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From a Weak to a Proactive Response to a
Changing Neighborhood

Sally Khalifa Isaac

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EUROPE AND THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS

FROM A WEAK TO A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO A CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

Sally Khalifa Isaac

Abstract

This research paper attempts to assess European responses to the Arab uprisings and, in particular, the introduced change in the EU policy towards its Southern Neighborhood. In specific terms, to what extent do security and strategic considerations still constitute the basis in the EU's "fundamental revision" of its policy in the Southern Neighborhood? And to what extent is the need to safeguard security and strategic interests undermining an authentic EU role in building deep democracy in the region? The presented analyses provide a profound scrutiny and assessment of the new version of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), an empirical evidence of persisting security considerations post-2011 in Euro-Arab relations, and a more elaborated vision of future Euro-Arab relations, attempting to balance between three considerations: security, democracy, and governance. The paper argues that the EU response to revolutionary events in the Arab region has been weak and that the new version of the ENP results hollow. Wide disagreements among European capitals on how to react to Arab uprisings, the sudden influx of illegal migrants and refugees, increased energy concerns, and the rise of political Islam, especially in radical forms, appears to be the key reasons behind this weak response. The study advocates that a proactive and agile EU role in the Arab region post-2011 should not be considered as derived from a moral stance. Rather, it is urgently required as it is in Europe's own interest. The historic events in the Arab region suggest that the EU should not merely revise its own ENP with the Southern Mediterranean. However, it should develop a comprehensive vision and an all-encompassing approach to the entire Arab region, from the West Mediterranean to the Gulf. Finally, this paper provides a number of policy recommendations, attempting to offer a frame for such a vision.

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1. Introduction¹

The public uprisings that have been sweeping across the Arab region since January 2011 came to represent a major juncture in the history of the region as well as in international history at large. For the first time in history, many Arab countries started to witness signs of democratic change that are aspired by the will of the Arab peoples rather than poorly introduced by their authoritarian regimes. These democratic winds of change, which succeeded in overthrowing dictatorships that, for decades, many thought unshakable, equally represent an imperative juncture in the traditional relationship between many Arab countries and the West in general. Importantly, they pose endless questions on future scenarios for strategic, political, and economic relations between the two parts.

In this respect, these unexpected and rapid developments bring all the interconnected political, economic, and social dimensions of Euro-Arab relations in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) back to the forefront of West-Arab relations. Not surprisingly, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, has announced in February 2011 – immediately after the Tunisian and the Egyptian peoples have succeeded in toppling down Ben Ali's and Mubarak's regimes, respectively – that there should be a “fundamental review” of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) so as to face new emerging challenges from the South Mediterranean (Ashton 2011). This “fundamental review” revolves substantially around revisiting EU policies regarding the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and reinforcement of the rule of law in the Southern Mediterranean. The announced “fundamental review” came concretely out in May 2011, promising a new EU response to a changing neighborhood and interpreting Ashton's three-fold strategy: building deep democracy, working on economic development, and facilitating people to people contact (European Commission 2011c).

Nonetheless, in light of the high fluidity and uncertainty that dominate the scene in the wider Arab region – some countries are in troubled transition periods while others are trying to maintain the status quo – major challenges face an authentic EU revision of its traditional policy in the area. For many perceived soft and hard security threats emanating from inside the region, Europe has been entrapped for decades in the dilemma of how to cope with two contradictory security requirements: One is the need to promote good governance, which is considered part of a long term solution to many soft economic, social, and demographic security threats. The other is the need to simultaneously preserve the political stability of many friend authoritarian regimes for their moderate foreign policy outlook, their strategic and geopolitical significance, their cooperation with many European countries in fighting terrorism and limiting illegal migration, and for the EU need to secure energy routes from North Africa and to keep oil and gas prices stable. This implies that security and strategic considerations have figured themselves prominently in the formulation and implementation of EU democracy promotion policies towards the Southern Mediterranean for long. Now, since the demise of some friend authoritarian regimes in MENA did not actually put an end to continuing strategic and security considerations in Euro-Arab relations, many questions are raised on the extent to which the still persisting security concerns continue shaping the new EU approach to democratization in

¹ The author extends earnest thanks to Prof. Dr. Thomas Risse for his careful reading and insightful remarks on an earlier version of this research, which has been presented and discussed in the KFG research seminar on January 9, 2012.

the Southern Mediterranean. This point is of high importance, noting that, despite the success of some revolutions – so far in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya – to topple down their authoritarian regimes, these revolutions still did not lead to a complete democratic transition of power. In addition, the transitional ruling civic and military elites in these countries could be considered to a certain degree – particularly with regard to their foreign orientation – as a continuation to their collapsed predecessors.

With the main focus on the persisting supremacy of security and strategic considerations in Euro-Arab relations, this paper is embedded in the accumulated scholarly literature which assesses and criticizes European policies in the Mediterranean as geared towards preserving stability, security, and geostrategic gains rather than promoting democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Early analyses clearly emphasize the democracy-stability dilemma of European – EU and member states – policies towards their Southern Arab neighbors through stressing three key arguments: The first one stresses that the early European adoption of democracy promotion policies and good governance mechanisms in the Arab region through the EMP, which has been further elaborated through the ENP in 2004, has essentially been a security and strategic imperative rather than a merely ethical or moral one (Parfitt 1997; Youngs 2003).² The second argument accentuates the failure of European democratization policies in the Arab neighborhood by denoting that, in practice, Europe has exerted significant pressure and has applied conditionality based on Arab states' foreign behavior and external actions rather than on their internal progress on the democratization and development fronts (Youngs 2003; Ziadeh 2009). The third argument underlines the European apprehension of a potential rise of political Islam with an anticipated hostile foreign policy orientation if democracy had been promoted earnestly. In this regard, several analyses highlight the European reluctance to condemn human rights violations against Islamists and the constant process of friendly authoritarian Arab regimes to oppress Islamists (Tocci/Cassarino 2011; Youngs 2003; Ziadeh 2009). Besides these key arguments, this paper further develops an important thread in accumulated literature, which scrutinizes the wide assortment of European security concerns that have been entrapping Europe in this stability-democracy dilemma for decades. Most important of these concerns are soft-security threats, revolving mainly around demographic challenges, energy security, illegal migration, terrorism, and organized crime (ESIS 2010; Cabras 2010; Carrera 2011; Masala 1999).

While embracing these established arguments and ideas, introduced and refined in scholarly literature prior to the outbreak of Arab uprisings, this paper also builds on and contributes to the notable analyses focusing on the imperative need to rethink Euro-Arab relations post January 2011. These academic and policy oriented analyses, first, highlight the unaddressed conflict between different EU foreign policy objectives in the Mediterranean after the so-called *Arab Spring*, stressing that EU democracy promotion efforts are embedded in the broader context of bilateral and regional cooperation schemes, which limit European approaches to democracy promotion out of the lingering anxiety to jeopardize security and welfare objectives (van Hüllen forthcoming). Secondly, they call for a fundamental rethinking of the EU's hierarchy of policy priorities by reviewing the effective use of conditionality, establishing adequate monitoring mechanisms, and engaging with a plethora of partners both within and beyond the region (Nicolas 2011; Tocci/Cassarino

² For extensive assessment of EU democratization and political reform policies, see Bicchi 2009; Kelley 2006; Van Hüllen 2009; Youngs 2002, 2008.

2011),³ and, thirdly, emphasize yet again that democratization efforts in the Arab neighborhood remain an important dimension for European security and underscore the importance of serious European efforts to reach out to other external powers and relevant *de facto* actors in the Arab region (Silvestri 2011).

Based on this premise and drawing on existing literature, the focus point of this study revolves around assessing European responses to Arab uprisings and, in particular, the introduced change in the EU policy towards its Southern Neighborhood. In specific terms, to what extent do security and strategic considerations still constitute the basis in the EU's "fundamental revision" of its policy in the Southern Neighborhood? To what extent is the need to safeguard security and strategic interests undermining an authentic EU role in building deep democracy in the region? This paper contributes to the presented literature with a profound scrutiny and assessment of the new version of the ENP, an empirical evidence of persisting security considerations in post-2011 Euro-Arab relations, and a more elaborated vision of future Euro-Arab relations in a manner that attempts to balance three considerations: security, democracy, and governance.

The aim of this paper is twofold. The first is to provide an assessment of the revised EU policy towards the Southern Mediterranean in light of the aforementioned security-democracy dilemma. The second is to offer policy oriented recommendations, attempting to chart the way ahead for an enhanced European response to such historic events in the wide Arab region rather than in the limited Mediterranean area.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first brings into focus the initially perplexed reaction of the EU and the struggle for consensus among European capitals on how to react to these unexpected events in the Southern Mediterranean. The second provides an assessment of the new version of the ENP, which the EU has introduced in May 2011, claiming that it represents a fundamental review of its traditionally ill thought-through democracy promotion policy in the Southern Neighborhood. The third attempts to explain why the EU response is weak, mainly through highlighting various security concerns that continue to persist in Euro-Arab relations and that have even presented themselves more forcefully in the aftermath of the *Arab Spring*. Finally, the fourth section offers some policy oriented recommendations for a more re-invigorated EU response to a changing neighborhood, taking into account both the strained financial situation in Europe and the inevitable need to balance security considerations with democracy promotion.

2. Europe Caught By Surprise: Perplexed Initial Reactions to the Arab Revolutions

The EU did not start to be loud in promising full support to democratic reforms before the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolutions succeeded. Its reaction was slow and hesitant, cautiously trying to figure out where the public revolts are going with Europe's best autocratic friends.

³ For specific analyses on case studies, see Koenig 2011 and see also the policy-oriented analysis of Dworkin et al. 2011.

Europe was caught in surprise, no doubt. The lack of consensus among European capitals on how to react to the various revolutions in the Arab region was the clearest manifestation of European confusion and perplexity. Most importantly, this lack of consensus made it more visible than ever that a unified European foreign policy towards the Arab region is still long way off. The fact that each EU country has its own particular story in terms of interests and ties with different Arab dictators, which is not shared by other EU countries, explains much of the initial confusion and discord.

In the case of Tunisia, after a few days of confusion, the EU was loud on supporting the revolution. However, two incidents came to mar Europe's credibility: First, disagreement immediately erupted between Italy, France, and other EU countries, following the unexpected influx of around 20,000 Tunisia immigrants to the 5,000-inhabitant Italian island of Lampedusa. Countries affected by this massive inflow of immigrants – above all, Italy, Malta, Cyprus, and Greece – demanded solidarity from other EU member states at the meeting of the EU Justice and Interior Ministers on February 24-25 in Brussels. The EU did not positively respond to these countries' demands. Rather, media quoted the German Interior Minister, Thomas de Maiziere saying to his EU colleagues that "Italy is restrained, but not overstrained" (Dohmen et al., 28 February 2011). Disappointed at the EU's response, the Italian government issued visas to Tunisian refugees, who – now allowed to move freely in the Schengen zone – moved to France. Finally, France and Italy have pressed the EU to review the Schengen treaty (Banks 2011; Euronews 2011).

On a second front, parallel to its high rhetoric on support to the revolution in Tunisia, the French government was indeed embarrassed when it was revealed that French Foreign Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, spoke to Ben Ali while she was on vacation in Tunisia during anti-government protests in December, and flew twice on a jet owned by one of his close friends (Castle 2011).

In the case of Egypt, a country of clear political and strategic significance, Europe was particularly hesitant in explicitly siding with public protests. Initial EU statements did not demand the ouster of Mubarak, rather called on the Mubarak regime to stop violence against peaceful protesters and undertake necessary reforms. Ironically, Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, had even praised Mubarak on February 4, saying that he hopes "that in Egypt there can be a transition towards a more democratic system without a break from President Mubarak, who in the West, above all in the United States, is considered the wisest of men and a precise reference point" (Reuters 2011). Many in Egypt have even pointed out that the EU did not utterly support the Egyptian public demands that Mubarak has to step down until US President Barak Obama made his bold announcement that "Muabarak should leave now".

The revolution in Egypt, however, made it clear in Europe and elsewhere, that it was not only about Tunisia, but that the Arab region was now experiencing a wave of revolutions. Immediately after Mubarak stepped down and before the commencement of public revolts in Libya, the EU announced that its Neighborhood Policy in the Southern Mediterranean should be fundamentally revised.

In the case of Libya, disagreements on how to react marked the discussions of EU capitals and undermined the actual existence of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (Hanelt/Bauer 2011). On the Western side, only Britain and France were enthusiastic for intervention. Germany strongly opposed and even removed its ships from a naval blockade in the Mediterranean and pulled its crews out of NATO

support aircraft. Italy, a country with huge economic ties with Libya and a number of agreements aiming at controlling the flow of illegal migration with the ex-Gaddafi regime, considered the loss of Gaddafi as catastrophic. It initially opposed the intervention and preferred the adoption of a “cautious stance”. Most Italian officials were convinced that Gaddafi’s successor would not appreciate Berlusconi’s lavish attentions to his predecessor” (Faris 2011). Malta resisted intervention, fearing a potential flow of refugees. On the Eastern flank, Poland led several East European countries in arguing that Libya’s problems were an internal affair (Nicolas 2011). Moreover, Eastern European members seemed to prefer seeing EU support going to their immediate neighbors, such as Ukraine and Georgia, rather than to countries they deemed mostly irrelevant to their interests (Dohmen et al. 2011).

The struggle for consensus in Europe was indeed embarrassing, noting the perfect context for the EU to act. UN Security Council Resolution 1973, authorizing the use of force, was approved; an unprecedented request for intervention from the Arab League was made explicit; and the US clearly indicated that it will not take the lead. As Sven Biscop correctly points out, all preconditions were there but European Unity and it was hence a shame that the intervention in Libya could not be undertaken through the EU (Biscop 2011).

In the case of Bahrain, which marked that revolutions were moving to the Gulf, everyone preferred to maintain a perplexing silence, reaffirming that the Gulf is simply not North Africa. The region has huge oil reserves, represents a hub for Western financial investments, and enjoys an extremely geostrategic importance. Saudi Arabia, a major authoritarian regime in the Gulf, but labeled moderate by the West because of its pro-Western foreign policy profile, took the lead in cracking down the revolution in Bahrain amid international silence. Bahrain is governed by the minority Sunni elite, while the Shiite majority is politically marginalized. As it has been always the case, the issue is seen from a security perspective: A rise of Shiite in the Sunni Gulf would signify increased Iranian influence in the region. Bahrain itself is considered an important US ally in the Gulf. It enjoys the status of a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) and its capital, Manama, is the headquarter of the US Fifth Fleet, which is permanently stationed in the Middle East with its area of responsibility identified in the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian Gulf.

Again, from a strategic and security prism, Egypt represents an even more important case compared to Bahrain since it enjoys the status of a MNNA and is considered a key strategic partner to the West. For several decades, the Mubarak regime maintained peace with Israel and backed US initiatives in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, the military institution in Egypt, which protected the Egyptian revolution and is currently leading the transitional period after Mubarak, was considered the best guarantor of Western interests. Not surprisingly, the first announcement of the Egyptian military, which has been receiving \$1.3 billion annually from the US ever since 1979 when the peace treaty with Israel was signed, came to assure that Egypt honors its international and regional commitments. For the West, the Egyptian revolution was in safe hands. Yet, no safe hands were there in the Gulf to secure a smooth transition to democracy without jeopardizing security and strategic interests. Therefore, the conclusion that seemed to be reached in the US and Europe was that the Bahraini revolution should be contained. This stance, again, strongly highlights that security considerations still override democracy promotion and that the latter would be supported only when the first is guaranteed.

In the case of Syria, the EU continued its already initiated policy aiming at isolating the Assad regime through increased sanctions. New EU sanctions included imposing embargos on arms and related materiel and on equipment which might be used for internal repression, a ban on the provision of certain services, restrictions on admission of certain persons, and freezing of funds and economic resources of certain persons, entities, and bodies (European Commission 2011e). At the beginning, some expected that this policy is doomed to fail as the Assad regime still had good relations with China, Iran, Russia, and Latin America. However, the effectiveness of sanctions started to gain more momentum when many other countries joined the EU in sanctioning Syria. Most important to mention are Turkey and many Arab states.

After the first phase of surprise and perplexed reactions, the EU announced its intent to reinvent the neighborhood policy to accommodate to the new situation in the Southern Mediterranean. The first unified action came on March 2011, when an EU summit was held to discuss the proposal on “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” (PDSP) with the Southern Mediterranean (European Commission 2011a). This initial proposal has been criticized for being significantly underfunded and hastily adopted without adequate study of the situation. According to Stefano Silvestri

“it is sad to think that these quasi-decisions are the outcome of the first major test of Europe’s External Action Service (EEAS), the new decision-making mechanism for foreign, security, and defence policy. The crises have been dealt with through unilateral initiatives and special contact groups, shortcircuiting the European multilateral mechanism” (Silvestri 2011).

Building on the PDSP, the EU came up in May 2011 with what it described as a fundamental change to its Southern Neighborhood Policy. The following section of this paper brings the new version of the ENP to focus to assess its soundness.

3. Assessing the New ENP: A True Democracy Promotion Response to a Changing Neighborhood?

According to the new version of the ENP, the EU maintains that a new approach to the Southern Mediterranean is needed in order to “build and consolidate healthy democracies, pursue sustainable economic growth and manage cross-border links”. It continues to affirm that the new EU approach is based on “a shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law” (European Commission 2011c). These statements are not actually new to the ENP, as the EU has spelled out its commitment to the promotion of democracy in the Southern Mediterranean since the early stages of the EMP in the 1990s.

Nonetheless, and building upon the PDSP, the “fundamental review” that the new ENP presents appears in stressing the principle of conditionality and the adoption of a much higher level of differentiation. The principle of conditionality indicates that more EU funds will be allocated to countries that progress in internal reforms. While the principle of differentiation would allow each partner country to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs, and capacities allow. It is worth noting in this place

that the principle of conditionality was not introduced for the first time in the new version of the ENP. The original version of 2004 clearly stipulates that respect for human rights and democracy is an essential element of any bilateral partnership agreements between Southern individual countries and the EU. This was usually referred to as the “human rights clause” or “positive conditionality”. The European Commission memorandum of May 2001 also stressed that bilateral agreements with the EU would be suspended, but only as a last resort if democracy and human rights were not respected. However, the previous experience proves that the EU continued to prop up autocratic regimes in the Southern Mediterranean at the expense of promoting democracy and human rights and that positive conditionality has never been applied.

In the new version of the ENP, the enhanced EU support is envisaged in various forms. These include: funds for social and economic development, larger programs for comprehensive institution building (CIB), greater market access, increased European Investment Bank (EIB) financing in support of investments, and greater facilitation of mobility.

Yet, despite this scrupulous presentation of a new and ambitious EU approach to revolutionary events in the Southern Neighborhood, the new ENP proposal goes amiss in many ways:

First, it does not specify in practical ways how exactly the EU is going to assess its partners’ reform progress and their actual implementation of proclaimed reforms. Hence, it remains still unclear whether the EU is going to reward its Southern partners for announced/planned reforms or for effectively achieved reforms. This point is of immense importance since the EU started providing Egypt and Tunisia with democratization and development assistance funds in August 2011 while in both countries – at the time – only little manifestations of achieved reforms could be found. For Egypt, the European Commission has approved €100 million on August 17, 2011: €20 million to improve living conditions of the poor population residing in under-served areas in the Greater Cairo region; €20 million to implement trade and domestic market-related reforms; and €60 million to improve sustainable energy supply via the promotion of renewable energy (European Commission 2011f). In Tunisia, the European Commission has approved €110 million for development assistance projects: €90 million for supporting the economic recovery measures announced by the Tunisian government; and €20 million for national modernization policies in the services sector (European Commission 2011d).

Secondly, the EU’s assessment of its partners’ progress in democratization, rule of law, and human rights is simply scheduled to take place too late. According to the new version of the ENP, the EU

“will take the reform track record of partners during the 2010-2012 period (based on the annual progress reports) into account when deciding on country financial allocations for 2014 and beyond. For countries where reform has not taken place, the EU will consider or even reduce funding” (European Commission, 25 May 2011).

These lines clearly indicate that the EU is not going to actually consider applying its conditionality clause until 2014. The application of conditionality is, hence, planned to take place too late, considering that most important developments setting the basis for a real democratic change in transitional countries, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, are occurring in 2011 and the first half of 2012. If the EU was actually serious

about supporting the process of democratization in the Southern Neighborhood, that span of time is the crucial one for enacting conditionality and for monitoring progress in democratization efforts.

A careful observer of how the transitional periods in Tunisia and Egypt – but particularly in Egypt – have been run by interim military and civic elites would wonder: On what basis has the EU dispensed funds to these countries early in August 2011? In Egypt, increased violations of human rights and restrictions on freedom of expression have been increasingly reported under the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), which has been governing the country since Mubarak stepped down in February 2011. The outbreak of massive demonstrations in Egypt, particularly during July and November 2011, came to reflect public frustration about the SCAF and the slow pace and reluctant attitude it has tightly embraced in introducing real change to post-Mubarak Egypt (Isaac 2011; see also Isaac 2012b; Dunn 2011).

The answer to the previous question is ironically simple: Conditionality, which is again the only fundamental change introduced to the ENP, is to be applied for future allocations of funds starting in 2014.

Thirdly, the new ENP is awfully underfunded. Apart of previous downfalls in the EU's application of conditionality, offered funds do not represent a real incentive for countries in the South to undertake reforms. This undermines the ability of the EU to influence progress towards democratization in the region.

The EU has promised assistance to long lists of activities that are inserted under several dimensions of the ENP's two main pillars: supporting progress towards deep democracy and supporting sustainable economic and social development. Yet, promised EU funds are at no match for the laid down scope of action and are quasi insignificant in light of the miserable economic and political conditions of Arab countries in transition.

For the entire Southern Mediterranean region, the EU has €5.7 billion already allocated for the period 2011-2013, plus additional funding of €1.24 billion that has been transferred from other external resources to be made available in support of the new ENP (The European Union 2011). It is also important to mention that, according to EU documents, the European Council has agreed to increase EIB lending to the Southern Mediterranean by €1 billion over the same period 2011-2013; and that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will work to extend its operations into the MENA region starting with Egypt. The expectation is that annual lending volumes could reach around €2.5 billion per year by 2013 (The European Union 2011).

Considering Europe's financial crisis, these figures, whether provided in aid, investment, or loans forms, denote meaningful assistance funds. Yet, these figures lose their significance when considering the economic conditions in North Africa, which have further deteriorated after the revolutions. So, the EU is offering in total less than €7 billion in aid to the entire Southern Neighborhood from 2010 to 2013, while Egypt alone has an estimated debt of \$184 billion in June 2010 (equivalent to 89.5 percent of the country's GDP). This figure has been announced in February 2011 by the head of Egypt's Central Auditing Agency, Gawdat El Malt, warning that it was "above a safe level" (quoted in: O'Connor 2011). The Egyptian government is spending around \$18 billion – only in 2011 – on total internal and external debt services. This exceeds annual amounts allocated for education, health, and all other public services. In Tunisia, the economic

situation is not as bleak as the case of Egypt, but the country has still an estimated debt of approximately €20.2 billion, equivalent to 40 percent of its GDP (Global Finance 2011; see also OECD 2008). IMF reports list Tunisia and Egypt in their red-zone, alongside Syria and Yemen. Furthermore, continuing deteriorating political, security, and commercial environments in these countries critically influence the ability of their economies to recover after the revolutions. In Egypt, and to a lesser degree in Tunisia, continuous public protests, prevailing chaos, political instability, and sectarian violence are threatening foreign investments and tourism (D&B Government Solutions 2011). In fact, the two economies have suffered sluggish exports, withdrawal of foreign investors, decreasing remittances of workers abroad, and declining tourism inflows during 2011.

The key point to underline here is that in order to truly help the process of democratization and development in the Arab region, huge funds in democratization and development assistance are needed. Alas, at this particular moment in history, it seems that neither Europe, nor any other single actor on the international stage, is in a privileged economic position to provide them. It would necessitate, however, that the EU takes the lead in a concerted international and regional effort to help its Southern partners. This point will be further tackled in the last section of this paper, but it is worth mentioning in this place that the EU does not even seem ready to assume this political role. For instance, it was the United States, rather than the EU, who took the initiative in May 2011 to commit a debt swap for Egypt and took the diplomatic move of calling upon other G8 countries to join the US in this effort (Clinton/Geithner 2011). As a letter authored by US Secretary of States, Hilary Clinton, and US Secretary of Treasury, Timothy Geithner, addressing the G8 ministers, demonstrates, the US has further called on governments around the world – including in the Middle East and the Gulf – to join it in forming a broad and long-term partnership to support Egypt and Tunisia (Clinton /Geithner, May 2011). Few days after, the G8 reacted by promising \$20 billion in aid and stated in its declaration that

“multilateral development banks could provide over \$20 billion, including €3.5 billion from the EIB, for Egypt and Tunisia for 2011-2013 in support of suitable reform efforts. G8 members are already in a position to mobilise substantial bilateral support to scale-up this effort. We welcome support from other bilateral partners, including from the region” (G8: 2011).

Later, in September 2011, the G8 finance chiefs pledged \$38 billion in financing to Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan for 2011-13, widening the deal agreed in May and offering Libya the chance to join, too (Breidthardt/Bremer 2011).

The preceding analysis of Europe’s confused reaction to the Arab revolutions and the previous assessment of the new ENP make it quite clear that, again, the EU is not presenting an authentic change to its democracy promotion policy in the Southern Mediterranean. Rather, the EU seems to be adopting a wait and see approach until it becomes clear where the winds of change are taking its Southern Neighbors so as to adjust and readjust its stances and scope of role.

4. Why the EU Response is Weak

The controversial low profile of the EU in Arab revolutions raises many why-questions. The comfortable answer, although representing a true part of the explanation, would be the arduous financial situation of Europe that impedes the EU from providing a significant democratization fund to its Southern partners or from playing a meaningful role in the process of their democratization. However, many important factors, in terms of security and strategic considerations, still present themselves strongly on the wider MENA region and do provide an important part of the explanation for the weak EU response. Also, as mentioned in part one, the fact that each EU country has its own particular story – in terms of interests and ties with different Arab countries – which is not shared by other EU countries, has been manifested in a first confused reaction and appears to have influenced the decision making process on the EU level.

In fact, security and strategic considerations have shaped much of the previous EU approach towards the Arab region before 2011. Europe's stress on democratization, rule of law, and human rights in the Southern Neighborhood has been embraced as tools to a more secure Mediterranean. These tools represented non-military means in dealing with the many soft security threats emanating from the Southern Mediterranean and encroaching on Europe's own security. Deteriorating economic conditions, energy concerns, ecological degradation, terrorism and organized crime, illegal migration, and demographic challenges – represented in a massive population increase producing a youth bulge across Arab North Africa that is unmatched by Southern and Western European countries – account for main current and future security concerns.

Now, with revolutions sweeping across the region, security concerns did not fade away. Rather they even persist more than before in Euro-Arab relations and, hence, seem to continue constituting the basis for the EU's new review of the ENP. This has been particularly manifested in three ways:

- First, flows of illegal migrants and refugees.

According to EC reports, “more than 20,000 migrants, mainly from Tunisia and, to a lesser extent from other African countries, have managed to enter the Union irregularly, reaching the shores of Italy (most to the Island of Lampedusa) and Malta” (European Commission 2011). As mentioned earlier, the situation marred relations between Italy and other EU members, especially France. These dramatic events led many EU leaders to embrace a defensive stance of Arab revolutions and to push for tightening migration controls including a serious discussion of a rollback to the Schengen accord to reintroduce boarder controls between EU states (Banks 2011; Euronews 2011).

Although the EU has contributed with €100 million in humanitarian aid, it still has failed to react to this human crisis properly. Simply, its mechanisms and funds are not designed to respond to crisis situations. According to EU officials,

“the financial resources available under the general programme ‘Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows’ are inadequate to respond to all requests for assistance. First, these funds cannot be mobilized easily; they are designed to intervene in a stable situation and not to tackle emergencies and crisis. Secondly, the magnitude of the problems largely exceeds the existing facilities” (European Commission 2011b).

Previous experience proves that the EU and relevant member states prioritized cooperation on migration and terrorism with Southern Mediterranean partners over human rights considerations and international law principles. Following the launch of the ENP in 2004, some of the largest aid fundings have gone to projects designed to reduce illegal migration and to fight terrorism. Examples include the allocation of €40 million for such a program in Morocco contrasting with the country's exclusion from the EU's democracy and human rights fund. Lebanon and Algeria, countries with little democratic credibility, were supported by the EU in exchange for participation in counter-terrorism activities and strategies (Ziadeh 2009; see also Bertin/Fontanari 2011). The Treaty of Friendship between Italy and Libya in 2008 is another example. As described by Ana Gomes, Member of the European Parliament's sub-committee on Security and Defense, and of the Foreign Affairs Committee, this Friendship Treaty

"is a sad example of the effectiveness of this closed-doors and push-back policy: in exchange for \$5 billion over 20 years, the Gaddafi regime ensured – almost overnight – that immigrants stopped arriving on Italian shores. [...] such gains in migration control were achieved at high costs: the rights of migrants and refugees pushed back at times with brutal methods, with asylum-seekers even prevented from asking for asylum. [...] Migrants and asylum-seekers are often delivered to traffickers who hold them from ransom or handed back to the hands of dictators, with the help of EU member states' patrols. [...] sometimes using electric shocks" (Gomes 2011).

The youth bulge in North Africa still indicates that the problem of illegal migration is not to end anytime soon (see Table 1). The situation has been actually worsening with even more bleak economic conditions pounding countries in transition after the revolutions, mainly due to severe decline in tourism and significant withdrawal of investors. As underlined in the Europe 2020 Strategy,

"one of the most pressing economic challenges faced by Europe is the need to address the demographic decline in its working population coupled with significant projected skills shortages in certain sectors. [...] poorly managed immigration can affect social cohesion and the trust of citizens in an area of free movement without internal borders" (European Commission 2011b).

Table 1: Selected Demographic Indicators of Southern Mediterranean Countries

Country	Population (1000s) Y 2010	Population Growth Rate (%) Y 2010-2015	Total Fertility Y 2010-2015	Population Aged 0-14				Population Aged 15-24				TOTAL Population Aged 0-24			
				Y 2010		Y 2015		Y 2010		Y 2015		Y 2010		Y 2015	
				(1000s)	(%)	(1000s)	(%)	(1000s)	(%)	(1000s)	(%)	(1000s)	(%)	(1000s)	(%)
Algeria	35,423	1.45	2.26	9,560	27.0	10,157	26.7	7,246	20.5	6,468	17.0	16,806	47.5	16,625	43.7
Egypt	84,474	1.66	2.68	27,149	32.1	28,519	31.1	17,030	20.2	16,268	17.7	44,179	52.3	44,787	48.8
Jordan	6,472	1.44	2.81	2,197	33.9	2,252	32.4	1,322	20.4	1,341	19.3	3,519	54.3	3,593	51.7
Libya	6,546	1.79	2.47	1,970	30.1	2,104	29.4	1,133	17.3	1,139	15.9	3,103	47.4	3,243	45.3
Mauritania	3,366	2.07	4.07	1,320	39.2	1,411	37.8	676	20.1	740	19.8	1,996	59.3	2,151	57.6
Morocco	32,381	1.17	2.26	9,078	28.0	9,204	26.8	6,376	19.7	6,086	17.7	15,454	47.7	15,290	44.5
Occupied Palestinian Territory	4,409	2.87	4.50	1,962	44.5	2,133	41.9	879	19.9	1,053	20.7	2,841	64.4	3,188	62.6
Tunisia	10,374	0.96	1.82	2,370	22.8	2,392	22.0	2,001	19.3	1,756	16.1	4,371	42.1	4,148	38.1

Source: United Nations Populations Division, World Population Prospects: The 2008 Population Revision – Population Database, available online at: <http://esa.un.org/UNPP/index.asp?panel=2>; November 2011.

- **Second, increased energy concerns.**

As a matter of fact, MENA countries account for 30.36 percent of Europe's oil imports (see Figure 1 and 2). Particularly over the past decade, South European countries have been increasingly dependent on the relatively cheap and vast gas reserves of North Africa, mainly from Libya, Algeria, and Egypt. Italy is largely dependent on gas imports from Libya, transferred through the 520-km-long Greenstream pipeline inaugurated by Berlusconi and Gaddafi in 2004. Ever since, Libya is considered Italy's largest supplier of oil and gas. Algeria – a country that remained immune from public revolts – provides alone more than half of the non-European gas that flows into Europe through the two gas pipelines "Trans-Med" and "Maghreb-Europe". Algeria delivers around 30 percent of Italian and 20 percent of Spanish gas demand and is considered the EU's third largest (after Russia and Norway) foreign gas supplier (Lochner/Dieckhöner 2011). Securing access to these energy sources and maintaining their prices stable has always been considered a crucial element of energy security in Euro-Arab relations.

These facts explain why Italy has been alarmed by the disruption in gas transfer from Libya through the Greenstream pipeline. Also, they explain why there were broader energy concerns – not merely limited to Italy, but broadly across Europe – and the fear of a potential spread of Arab revolts to Algeria or even to the Gulf. This was even true for European countries that import most of their oil and gas from outside the MENA region, such as Germany, since disruption in the production of oil and gas or instability in their prices in MENA would affect the international market at large. According to a recent analysis, "if the pro-democracy unrest should also spill over into oil-rich Saudi Arabia, experts predict that oil prices could reach new all-time highs, which could have disastrous effects on growth and employment in Europe" (Dohmen et al. 2011).

Figure 1: EU oil imports from the world

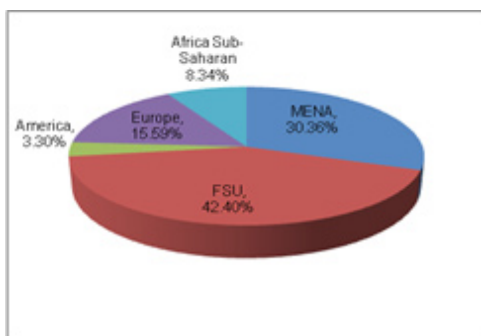
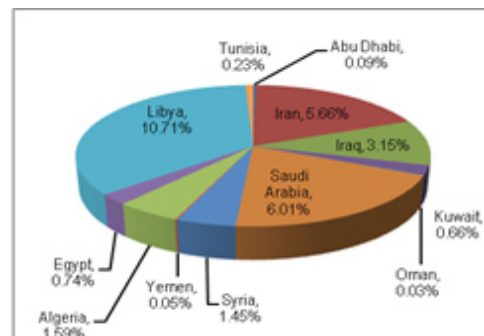


Figure 2: EU oil imports from MENA countries



Source: European Commission, Directorate General for Energy, Registration of crude oil imports and deliveries in the EU, period: 1-12/2010.

In Germany, a production slowdown in Libya has caused gas prices to climb to €1.57 per liter, up from €1.49 per liter in January 2011. Apart from energy, EU investments in MENA, and specifically in the Gulf, have been rising over the past decade. According to Thomas Bach, president of the Arab German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Ghorfa), "trade volumes between the two sides have more than doubled in the last decade, reaching 16.98 billion Euros in 2010, accounting for more than half of Germany's trade with Arab countries" (de Sybel 2011). In brief, the question of energy denotes that stability considerations and energy security do still matter in Euro-Arab relations.

- *Third, the Rise of Political Islam in the Aftermath of Youth Revolutions*

The Arab Spring turned out to be an Islamic winter. Regardless of how democratic this would turn out to be, the rise of political Islam in moderate and radical forms after the revolutions sent alarming bells to the West in terms of foreign orientation. The situation was puzzling, noting the unexpected rise of radical Islamists, such as Salafies in Tunisia and Egypt, and the Islamic Group/Jammaa Islameya in Libya and also in Egypt. Ironically, prior to the revolutions, autocratic regimes in MENA were struggling to suppress and contain moderate political Islam, represented mainly in the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Arab Spring has been initiated by a well-educated Arab youth, who is mostly secular and identifies itself with the universal values of democracy, governance, and human rights. However, lacking organization and experience, youth forces were rapidly fragmented and appeared too fragile to challenge the well-organized Islamists.

While the US and Europe were less preoccupied in the case of Tunisia, where the transitional period has been proceeding relatively smoothly and where Al-Nahda Islamic Party presented itself through a moderate and a rather modern discourse, the case of Egypt was deemed troublesome due to the country's strategic importance and political weight in the region. In addition to these factors, lumbering internal developments in the country fueled international apprehension about the still unpredictable fate of post-Mubarak's Egypt. These include the apparent chaos and insecurity that prevailed in the country, frequent incidents of religious strife, and the increasingly rising voices calling for a serious review of the Peace Treaty with Israel, which has been actually accompanied by the thirteen times bombing of the gas pipeline that is extended from Egypt to Israel in less than eighteen months,⁴ and the attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo. In addition, the rise of political Islam in Egypt and the still unsettled power struggle between the military, the Islamists, and secular and youth forces continue to undermine the political stability of the country and, hence, present an additional concern in the West.

In recent experiences of the past decade, when Political Islam (mainly Hizboallah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza) got its way to power through democratic electoral processes, the West was not willing to accept the results. According to the analysis of Tucci and Casarino,

“these Islamist inroads through democratic processes triggered the abandonment of what had been a rather superficial and ill-thought out embrace of democracy by the West in the post-9/11 world, reverting back to comfortable notion of cooperation with authoritarian (but pro-Western) regimes” (Tucci/Cassarino 2011).

The rise of Political Islam in post Arab revolutions seemed therefore to be presenting itself as another concern, encouraging Europe to tightly embrace a wait-and-see approach. Also, Europe seemed relying on the US, who enjoys more political clout and holds the keys of most diplomatic cards in the area, to prevent things from going out of control. US diplomacy moved quickly to enhance the gradually-eroding credibility of the Egyptian military by backing the Shalit swap deal between Israel and Hamas in October 2011, giving more credit to Egyptian diplomacy in concluding the deal. This was most evident when Hamas immediately

⁴ The mentioned figure (13 times) represents the number of times the line has been bombed until March 2012.

afterwards announced that it was moving its headquarter to Cairo. Then, in December 2011, when the preliminary results of Egypt's parliamentary elections revealed an outstanding success of Islamists, seizing around 70 percent of parliament seats, US diplomacy moved again to push for the unexpected announcement of radical Salafies and the moderate Brotherhood that the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel will be honored (Abdel Khaleq 2011). Also, in late December, the Obama administration announced a weapons deal with Saudi Arabia, saying it had agreed to sell F-15 fighter jets valued at nearly \$30 billion to the Royal Saudi Air Force (Ukman 2011). This has been largely considered as another move of the US to fortify the defense capabilities of a key ally in the Persian Gulf. On one side, the Saudi Kingdom is a main buffer against the rise of Iran, and, on another side, Saudi Arabia has been working to maintain the status quo in the Middle East and the Gulf area after the Arab revolutions.

5. A Vision for an Enhanced EU Role: Policy Recommendations

Realistically speaking, and in line with the preceding analysis, a proactive and agile EU role in the Arab region post-2011 should not be considered as derived from a moral stance. Rather, it is urgently required as it is of Europe's own interests.

The historic events in the Arab region suggest that the EU should not merely revise its own ENP towards the Southern Mediterranean. It should, however, develop a comprehensive vision and an all-compassing approach to the entire Arab region, from the West Mediterranean to the Gulf. In geographic terms, it needs to develop a vision that is not limited to the South Mediterranean region. In substantive terms, it should achieve a needed balance between three considerations: security, democracy and governance, and economic development. This vision should not be limited to the narrow consideration of the role of the EU or individual European countries, but one that takes into account the roles played by other *de facto* Mediterranean and Middle East powers. The following policy recommendations attempt to offer a frame for such a vision. These recommendations start with what Europe, the EU, and member states, should do on their own. Then, it moves to consider possible frameworks of cooperation between the EU and other key regional powers and organizations.

a. Make the ENP and future bilateral agreements meaningful

The EU should work on identifying clear criteria for granting democratization and assistance funds. Clear measurements and time plans should be agreed on with Southern partners in a way that ***assistance funds reach those who implement reforms or achieve a measurable progress in implementing reforms, rather than only announcing them.***

Much weight should be given to ***building institutions and reforming education*** in transitional countries. These are key pillars that are supposed to help transitional countries in fostering deep democracy and economic development on the long run. The new version of the ENP stresses more the importance of assisting civil society organizations (CSO). However, without strong and transparent state institutions, CSOs alone can do little in democratization and developmental efforts.

Support small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), particularly in Egypt and Tunisia. This would help the EU in playing a significant role in creating job opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurship, and hence in the economic development of transitional countries. A recent analysis points out that supporting SMEs is effective and feasible, as it “can be done through assistance loans or cooperation projects as envisaged within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean or the ENP” (Hanelt/Bauer 2011).

b. Enhancing Europe’s profile: The importance of being politically loud in support of democracy and human rights

The EU, as well as most member states, has responded loudly in support of Arab revolutions and against violations of human rights during public revolts. This took mainly the form of political statements condemning the use of violence against peaceful protesters and imposing sanctions on autocratic regimes suppressing public revolts. In this regard, the EU has adopted a number of important restrictive measures in support of the Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria (European Commission 2011e). While the EU is still politically loud in the case of Syria, it should also continue to be politically strident in transitional countries, especially in Egypt and to a lesser degree in Tunisia, where the use of violence against protestors, violations of women and religious minorities rights, and restrictions on CSOs are still in practice by interim governments and ruling military elites.

c. The EU should engage Southern partners in initiatives on migration mobility, and cross-border and maritime security

The EU has and is still elaborating a considerable number of policies and mechanisms to encounter illegal migration and cross-border crime. The most recent one in the area of border surveillance is the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR). It has been developed by the European Commission in close consultation with member states and FRONTEX. Operational as of 2013, EUROSUR is believed to be one of the key initiatives under the EU Internal Security Strategy and is expected to allow the EU to face the challenges to the security of its borders more effectively (Manservisi 2011).

However, ***the EU should work to seriously engage its Southern partners in similar initiatives, aiming at ensuring regular migration, and cross-border and maritime security.*** According to Stefano Manservisi, Director General of the European Commission’s DG Home Affairs since 2010, the EU should “enter into a dialogue on migration mobility and security, and present to the neighborhood countries a package of measures to translate this dialogue into concrete actions” (Manservisi 2011).

In such a dialogue, ***a balance between short-term and long-term policies should be carefully considered.*** While cooperation in maritime security, border surveillance, and information sharing would be effective on the short term, there is a need to consider the root causes of illegal migration and human trafficking. Most important of which are poverty, unemployment, instability, and political repression. In this respect, Ana Gomes, Member of the European Parliament’s sub-committee on Security and Defense and of the Foreign Affairs Committee, stresses that the EU needs to better coordinate among several external action policies, mainly development and security (Gomes 2011). This has also been stressed in a communication of the European Commission in May 2011, emphasizing that the need to address the challenging and evolving

situation of illegal migration “should not lead to a short-term approach limited to border control without taking account of long term issues” (European Commission 2011b).

d. The EU should capitalize on its expertise in the fields of managing civil-military relations (Isaac 2012a), training of police and security forces, and state-building in assisting post-Gaddafi Libya.

e. Seeking a more coordinated European role in MENA: The importance of sub-regional forums for security and economic cooperation

While the EU members have to reach consensus and to act multilaterally in the previous policy aspects, other issues could be partially left for relevant individual member states or for sub-regional settings.

It is of no doubt that the details of specific policy areas, mainly related to the security of the Mediterranean, illegal migration, and cross-border crime, are of more interest to Southern European countries compared to Northern or Eastern ones. Therefore, it is not surprising that sub-regional forums, such as the 5+5 Initiative for Defense and Security in the West Mediterranean,⁵ have been designated to profoundly tackle such threats. On a similar level, the increased financial contacts and economic relations between some Western European countries and Gulf countries were the main drive behind the launch of the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) dialogue, which mainly aims at enhancing bilateral economic ties between the two sides.

These already established forums for dialogue and cooperation do represent an existing opportunity for better European coordination in post-2011. According to Coustilliere’s analysis,

“although the 5+5 initiative is still engaged in very modest endeavors, it does appear to be a true testing ground for the area of policy and security of the Barcelona Process, and it is now in a position to offer new dynamism to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the long term” (Coustilliere 2006).

On the one hand, the 5+5 initiative represents a true forum for relevant countries on both shores of the Mediterranean to meet and discuss security issues relevant to the West Mediterranean as a specific sub-security system in MENA. On the other hand, it offers a platform for concerted action and practical cooperation schemes (Coustilliere 2006).

Similarly, the EU-GCC dialogue, which is active in economic issues while still timid in political and security aspects, needs to be reinvigorated. This structured dialogue, through annual meetings gathering EU officials with their Gulf counterparts, represents another opportunity for a more coordinated European role in the Arab region. This point is further tackled in the following lines, which bring to focus the inevitable need for the EU to seek cooperation with regional powers and organizations in MENA.

5 The “5+5 initiative” was first launched as a dialogue initiative at the Ministerial meeting in October 1990 in Rome. It inaugurated a process of general cooperation in three areas (security, economy, and culture) between five South European countries (France Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Malta) and five North African countries (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya). The “5+5 initiative” developed into a Security and Defense Initiative in December 2004, when the Ministers of Defense of the ten countries signed the basic documents for the security entente in 5+5 format in Paris: the Declaration of Intentions and the Action Plan for 2005.

f. The EU should seek engaging other powers on the Arab theater in a concerted effort

In post-2011, many scholars have correctly pointed out that the EU would be able to do little if it continues working on its own or if it continues regarding the Mediterranean as merely a European Neighborhood. The Arab theater is now full of key actors that started moving to influence events in the Arab region according to their interests. These include the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the GCC, and China. Mark Leonard points out that

“the area surrounding the EU is moving from being a European Neighborhood to a more multipolar one [...]. In this more competitive environment, the EU still has much to offer but is likely to maximize its influence by reaching out to other players such as Turkey, the United States, and the GCC and finding institutionalized ways of working together” (Leonard 2011).

Also, Stefano Silvestri correctly indicates that the EU “would have to acknowledge the role of regional organizations like the Arab League, African Union, or Islamic Conference, to the extent that they are willing to take part in a collaborative strategic approach” (Silvestri 2011). In this regard, the EU should act as a catalyst for other powers and regional poles to join in a comprehensive international effort that helps both to democratize and stabilize the region.

However, this is not an easy task. Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries are more keen to politically stabilize the region and maintain the status quo in their own authoritarian monarchies rather than help out the Arab peoples on the road to democracy. These countries did not welcome the revolutions and sought to contain them through cracking down public revolts in Bahrain and, then, through forming the club of monarchies by offering the GCC membership to Jordan and Morocco. The huge Gulf assistance funds promised to Egypt, and to Egypt alone, has raised much controversy and triggered geopolitical analysis of the real intentions of these conservative monarchies. Saudi Arabia promised \$4 billion in budgetary aid; UAE promised \$3 billion in support of SMEs and housing projects; Qatar promised planning projects worth \$10 billion; and Kuwait announced that \$168 million state-run business are set up to invest in Egypt’s economy (E-Shenawi 2011). No one knows anything about the conditions associated with Gulf aid, or on which basis these funds will be delivered. Yet, many presume that such aid mainly aims at both investing in Egypt’s stability and at blocking potential Iranian influence in post-Muabrak Egypt. On another front, Turkey is not expected to easily welcome cooperation with the EU in the Arab region. It is indeed quite apparent from Turkish Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan’s statements, tours, and actions in the region that Turkey is rather keen to fill in the leadership gap in the Middle East, to position itself at the core of the Arab Spring, to stress Turkish-Arab unity, and to act as the vanguard supporter to the Palestinian cause (Escobar 2011).

Therefore, the EU may not be able to conclude perfect cooperation schemes with these powers in the Arab region. However, a minimum level of coordination is still possible and feasible. It is important to note in this place that the EU needs to develop a coherent policy towards the Gulf (Bauer 2011). This policy should transcend the mere tackling of economic issues to political and strategic concerns, on which the EU and the Gulf countries already share similar visions. The EU will never emerge as an attractive political player or able to forge strategic partnerships in the Gulf unless it concretely addresses the many security and political challenges in the region and demonstrates what it can actually do there. These challenges include the rise of Iran and the unstable situations in Iraq and Yemen.

In this regard, the EU is able to forge political and security cooperation with the Gulf. Signs of European involvement in political issues in the Gulf are many. The EU has been supporting the GCC initiative in Yemen and is now following its implementation. In Iraq, an important buffer zone in front of Iran, the EU has developed a concrete “Joint Strategy Paper for Iraq 2011-2013” (European Commission 2010) and continues providing training to Iraqi police and judiciary through the European Union Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX/Iraq), which has been renewed until June 2012.⁶ ***Forging serious political and strategic cooperation with the Gulf countries is deemed crucial for Europe’s ability to attract other important regional powers and organizations.***

g. On another front, the EU should reinvent a role for itself in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is gaining much weight and significance in post-2011. One possible way to put momentum into the Middle East peace process could be by reviving the Quartet in which the EU (together with the US, the UN and Russia) takes part, and in which it is considered the key actor that could counterbalance the United States.

6. Conclusions

The EU’s response to revolutionary events in the Arab region results weak. After a series of perplexed reactions and embarrassing disagreements among European capitals, the EU came up with a hollow revision of the ENP, claiming that it represents a fundamental review of its previously ill-thought through democratization policy towards the Southern Mediterranean. The new ENP does not specify in practical ways how exactly the EU is going to assess its partners’ reform progress and their actual implementation of proclaimed reforms; the EU’s assessment of its partners’ progress in democratization, rule of law, and human rights is simply scheduled to take place too late, as it is not until 2014 that the EU is going to actually consider applying its conditionality clause; and the new ENP is awfully underfunded, which signifies that offered assistance does not represent a real incentive for countries in the South to undertake reforms. This undermines the ability of the EU to influence progress towards democratization in the region.

Explanations to this weak response are varying. The comfortable one, although representing a true part of the explanation, would be the arduous financial situation of Europe that impedes the EU from providing a significant democratization fund to its Southern partners. However, many important factors, in terms of security and strategic considerations, still present themselves strongly on the wider MENA region and do provide the important part of the explanation for this weak response. These are mainly: sudden influx of illegal migrants and refugees; increased energy concerns; and the rise of political Islam, especially in radical forms. This last element seemed to encourage Europe to tightly embrace a wait-and-see approach until it is clear where the winds of change are taking its Southern neighbors so as to adjust and readjust its stances and the scope of its future role.

6 The EUJUST LEX/Iraq is a civilian crisis management operation under the auspices of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The operation started on July 1, 2005, and the EU decided to extend its mandate from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012.

The study advocates that a proactive and agile EU role in the Arab region post-2011 should not be considered as derived from a moral stance. Rather, it is urgently required, since it is in Europe's own interests. The historic events in the Arab region suggest that the EU should not merely revise its own ENP with the Southern Mediterranean. However, it should develop a comprehensive vision and an all-compassing approach to the entire Arab region, from the West Mediterranean to the Gulf. In geographic terms, it needs to develop a vision that is not limited to the South Mediterranean region. In substantive terms, it should achieve a needed balance between three considerations: security; democracy and governance; and economic development. This vision should not be limited to the narrow consideration of the role of the EU or individual European countries, but one that takes into account the visions, strategies, and moves of other Mediterranean and Middle East powers. The study provides a number of policy recommendations, attempting to offer a frame for such a vision. These recommendations start with what Europe, the EU, and member states, should do on their own. Then, it moves to consider possible frameworks of cooperation between the EU and other key regional powers and organizations. Briefly, these recommendations are:

1. Make the ENP and future bilateral agreements meaningful by: ensuring that assistance funds reach those who implement reforms rather than only announcing them; stressing the importance and assisting the processes of building institutions and reforming education; and supporting SMEs.
2. Enhancing Europe's credibility by being politically loud in support of democracy and human rights in transition countries.
3. The EU should engage Southern partners in initiatives on migration mobility, and cross-border and maritime security. In such a dialogue, a balance between short-term and long-term policies should be carefully considered.
4. The EU should capitalize on its expertise in the fields of managing civil-military relations, training of police and security forces, and state-building in assisting post-Gaddafi Libya.
5. The EU should seek a more coordinated European role in MENA. This could be achieved through revitalizing existing sub-regional forums for security and economic cooperation. Examples include the 5+5 initiative and the EU-GCC dialogue.
6. The EU should seek engaging other powers on the Arab arena in a concerted effort. The Arab region is now full of key actors that started moving to influence events in the region according to their interests. These include the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the GCC, and China. The EU should act as a catalyst for other powers and regional poles to join in a comprehensive international effort that helps both to democratize and stabilize the region.
7. Forging serious political and strategic cooperation with the Gulf countries is deemed crucial for Europe's ability to attract other important regional powers and institutions.
8. On another front, the EU should reinvent a role for itself in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is and will be gaining much weight and significance in post-2011.

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