not their blessing? So while encouraging efforts to end the Israeli siege on Gaza, celebrating such efforts during the “Arab Spring” while ignoring the role of Israel in them, or treating them as evidence that Gaza has been liberated from Israeli occupation following the disengagement in 2005, would not serve the Palestinian national interest. By falsely highlighting that while officially there is an Israeli siege, the tunnels, diplomatic missions and visits do let goods, petrol, gas, and humanitarian aid pass into Gaza, one can misleadingly come to the conclusion that the Israeli blockade and siege on Gaza since 2007 is not really affecting the lives of Gazans. So this argument, promoted during and in the spirit of the “Arab Spring” was very dangerous.

Another effect of these visits was the increase of popularity of Hamas. It was definitely a spring for Hamas at that period. Hamas started to gain a more powerful position within Palestinian politics but also within regional politics, especially after the victory of the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt. Then the situation changed following the June 2013 Egyptian protests that turned things upside down and ended the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Prior to that date, Hamas was living what I call a honeymoon or

a spring with the nearly unconditional support from Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to Hamas in Gaza. But now, they are being pushed to the side, and are becoming more and more isolated. In addition, the tunnels are being destroyed. Therefore, in terms of effects of the events in neighbouring Egypt on Gaza, we now see that things are turning against Hamas. People of Gaza are also paying the price for these changes.

I would like to touch upon two themes regarding the current situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of them is within the Palestinian context and the other one is within the Israeli context. Within the Palestinian context, we know that Palestine has been recognized as a non-member observer state. We can discuss in length the disadvantages of this recognition. But this recognition at least creates the perception that Palestinians now have more political opportunities apart from only being forced to follow the path of a peace process. Theoretically the Palestinians now have the option of resorting to other means to achieve their aims. We even noticed this in the new Palestinian official rhetoric, like in a recent statement issued by President Abbas and by the negotiating team. In that statement they said that following the failure of negotiations and the deadlock that emerged with Israel that "all options are now open". Again, what does that mean? Do Palestinians now have the power to execute these threats? Do they have real options when it comes to alternatives to the peace process or negotiations?

The other thing that is happening in the Palestinian context is the decrease in the popularity of Hamas. Just recently there was a public opinion poll conducted both in Gaza and the West Bank. It looked at various aspects, but one of them was the perception both of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority with regards to freedoms and authoritarian behaviour. When it comes to the Authority in Gaza, the numbers were really high. 54% of the respondents in Gaza as opposed to 38% of West Bank respondents believed that the (Hamas) government in Gaza is authoritarian. Now the other aspect that the poll also looked at is how optimistic the Palestinian population feels with regards to the chances of reaching a reconciliation or settlement between Fatah and Hamas. And the numbers were 52%, which is not bad unless you compare it with previous years' numbers, which were 75%. Again, we see a change both in the perception of Hamas, but also in the optimism of the Palestinian public when it comes to reaching a settlement or reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, or reaching some kind of a unity.

Finally, and with relevance to Israel, the peace process negotiations currently are not going very well. Despite the inner pressure on the Israelis, the re-

building of settlements, new settlement plans; they all pose obstacles to the peace negotiations. Furthermore, the current Israeli government is composed of the most extreme right wing parties of all times in Israeli history. For example Naftali Bennett, a fierce right wing settler, is sitting in the current Israeli government. So how can an Israeli government, for example, promote a peace settlement that would lead to the evacuation of settlements or the halt of building of new settlements when a right wing settler and his political party are an integral part of that government? Also, we have the return of Avigdor Lieberman, the famous Israeli radical right wing foreign minister. He has been cleared of corruption charges lately after the failure of the Israeli prosecution to prove his involvement in the charges against him. All of these developments are happening right now. Moreover, the regional balance is changing too. Egypt is not the same Egypt. Syria is not the same Syria. We have the problem of Palestinian refugees in Syria. Learning from past experiences like the Gulf war and the Palestinian crisis in Kuwait, the Palestinian leadership took the decision not to get involved in the Arab Uprisings, as they are the internal affairs of other countries, but in Syria we see that they are being dragged in against their will. All of these and more will leave their mark on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, the rapid changes and developments make it difficult to give a thorough assessment of the effects or the regional transformation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A Region in Conflict and Aspiring for Peace

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I will try to offer a more general view of different negotiation processes that are going on in the region and how they might be affecting one another. Since I see myself as a scholar working on the negotiation processes with a special interest in Middle Eastern cases rather than as an area expert, I will try to look at what is going on in the region from a more thematic perspective. One thing that I would like to emphasize is that I myself have spent a lot of time studying the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and Turkey's role as a mediator in the region, though in this paper I would like to focus on two things. After describing the different negotiation processes underway, the first step is to see how they might be affecting one another and secondly to look at where Turkey actually stands as a potential mediator in all of these processes.

To complete the picture that is presented so far, I would like to offer a picture of the region. When we look at the region we see that there are three simultaneous yet different types of negotiation processes going on. The first one has been well defined by Dr. Kayhan Barzagar. They are the negotiations that are going on between the US and Iran, or the P5+1 and Iran, a typical international negotiation case. The global actors are involved in a typical inter-state conflict. The focus is mostly on hard security issues, such as the nuclear issue. The process takes place at state level and elites are involved. We are talking about a typical two-level type of negotiation. More importantly, it is pretty much a single-issue negotiation as Prof. Barzagar mentioned. Most likely it is not going to be a grand-bargain. The main issue is the nuclear program. However, it might also introduce compromises related to the recognition of the regime in Iran by the West in exchange for some compromises in the nuclear program of Iran. This is a typical negotiation process going on in an international state to state negotiation process that we are very much used to.

The second type of negotiation that is going on simultaneously is the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. This is a very different type of negotiation than the US-Iran negotiations. First of all it is a very intractable conflict. It is a very complex, multi-level conflict. The issues on the negotiation agenda keep changing with factual changes emerging on the ground. The constituencies are becoming more hardliner on both sides. It is becoming more and more

intractable as the facts on the ground are changing. Today the main issue that blocks the negotiations is the question on settlements, so much so that the parties can't even get to the hardest issues such as Jerusalem, the right of return, the rights of refugees. These used to be seen as something that was relatively easy to tackle. New intractable issues are being added on the agenda. Even though the nature of the situation changes, the same old negotiation strategy is being attempted. The US is the mediator; again a typical peace negotiation. But the model that is being tried over and over again has actually become a failure. It is not getting anybody anywhere. So both parties and the mediators from now on will probably be looking for new ways of viewing the negotiations in this context especially after the latest obstacle that emerged out of settlements.

Since there is a very good account of both of these negotiation processes, I would like to spend a little time on the third type of negotiations that we are seeing in the region. The third type of negotiations emerged out of the Arab Spring and its needs. The first one I defined as classical state-to-state single-issue kind of negotiations, the second one is the typical peace negotiations. The third type is actually a new kind of negotiation setting that we are seeing in the region. It is negotiating what we call the double transition process, meaning that it is combining the negotiation of state building with reconciliation and peace negotiations. For example this is what is going on in Yemen today. There is a societal nature of these conflicts. They are more inter-communal. The things that are needed to be negotiated are very different: political transition, the negotiation of a social contract, state building, institutions, transitional justice etc. It is better to call it a national dialogue process and that is what it is called in Yemen: the Yemeni National Dialogue. One of the key aspects of these negotiations is that in addition to these different types of issues, we are also seeing representation and social inclusion as becoming very important elements. So why is social inclusion becoming a key component of these type of negotiations? First of all apparently, social exclusion was at the heart of the problem in these countries. Several ostracized groups exist in all of these countries, and these groups, having been denied opportunities, revolted. It is at the heart of the problem. Another reason behind these conflicts is exclusion and poverty. In the case of the Arab Spring, we do not necessarily see the exclusion of the poor, but the exclusion of the middle class and educated people. The demographic pressure is also there. Most of these societies are populated by young people. So it is not the exclusion of the poor, but also the exclusion of business elites, the middle class etc. Another reason is that these societies experienced a situation where exclusion started becoming very cost-

ly, especially in terms of economic costs and inefficiency. Another very important factor is that social inclusion works better in the long run. There is a lot of World Bank data for example that presently shows that socially inclusive processes result in more sustainable peace agreements and also encourage sustainable development. There is a lot of emphasis on social inclusion in the architecture of peace negotiations in these countries like in Yemen today.

The Yemeni National Dialogue is being primarily mediated by the UN. The architecture of the process is designed to bring very different social groups together making sure that all sorts of political groups, parties, youth, women, regional actors, tribal actors etc. are all represented in a nation-wide process divided into working groups. Each working group is responsible of working on a different issue of political transition. At the moment this process is unique to Yemen and has a lot of potential. If it becomes successful it will have a lot of implications for other Middle Eastern or Arab Spring countries that are experiencing similar problems. Principles of governance, social contract, social inclusion, participatory decision making, trying to reconcile and bring peace among the fighting groups are all discussed in Yemen but at the same time there is talk about designing the new institutions in the country so that all these principles can be realized. So we will see how this process will evolve. I will not go into the details of the Yemeni National Dialogue process. But I will briefly talk about the possible effect of these three different negotiation systems on one another.

Now I see asymmetrical effects in the sense that until the Arab Spring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been defined as a breeding ground for all other problems in the region and also to some extent in the global scene. Now the question is whether this is still the case. Will the successful negotiation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contribute to any constructive solution? Will it have a spillover effect in the region? Will it have any positive impact on the third type of negotiation processes that I talked about? Maybe a little bit, perhaps indirectly, but not too much. On the other hand the successful negotiation of a political transition processes in these countries, and how they are resolved as a successful national dialogue process will hugely impact the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It will have an impact on the internal Palestinian division probably. It may also encourage the Palestinians to look for other types of strategies and other types of processes other than the typical two-state negotiation process. So it may strengthen the motivation to that end.

Where does Turkey fit in this picture? Actually, Turkey has been involved as a third party in all of these processes. You all know that Turkey and Brazil

played a role in the negotiations concerning the Iranian nuclear program. Even though that agreement was put aside, it may come back in a different format at some point. Turkey was also very much involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Turkey is still involved, but to a lesser extent. There are a lot of problems in this involvement due to the deterioration of Turkey-Israel relations and also due to Turkey's relations with Syria. Turkey's relations with Fatah in the West Bank are not that brilliant either. However, Turkey is still very much involved through humanitarian aid, development aid etc. Turkey is also still in communication with Hamas. In terms of the third-type negotiation processes I have not seen any Turkish contribution to the National Yemeni Dialogue, or any offer of expertise or any professional contribution. So far the Turkish contributions have been limited to development aid and humanitarian aid, building infrastructure and contributing to the structural changes in that society.

External Actors: Intervention

EU Response to the Arab Uprisings: Is it changing?

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When we consider the EU, there are at least three different kinds of actors: the EU institutions, the member states and European societies. I will try to cover all three looking at two different issues: firstly, whether and how they contribute to political transitions, political change, and possibilities of reform in this region and, secondly, their stance regarding ongoing conflicts in the region.

How did the European Union countries react to the political changes in the region? It adapted existing policies instead of designing a brand new policy. There has been a review of the European Neighborhood Policy that was already foreseen in 2010. In other words, the bureaucratic timing and the political timing coincided. The main principles and changes are reflected in the communiqués between the European Commission and the European External Action Service that were released in March and May 2011. There is an attempt to reinforce conditionality but this is not anything new. It has also defined incentives for reforms, the three M's: money, market and mobility. However, has the EU been successful in delivering these three? Well they were able to mobilize some amount of money unforeseen in a period of crisis that is already a success but not enough to bring any meaningful change to the region.

I want to share with you an anecdote that exemplifies this. There are rumours claiming that when Ashton met with the interim Tunisian authorities for the first time, weeks after the uprising, EU officials explained that they had been able to find 12 million Euros extra to support the transition. Tunisians were at first happy because they understood millions as billions. They soon realized that they had misunderstood their European colleagues. This alone indicates the wide gap between the capability and the expectations. At the end, the EU was able to mobilize 350 million that year to support the transition but it was still not enough to support a country in such a critical period.

Regarding markets, the innovation is that the EU is now offering Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. This means that the EU continues with the idea that through liberalizing the economies, we will have more development and a larger middle class, which will result in more impetus for po-

litical reform. However, this liberalization is incomplete as workers/labourers and agriculture are not part of the agenda.

Mobility is a crucial issue and I think the EU was right in identifying mobility as one of the main demands of society. It is one of the few elements that could allow the EU to reconnect with the societies in the region. And this includes Turkey where the visa issue has been a social demand for quite some time. In the South, what we have witnessed is the signing of mobility partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia, but nothing substantial has ensued. I was discussing this with Tunisian interlocutors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they described their conversations with Europeans as a clash between two different paradigms. When Tunisians discuss mobility, they talk about employment and education. However, when Europeans come to the table, they talk about borders and security. Moreover, there is a problem of credibility. When the EU affirmed that mobility was one of the incentives, at the same time everyone witnessed how the Lampedusa crisis was managed and the pressures that Italy and France imposed. This damaged the credibility of mobility inside the EU.

So, are the 3 Ms an attractive and credible offer? If one is to be critical, we could state that we are facing a rebranding operation, basically a reappropriation of the same principles and same ideas with some new elements and a new marketing ploy to make it more attractive for the end-users and customers which are not only for the neighbours but also for the domestic constituencies of Europe, all in order to make a point how that an action is being taken. We can also describe this offer as a bureaucratic response, not a political one. The EU's response is the result of an internal exercise in the Commission in which all Directorate Generals were requested to come up with some ideas. In effect, the ideas come across as very bureaucratic and are based on policies we already have. How can we do better with what we already have? The basic principles remain the same but we do have some new instruments such as the European Endowment for Democracy.

What about member states? I would say that member states were looking for redemption, using the newly arisen opportunity as a second chance. However they were also acting very pragmatically. They gave support to countries in transition, applauding the top-down reforms in countries like Morocco or in Jordan and being relatively silent in situations that reinforce the status-quo in Algeria or even the Gulf. What was new was the attempt to connect with Islamist actors. This is true both for the EU, and particularly for member states. Almost all member states were scrambling to find interlocutors from the Muslim Brotherhood or the Ennahda. Everyone invited an Islamist to the table.

What about European societies? As Luciano Zaccara has stated, societies were also caught by surprise. However, the initial reaction was an empathic one towards the movements in the streets and squares of the region. Basically you could feel that the European citizens were thinking, "yes they are like us, we could've been them." Interestingly, this reaction overlapped with the occupy movements, not only in Europe but also in other regions. So there was an attempt to place the Arab Spring within the broader framework of the "indignados" and "occupy" movements. However, things started to change by the end of 2011 and even more drastically in 2012 as European public opinion regressed to the old stereotypes and fears. Some may say the Islamist victories in the elections were the main factor, but I think Libya and Syria have had a stronger impact on how European citizens have interpreted the situation. Presently, we unfortunately are back to the old stereotypes of radicalization, fanaticism and violence, even the paranoia of an invasion.

Then there is the second issue about how Europeans have reacted to new conflicts and the ensuing discussion on whether and how to intervene. Here we have three cases in point: Libya, Syria, and Mali. I include Mali in the analysis because this conflict was, partially, the result of a spill over effect of the war in Libya. What was the reaction of the EU institutions? The EU has been active in supporting the sanctions but the EU as such was not present in the battlefield. During post-conflict their presence was very modest and this is striking if you compare with actions taken in the past. We have been unable to respond to the demands of Libyan authorities on reforms in the security sectors. Member States and NATO are assisting them with these reforms while the EU has had a security sector reform mission in Guinea Bissau.

Basically when we are talking about interventions, we are talking about member states, rather than the EU as a whole. Europeans, particularly France and the UK, have been present but not the EU. There are too many divisions among Member States. A case in point was the voting of the 1973 resolution in the UN Security Council on Libya: Germany abstained; France and the UK were in favour. The voting on Palestine's UNESCO membership some years ago was even worse. The three big countries voted differently: France in favour, Germany against and the UK abstained. Even in issues like new sanctions to Syria there are divisions among the member states. Too often they can only reach minimal agreements among themselves.

What about European societies? I think that European citizens are trapped in the Iraq and Afghanistan syndrome. There was some sort of support for the Libyan intervention within some countries inspired by the idea of the re-

sponsibility to protect. However due to the way the Libyan conflict evolved, many people who had supported the operation probably were more sceptical with regards an operation in Syria. Moreover, they thought that it would be much more dangerous and costly. During the first months, the European societies were pursuing the idea of humanitarian intervention, now they are more inward looking and taking a defensive, conservative attitude.

To wrap up, I use five concepts to summarize the European reaction to these tectonic shifts in the area: reactive, defensive, pragmatic, self-constrained, and also the idea of a second chance. What can we expect from now on? I believe there is room for strategic thinking. I also hold the opinion that there are some cases in which Europe can actually make a difference: Tunisia is the best example. We know that Algeria has been playing with a negative conditionality. If you do not solve your problem we have to solve it for you, was the message of Algerian authorities delivered in the meeting with Al-Ghannushi and Beji Caib el Sebsi in Algiers. I think Europe can be more ambitious and generous in supporting the National Dialogue in Tunisia and reward the process if the transition is back on track. I also think there is room to try to promote regional dialogue in the Middle East (not regional integration at this stage because this is going to fail). A big question mark concerns what to do with Egypt. We have seen that the EU has the capacity to talk to the military, the secular parties and the Muslim Brotherhood but apparently it is unable to shape events in Egypt. The problem is that we are not big enough or that perhaps there is no single decisive actor. If all external actors were to unite and act together, they could probably be decisive. However one actor alone at least the EU in this case will not be decisive except perhaps in Tunisia. If you want to end with a positive note, which I do not know how positive it is, but there is much debate about the US pivoting towards Asia, though it is clear that we cannot pivot from the region. These are our neighbours, and they will always remain so. We cannot afford to neglect political changes or conflicts in our neighbourhood.

Obama Administration and the Transformations in the Arab World

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I am going to start this discussion on Obama's Middle East policy from quite far back because I think you have to understand the particular context of US foreign policy in which Obama has to make decisions on the Middle East concerning the discussions of transitions in the region. I want to start with the end of the Cold War. I would argue that since the end of the Cold War, the US has not had a framework for its foreign policy. The Cold War provided a very clear framework. American diplomats used to joke by saying, if one were to ask them what the US interest in (say) Burkina Faso was, the reply would be "Tell me what the Soviet Union is doing there and I'll tell you what the US interest is." Otherwise, there was no concern for the domestic policies of other countries. Their importance laid in their international alignment. This was US policy in a nutshell. Then the Cold War came to an end; the Soviet Union disappeared and US policy was left without a guiding framework to follow. I would argue that neither President Bush the first nor President Clinton developed a new framework for US foreign policy. They stumbled from decision to decision but without a guiding concept. Then George W. Bush came along and he essentially adopted a framework. This was not a well-thought out plan; it was not something that was discussed at length. Nonetheless, the promotion of democracy became the justification underlying foreign policy. Bush used it as the justification for interventions, particularly in Iraq. Afghanistan was more justifiable in terms of being a direct threat to the US. The motto of the Bush administration became the promotion of democracy, which marked a real change in US foreign policy. It meant a change of focus on the domestic conditions of these countries. This policy ended with a disaster for the US because US promoted democratic elections that led to outcomes the United States did not like. In the 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood won 20% of the seats, then Hamas got the majority of the votes in the 2006 Palestinian elections. These results led the Bush administration to abandon what was called the freedom agenda. Of course they did not announce it, but it was accepted internally, as the US discovered that democracy can lead to unexpected results. Thus came the total abandoning of the freedom agenda. Yes, the US continued to promote democracy in a bureau-

cratic way, with small projects by USAID and American NGOs, but democracy was no longer at the centre of US policy.

This is the situation that Obama inherited: a failed policy, a process of re-thinking about the wisdom of promoting democracy, and in addition a public that rejects US involvement in yet another conflict in the Middle East. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were costly in terms of life, although not as much as the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the army is no longer dependent on conscripts, which makes things easier because it means that most people would not have any relatives among the people who get killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military has become a self-contained box. Although there was no violent reaction against those wars, as was with the case in Vietnam, there certainly was a very clear idea that the US should not go to war again. That is reflected not only in what the public says but also in the reaction the Congress displays. The Congress simply is not interested in voting for another war.

Against such a background Obama found himself with the problem of the Arab uprisings and how to react to them. Here we have a series of different reactions. For the first few days, the US hesitated in expressing support. This was particularly true in Tunisia: Washington initially ignored events there, in part because it had always been less concerned with Tunisia, believing France to be more influential there. Even in Egypt, the first reaction of the US was to restate its support for Mubarak, declaring him a favourable ally of the US. That lasted only three days. Then all of a sudden Obama went to the other extreme and started to state that Mubarak must go. (Obama never said Ben Ali must go because he went faster than anybody expected). Then Washington declared that Qaddafi must go, and eventually that Assad must also go. That is the position that the US took in theory, but in practice it did not put much effort behind it. In Egypt it was not a big problem because the military took care of Mubarak's topple essentially. It is now clear that Mubarak was deposed by the military, not by the street demonstrations. There was a clear decision by the military to oust Mubarak in order to save the regime. It was like an overloaded lifeboat where you have to get rid of one person otherwise the whole boat will sink. The military tossed Mubarak out of the boat. It saved the US from having to decide what to do.

The situations in Libya and Syria were much more difficult because it was clear that there would not be any quick solutions there. Especially in the case of Libya there was a lot of resistance to any form of intervention. The way I explain the reluctant decision of the US to intervene through NATO is as follows: First of all not only did the UN and the Arab League backed the intervention but above all Obama allowed himself to be shamed into ac-

tion by the human rights organizations in the US. There was a lot pressure on the principal level that we have to do something. When the time came to decide about Syria, the stakes were already set way too high. The justification for not intervening was that there was no UN Resolution because it was blocked by Russia and China. Neither did the Arab states demonstrate a unified position. Above all it was clear from the beginning that this would be an intervention far more difficult than before. Keep in mind that the intervention in Libya did not cost the US a single casualty. The only casualties they suffered were during the attacks on the Consulate in Benghazi long afterwards. The war itself was carried out by bomber aircraft thus was fairly safe. However it was clear that Syria would be no free ride and that any formal military intervention would have greater financial costs and more casualties than in Libya. Thus, Obama decided against military intervention.

So you have this very complex situation where on the one hand Obama states that all these dictators must go, on the other hand he is not willing to put much effort behind it. So what does the US do? It retreats to the position that it is up to the people of the country to decide to really bring about change. That means elections in Egypt and Tunisia. (By the way nobody talks about Morocco but I think it is important because it is another country that ended up with a party very close to the Muslim Brotherhood in power after the change). In both countries the US accepted the results of election, even if they brought to power the Muslim Brotherhood, because “[They] believe in democracy [and] accept the results of democratic elections”. There was a very conscious effort by the Obama administration to make it clear that they were going to accept the election results even if it was not the results that the US desired. I want to emphasize this point in contrast to the Egyptian perception that the US wanted the Muslim Brotherhood to come to power. No, the US did not want the Brotherhood to come to power. The US just accepted the results when the Brotherhood and the Salafis won the elections together. The fact is that they could do nothing about that because they had supported the elections. Contrary to what they had done in Palestine when they refused to recognize the Hamas government, the US decided to accept the government of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the US never established close relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and never got to know them well. I think it is important to keep this in mind.

I will give you an example. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where I work, organized a conference in April 2012 on Islamists in power, with the participation of Islamist parties that had won elections in their countries. We had delegations from Islamist parties in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. We even had some Libyan Islamists who were a major polit-

ical group although they were not in power. When we invited them, we received a call from the State Department asking us how to get hold of the delegations while they were in town. Normally, the State Department would not need the help of a think tank to contact a delegation from a party with which they have good relations. I have an even more paradoxical anecdote. I got a call from the Egyptian Embassy asking me whether I would make our guests available to them. Although they were still in power in this period, Islamists were still seen by many, including the Foreign Service bureaucracy, as outsiders, not really part of the regime. The embassy apparently did not think that the Muslim Brotherhood government represented Egypt.

Nevertheless the United States did make an attempt to establish relations with the Muslim Brotherhood. It even neglected the secular opposition to some degree, something which in part is explained by the fact that the secular opposition in these countries, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia, is very fragmented. So essentially it is very difficult to know who are the people that you should contact or talk to. There are alliances. For example the National Salvation Front was formed in Egypt but it never talked with one voice. I think one of the big problems is that the National Salvation Front is never going to run for elections. Its members are too divided among themselves. I have very serious doubts about the cohesion of the secular opposition in Tunisia. Nida Tounes is a very broad alliance. Its cohesion depends heavily on its leader. Whether or not it could continue without that leader is an issue that has to be raised because the leader is 87 years old. He is not going to be around forever. So you have these situations in which the US deals with the Islamists as best as they can. The US does not like them very much but at least tries to establish relations.

One important issue to keep in mind is that although a lot of Egyptians were fed up with the Muslim Brotherhood, the campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood was orchestrated by the security forces. The collection of signatures was the mission of the Tamarrod movement. The Mukhabarat, the domestic security forces, were behind the Tamarrod movement. There are many reliable sources that document their involvement, including a very good article by the Reuters News Agency. If you talk to Egyptians about the involvement of the Mukhabarat, they say it was an open secret that the Mukhabarat was collecting the signatures. So you have this very carefully orchestrated campaign that brought out the crowds to the streets, demanding the resignation of President Mohammed Morsi. They were not 30 million people in the street, as the military claimed; there are not enough squares in Egypt to hold 30 million people, but certainly it was an impres-

sive turnout. Of course there had to be a certain amount of discontent before people could be mobilized but it was not a spontaneous uprising, it was not a grassroots movement that started with a small group of youth activists in Tamarrod, as the official narrative claims it to be.

Although they knew months before about the attempt to force Morsi from power, the US officials were surprised when the military assumed power in July 2013 and did not know how to react coherently. The US refused to declare whether the intervention of the military was considered a Coup or not. According to US law, the United States has to stop all aid to a country where a coup d'état has taken place, and the US did not want to stop all aid to Egypt. On the other hand, you cannot really argue that a takeover by the military is not a coup d'état. The solution suggested by State Department lawyers was to avoid stating whether or not the military takeover was a coup by simply not making an official statement on the issue. This allowed the United States to suspend rather than completely cancel military aid to Egypt. It is the only aid with consequence at this point. What does this all mean? When we put the picture together and look beyond Egypt, I see the US returning to their Cold War policy. Once again, what really matters to the United States is not what happens domestically in these countries, but their foreign alignment. Secretary of State John Kerry stated that Egypt was making progress toward democracy because he wanted to keep Egypt aligned with the United States and Israel. Yet Egypt had adopted a constitution that bans parties with a religious orientation, which means that there will be elections in which the most important parties will not be able to compete. I am not saying that Islamist parties would get 70% of the vote in the next elections as they did the last time, but they might very well still obtain a majority vote given the fragmented secular spectrum. As a result, religious parties have now been banned, but if you hold elections banning the most important party, obviously you do not have a democratic process. By declaring that Egypt is moving toward democracy, the United States is declaring that what matters most is how countries fit into the regional picture, whether they have stability or instability, how this affects the US position in the region, and that Washington has turned its back on the Bush agenda of trying to promote democracy.

I have two final points. Firstly, to what extent is this return to Cold War policy limited to the Obama administration or to what extent is it a new lasting orientation in US foreign policy? It is very difficult to tell until the new elections. My belief at this point is that this is probably a new orientation in US foreign policy. It is difficult to say for sure because the Republican Party is so divided right now that it is difficult to know what it would do in terms

of foreign policy if they won the elections. But since I rule out the possibility of the victory of the tea party, the extreme right, it is probable that a Republican administration would be dominated by old line Republicans. Moreover I do not sense that they would be inclined to intervene in the internal affairs of Middle East countries. Keep in mind that we have not heard the word of nation-building as part of the US foreign policy for years now. It has totally disappeared. Obama once in a while mentions nation-building by saying we need to do nation-building at home. I think there is a change here. It goes beyond the Obama administration.

The second point that I want to make is that this non-interventionist policy by the Obama administration has left a vacuum. Not only has it left a vacuum in the region in terms of external intervention, but it has also left a vacuum in US foreign policy. We are seeing it very clearly throughout North Africa as the US pulls out of these countries. It is pulling out of Tunisia, Egypt and so on. What you have is the Pentagon taking over and playing a more important role in formulating policy towards these countries. Who is in charge of policy towards the problem of terrorism and the more radical groups? It is not the State Department; it is the Pentagon. It is very striking to see the military approaching think tanks in Washington to request for briefings. As they recognize that they are now dealing with issues that are essentially political, with which they have no experience. I find this rather unsettling. I want to finish with a quote that I find very scary. It was a conversation with one of the people from the Africom, African Command. They wanted us to set up some briefings for their people. He said that "You have to understand that we are very good at finding where Mohammad is hiding, very good at putting a bullet through his eyes, but we are not very good at understanding the political situation." What is unsettling about current US foreign policy in the Middle East is not that the president and the State Department are pursuing a non-interventionist policy, but the fact that they have allowed a vacuum to develop that less qualified agencies end up filling. The job of the military is to defend the country, not to shape foreign policy.

Is Russia Back in the Middle East? The Russian Role in Syria

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Russian policy at the first stage of the Arab Awakening differed profoundly from its policy after the upheavals. At the beginning, nobody ever articulated that foreign forces were behind the uprisings in Egypt or Tunisia. It was obvious that the core issues were domestic: social, political, and issues pertaining to justice and dignity. Later these estimations changed and the turning point was the situation in Libya. Russia abstained from the voting on the SC Resolution of 1973, which claims a no-fly zone in Libya. While not supporting the resolution directly, Russia realized at the time that Qaddafi could have used his air forces to bomb the opposition. Later on when the NATO forces started to implement the resolution, sentiments in the political circles of Russia had changed dramatically. The campaign was too long and bloody, and resulted in the medieval murder of Qaddafi. It meant that the responsibility to protect had been equalled to regime change. From Russia's perspective, this was the first lesson to be learned.

The second lesson dealt with the oil factor and Russian business. It's a common knowledge that Russia is very much interested in changes in oil prices. Oil plays a very important role in the Russian economy. Despite all efforts to diversify its economy, Russia still relies heavily upon oil revenues. That is why Russia has a great concern not only for oil prices but also for access to the oil fields in different countries. The projects in Iraq were partially stopped after the Bush Administrations' military invasion of Iraq in 2003. (LUKOIL invested four billion dollars in the West Qurna-2 and only now has the company begun to recover the expenses of the project). There were also business projects in Libya that were never resumed after the change in the political situation in Libya

The domestic situation was a factor that shaped the Russian approach towards the transformations in the Arab world. Russia's suspicions that foreign forces were very much interested in pushing Russia out of the region and out of the regional oil industry went hand-in-hand with the notion that the Arab Revolutions were Orange Revolutions in their essence, therefore orchestrated by external forces. The conclusion that some observers reached was that Russia might also become the victim of the same plans and strategies. The situation was made worse by the fact that there were

elections being held in Russia at the time. This campaign was characterized by the rise of anti-Americanism. However, this was also mirrored in the election campaign in the United States. There were candidates in the U.S. who were using anti-Russian slogans to strengthen their position in the race.

One could assert that the end of 2011 was marked by protest movements, especially in Moscow, against the results of the elections to the State Duma. There were observers who would prefer an oversimplified picture and argue that the protest movements in Russia were also arranged and assisted from abroad. This was the situation in Russia when the civil war in Syria had reached its peak, and it became obvious that the conflict between the opposition and the government had turned into a bloody civil war.

The position of Russia vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict was influenced by a strong belief that the U.S. supported the opposition because it wanted to make Assad step down, since he did not fit into the American regional strategy as an important link in the chain consisting of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. Also with Assad gone, Iran would be very much weakened. This was the time of Mr Ahmadinejad and all the irresponsible statements he made and erroneous steps he took.

The Syrian conflict proved that the regional actors had managed to play over the global actors. Actually they were the main players in the region. Many believe that as soon as the U.S. and Russia came to an agreement, there would be the possibility to find a certain compromise with respect to Syria. It is only partly true, the Russian - American agreement is an important prerequisite for the start of a political process but it is the regional powers that are an essential part of the equation. Regional powers have opposite positions; they see the developments as an existential threat, and believe that there could be no win-win situation, but only a win-lose situation. However, there will be no peace without Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar and Turkey acting together. To reach an agreement we should have all these players around the table.

I would like to remind you the case of Tajikistan. In the beginning of the 1990's in Tajikistan there was a bloody civil war. Fortunately this civil war ended with negotiations and the signing of the agreement on national reconciliation and power sharing. Two factors contributed to this agreement. First, neither the government nor the opposition wanted to see Tajikistan fall into pieces. They wanted to preserve a single, unified state. The second factor was that there were regional powers, the UN and other global powers, which managed to enforce their decision and their willingness to reach peace. It was a sort of enforced settlement but it worked. What we have in

Syria is probably much worse than what we had in Tajikistan but still there should be some way-out.

Analysing Russia's interests vis-a-vis Syria, one should also take into consideration an Islamist factor in Russia. For Russia, the activities of radical Islamists both in Russia proper and in Central Asia, which is next to its borders, are of great concern. They might evoke instability within Russia or in Central Asia. Radical organizations have been operating in the Muslim-populated regions of Russia and the situation in these regions is far from being stable. It is not caused by an external factor alone but rather by domestic reasons - corruption, unemployment of the youth, the absence of so-called social lifts which guarantee future for the younger people, and a general lack of justice. The situation is getting worse because in the North Caucasus there are clans and extended families that are responsible for what is going on in the Republics. So a number of marginalized younger people do not have much choice but to join extremist Islamist organizations. These organizations are funded from abroad; different Islamist foundations and even governments participate in this funding. It is a known fact that there were funds coming from Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Pakistan. Since what has happened in the Arab world was labelled in Russia as a crisis of secularism, the greatest concern was about Sunni radicalism because the Muslim population in Russia are also Sunni. That is why the notion that Islamist extremists might get an upper hand in Syria is absolutely unbearable for Russia. A number of Russian citizens are reported to be fighting on the side of the opposition in Syria. For Russia, the fact that Assad is a secular leader makes a world of difference.

At the same time Assad is not a Russian ally. His father was a Soviet ally but the younger Assad was an ally of France and Britain. He never went to Russia, and neither was Vladimir Putin ever invited to Damascus. The base in Tartus is in shambles and cannot be used. So Russia did not have a particular interest in Syria but a general interest.

Russia also has a functional interest in Syria. Russia wants to be treated on an equal basis with the U.S. and the European countries, which have been playing an important role in the region. From this point of view, Middle East policy and the policy towards Syria were instrumental. Russia had to prove firstly that she wants to be an equal power, secondly that she is against any military intervention, and thirdly that she is able to present an initiative of her own that can help to find the way out of the present impasse. The elimination of chemical weapons is the most well known example. Russia is an indispensable player in the region and its role cannot be diminished because of the tensions caused by the crisis in the Ukraine over Crimea. It

is a long way to peace in Syria and to make it possible concerted efforts of global and regional powers are required.



Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Turkey Office and the Middle East Technical University (METU) Graduate School of Social Sciences organized a conference titled “Middle Eastern Politics: Transformation and Conflict” to discuss the current political scene in the Middle East. Today the region seems to be in a turmoil that encompasses many of the regional actors. It also draws the involvement of extra-regional actors. This turmoil does not hide the fact that the transformations and conflicts in the region are diverse yet also have common themes that bring the regional and external actors together. Identifying these divergences and recognizing the unique elements of change and conflict in several countries and in the foreign policies of external actors, the conference encouraged its participants to also reflect upon alternative ways of resolving these conflicts and to contemplate other non-violent and steadier paths that lead to social and political transformation.