**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Competition, polarisation and fragmentation – both within the Arab countries and increasingly at home within the Union – are today’s signature hall mark that will require differentiation when adapting Europe’s response and toolbox to the Arab Awakening. With centrifugal forces gaining the upper hand in the Region, the EU will have to conceive as many different approaches as the new situation requires: As changes differ, so must responses to the Arab Spring do the same. The task is therefore arduous and unchartered. References to the 1989-1990 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe have certainly been made when looking at today’s Arab Awakening. Then, these countries tasks were to stabilize the economic and social situations, and to transform themselves from one Party rule and central planning to democracy and market: swift and harsh radical reforms were imposed but all were impressively united in their rejection of the old system and a hope for freedom, respect and dignity with the overarching aspiration of returning to the European fold. The call for dignity, respect and freedom also continues to fuel the Arab Revolt but the destination remains unclear and Europe’s response equivocal.*
Taken unaware by the sudden outbreak of the Arab Spring, the European Union (and the United States) has had to accept its dearth of influence over these revolutionary upheavals: Europe may assist or obstruct, but it cannot determine the course of events. If anything, the limited influence of Europe and of the international community on the timing and progress of the uprisings is an advantage. Alongside their peaceful trajectory, the beauty of the Egyptian and Tunisian Revolutions was that they were autochthonous, immune to any accusation of foreign meddling. But having little influence is not the same as escaping all responsibility.

The European response to date is still wanting. It quickly became clear that there was no real desire to reframe the relationship between the two shores of the Mediterranean, let alone to devise a 21st century “Marshall Plan”. The European reaction can therefore be summed up by an effective, timely humanitarian response; a vacillating, underwhelming political response; a predictably energetic bureaucratic response but lacking in focus and political will, and political tension over the suspension of Schengen rules by certain member countries.

Looking beyond, Washington’s strategic interests in the Mediterranean are limited whereas China, India, South Korea and Turkey are increasingly present and share rapidly growing economic interests in the region. Europe no longer has a monopoly over relations with African countries but still leaves it as the only major international actor that is tied to the region by both historic, political and security relations as well as trade, economic and development interests: geography prevails; we are the immediate neighbours!

As a start, it is important to understand that the risks of the process in our southern neighbourhood are largely short-term in nature, whereas opportunities predominate only in the medium term. The absence of an economic dividend threatens a still fragile political transition: bridging this vital time lag will “make or break” the future of a cooperative, coherent and sustained Euro-Mediterranean community. Time is of the essence. To this end, a few policy recommendations are submitted:

1. **BRIDGING A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN**

The EU should start by presenting itself as an “Open Europe” – albeit not to all winds -- and offer the transformation states a singular form of partnership that is not only intergovernmental but also draws in the societies involved: openness must relate to people -- who played such a major role in the Revolutions including a major one by women -- as well as to goods. A new form of association with the EU must be devised opening up the prospect of full access to its Internal Market encompassing the four freedoms of movement for goods (including agricultural and textile products), capital, services and people. Freer trade can provide the big idea to underpin a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous North Africa and, beyond, the Middle East. This all the more so a necessity as the overall importance for the European economy of the Arab states will predictably increase, especially considering the demographic structure of these young countries.

*Europe*, because of its own dire demographic structure, *needs immigration*. Transient mobility of persons can replace unwanted definitive migrations, if organised on the basis of a *joint analysis* of the needs of the various parties. Whilst Europe fears illegal immigration, the southern Mediterranean countries deplore their brain drain and loss of qualified workers! More qualified jobs, less massive migration and more circular mobility must top the agenda.
This migration dimension of the Arab Spring should evoke not only the potential short- and longer term movement of North Africans to Europe, but equally how Europe’s fear of migration dampened the broader political and public response to the historic revolutions in the Southern Mediterranean. Europe and international agencies were certainly effective in addressing the related urgent humanitarian crises, and EU bureaucracies also responded with relative speed to the dangers and opportunities generated by events. But a vacuum of political will meant that the response was fragmented and lacked conviction and vision.

But, the EU can still conceive and implement an ambitious plan to create a Mediterranean labour market uniting the region. Will it have the courage and wherewithal? Among its many advantages, it would endow workers with skills European companies need and help create a solid middle class of consumers for European goods.

The Arab Spring also revealed a series of governance gaps related to migration, mobility, and asylum that should be addressed by Europe and the international community and notably the management of migration flows and the protection vulnerable migrants. Forms of cooperation could be considered such as cooperation among international agencies and among receiving states. Identifying key immigration partner countries for the future—whether due to political ties, demographic growth, democratic change, economic dynamism, or skill base—and forging stronger partnerships based on genuinely collaborative goals will be the key to ensuring that innovation remains central to the external relations of EU migration.

A few additional recommendations for the EU on Migration in the Southern Mediterranean are tabled: “coalitions of the willing” will have to be at the vanguard, devising novel migration policies that could lead to a race to the top. The Lisbon Treaty allows for this “enhanced cooperation”. This could be done in the context of the Mobility Partnerships organized by the European Commission, the essentially defunct Union for the Mediterranean (replacing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) and the recently announced “Dialogues for Migration, Mobility, and Security,” or in other formats.

In sum, there is an argument not for more migration, but better migration. In an era of rapid globalisation, the EU could show the way in overcoming one aspect utterly underdeveloped: the orderly movement of people where its approach to Mediterranean mobility could be animated by a vision of constructive engagement and a signal to the outside world. A “Fortress Europe” mentality must no longer permeate political decision-makers running behind their electorates which fuel xenophobia and inward-lookingness.

2. **Setting-up a true Euro-Med Economic Partnership**

Another important objective is to create a compelling vision for the region’s economic transition. Incentives must be sought no longer smothered by conditional brakes.

To date, official EU aid has been of little direct benefit to the Arab populations targeted and has been exacerbated by a highly restrictive access to its territory. In addition, the all-consumming sovereign debt crisis and the continent’s weak governments contribute largely to this absence of a real response.

Practical projects must therefore provide immediate or mid-term answers geared to the practical needs of populations with more shared growth as the ultimate goal. Six priority sectors have identified to this effect including water and the environment, urban transport, higher education and research, social and civil protection, the funding of the economy and
safety of investments.

In addition, a genuine European budget for the Mediterranean must see the day. The 2007-2013 Multiannual Budget is now obsolete and no longer adapted to the situation of countries undergoing a democratic revolution. Any policy will require significant budgetary pledges over a far longer period.

Admittedly, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy proposed in their March 2011 communication on “A Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean” pledging additional funds complemented by additional allocations under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. But these amounts remain insufficient and, furthermore, the dispersion of the international funders (budgets of the EU, EIB, EBRD, African Development Bank, World Bank…) is harming its efficacy. After the failure of its Mediterranean regional multilateral schemes, the EU is now promoting a bilateral approach modelled on its Neighbourhood policy. However, this policy lacks the coherence and the resources needed to make it a success: a holistic approach is required.

Twinnings along the lines of those created with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the PHARE and TACIS programmes would also be essential to anchor southern and eastern Mediterranean countries in the modern globalized world. Europe could also take up the German model of economic integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which not only created jobs in eastern European countries but also created industrial jobs at home. This form of multi-localisation which avoids destroying the industrial fabric and creates added value on both sides should inspire Europe’s approach and policies toward the Maghreb. Boosting the role of the private sector in this regard will be essential in harnessing sustained growth and catalytic for cross-Mediterranean ventures and mergers. European private sector investment (outsourcing) must be attracted to the Region including joint industrial projects and technology transfers promoting added value.

Lastly and in a mid- to long-term perspective, Europe could envisage a Euro-Mediterranean “Erasmus Programme”; bringing to completion the Euro-Mediterranean Energy Community; setting-up other Communities on food security, water and health, and launching a feasibility study on a Euro-Mediterranean “monetary snake” which pre-supposes that the European Union overcomes its current Eurozone crisis and finds a new dynamic.

3. Ushering hope and future into a genuine long-term political relationship

The democratic revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East offer Europe a historic opportunity to build future relations with its immediate south on new foundations.

European countries and their political leaders must therefore avoid expressing abstract support for democratic transformation processes in one or other Arab country while at the same time wishing for a particular outcome. Instead mutual confidence must be built, even with actors they do not yet know and to whom they should extend a “trust bonus”. The European Union (and even more so the United States) should avoid repeating the mistake of dividing states into “moderate” and “radical” on the basis of their geopolitical orientation. Thus, Europe will have to redefine its understanding of “stability” and shed bygone approaches whereby many a European leader confused stagnation with real stability. The goal
must surely be to build a shared area of development, peace and collective security ensuring that the voice of the great “Europe-Mediterranean-Africa” Region is heard worldwide.

Beforehand, any process of defining a common security strategy should start from the premise of identifying the main threats and risks that the EU is obliged to confront. These would include the proliferation of nuclear weapons; the spread of terrorism; organized crime and piracy; illegal migration; crises of governance and violent widespread sectarian confrontation among Muslims; the Sahara as a sea of sand and troubles and the problem of Iran; the everlasting Palestinian-Israeli conflict; widespread environmental crises and energy security.

First and foremost support must be given to states that are moving towards democracy or attempting to consolidate nascent democratic processes. In other words, the EU should concentrate much of its political energy and resources on making a success of Tunisia and Egypt. Any major geopolitical project offering the prospect of a Euro-Mediterranean Union, must therefore concern only countries that have started these democratic transition and which respect the fundamental values and rights of mankind.

To this end, A Standing Political Committee -- chaired by the recently appointed EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean region of the EU High Representative -- could be created grouping the State Secretaries for the Mediterranean of each EU Member State and the State Secretaries for European Affairs of the Southern countries parties to the new partnership. This Committee would work in close cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean-Barcelona Process reporting to a Standing Conference for Security and Development led by the European Commission and composed of the ministers of both shores and, once a year, of the Heads of State and of government. In sum, the European security priority for the Mediterranean must focus on securing the Maghreb for the benefit of its people and thus to Europe.

A wider approach should also be envisaged with a new Euro-Med multilateral effort open to all interested external powers beyond the countries of the Region. Such a “Permanent Conference on Mediterranean Security and Cooperation” may help enlarge the dialogue and strengthen a process of confidence-building.

Here, a division of responsibilities must be worked out between the EU and the United States, clearly establishing the European lead for the Mediterranean and North Africa, and confirming the American lead for the Middle East and the Gulf. Of course, in both cases, the junior partner will actively contribute to the policy initiatives of the senior one.

Revisiting the 1989-90 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, the message appears clear today: sweeping liberalization of politics and the economy in a fallen autocracy opens the way for competition that enables creativity, produces opportunities for new activities, and makes possible personal advancement. This “lesson” applies to the Arab countries awakening from their long autocratic slumber. In the wake of the Arab Awakening, euphoria is however a poor political counsel, but fear is worse. Europe must seize the moment of this momentous Arab democratic wave.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO EU AUTHORITIES

“Time is of the essence”, as the saying goes, particularly valid these days when appraising the momentous developments unfolding in North Africa since the outbreak of the “Arab Spring”. But, recognizing immediate short-term urgencies to be tackled lest the Arab revolt wilts whilst ignoring a longer-term vision will precipitate an outcome contrary to the aspirations of the people and detrimental to a new Euro-Mediterranean foundation.

➢ In this spirit, Europe must show far greater ambition and embrace an optimistic political vision for the future when defining the new relationship between both shores of the Mediterranean. Rehashing past policies on “good neighbourhood relations” is no longer sufficient: the Barcelona Process and Union for the Mediterranean allowed for big projects with a small vision. Europe must now muster the political will to impart a new historical impetus to its work and set forth a big vision with effective projects. The Union must propose a strategic vision to its Southern neighbourhood with a clear destination including a viable roadmap that will be acceptable, palpable and directly beneficial to the peoples – civil society -- of the region as they open a new chapter in their history. This vision should be the setting up of a true Euro-Med Community.

➢ In order to reach this ambitious goal, the EU should offer a selective opening of its borders – casting aside a “Fortress Europe” mentality – and apply its “Money-Markets-Mobility” policy to the full but in a credible manner. To start, it must devise the prospect of full access to its Internal Market encompassing the four freedoms of movement for goods, capital, services and people. Whilst this goal remains overly ambitious, an initial opening -- through the partial use of its “acquis communautaire” mechanism -- to Southern Mediterranean agricultural and textile products would be a major signal that Europe has the wherewithal to build such a Community. Another area would be the creation of a Mediterranean labour market uniting the region and endowing workers with skills European companies need while concomitantly creating a solid middle class of consumers for European goods. In sum, we must create a Mediterranean Schengen Area for Transient Mobility. Investing in and creating jobs for a young North African population is the name of the game in town.

➢ This overall offer must rest on criteria defined by Europe as was the case to Central and Eastern Europe when it put forward the “Copenhagen Criteria” allowing for future EU membership. These well-known criteria rest on democracy, human rights, the Rule of Law, tolerance and market economies. Building a “common democratic home”, as envisaged by the Council of Europe, is the ultimate goal. We call these the “New Barcelona Criteria”.

➢ It is for the Arab states to make their own choices, but Europe must be ready to step up to the mark. All countries of the Region would therefore be invited -- through bilateral negotiations carried out by the European Commission -- to join in this effort. The EU will assist them through its various tool kits in reaching the goal of a EuroMed Community but under the necessary pre-condition that these “New Barcelona Criteria” be endorsed by the applicant countries. Thus, mutual confidence will be built in the process with Europe extending a “trust bonus” to the new Southern democracies. “More for more” could then be envisaged.
This bilateral relationship will finally require an overarching multilateral framework, a setting wherein both the Southern and Northern regions of the Mediterranean meet on equal footing such as through the establishment of a Standing Political Committee. It would be led, on the European side, by the recently designated EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean Region. The Association Agreements of the past need to be revamped in the process and a new political offer framed in such a way that it would ultimately link both shores in a close but not closed community sharing a common destiny.

Why not be bold? We envisage a hardcore EU using the various possibilities of “enhanced cooperation” within the Lisbon Treaty and a EuroMed Community in a second intertwined but not outward circle where countries from Morocco to the Gulf would find their proper place in a new regional EuroMed configuration fit to compete with the other global regional powers in the world at large. Europe would have seized the moment of this Arab democratic wave and not be judged further down the road of history as having “lost the Arab world”.

**BACKGROUND CONTRIBUTIONS BY VOLKER PERTHES**

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**BEYOND THE ARAB WORLD: IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN POLICY**

Taken unaware by the sudden outbreak of the Arab Spring, the European Union and the United States have had to accept their dearth of influence over these revolutionary upheavals. They may assist or obstruct, but they cannot determine the course of events. This applies even to the rapidly internationalised civil war in Libya. Whether Libya, after the fall of Gaddafi, remains divided or spirals into anarchy, whether the outcome will be a new dictatorship, some kind of tribal confederation or the emergence of a democratic system, will be decided by Libyans, not by Europe or NATO.

If anything, the limited influence of Europe and the international community on the timing and progress of the uprisings is an advantage. Alongside their peaceful trajectory, the beauty of the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions was that they were autochthonous, immune to any accusation of foreign meddling. But having little influence is not the same as escaping all responsibility.

Discussion of Europe is conspicuously absent from the websites and blogs of the Arab Spring. This political generation is overtly positive towards Europe, but overwhelmingly cynical about European governments (if they are discussed at all). Nonetheless, the people certainly have concrete expectations of Europe: from investment and technical support in establishing democratic institutions to freedom of travel.

Europe does indeed have an interest and a responsibility to expand and at least partially revamp its cooperation with the region, especially with those states that are undergoing transformation. Change always involves risks, and Europe had its fair share of alarmists who could see nothing but trouble and danger. It is important to understand that the risks of the process in our southern neighbourhood are largely short-term in nature, whereas
opportunities predominate in the medium term – and be that merely because better-governed states that treat their citizens better also make better neighbours and partners.

Europe is not the only international player in the region, but the interests of other powers are much more selective. American strategic interest focuses above all on the Persian Gulf and on Israel and its immediate neighbours. It will remain involved in both arenas, as most regional actors would wish. For all their differences, the Arab Gulf states depend on American assistance to contain Iran, and even Arab states that accuse the United States of taking sides in the Middle East accept that there can be no peaceful settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict without decisive U.S. intervention. But Washington’s strategic interests in the Mediterranean are limited. Egypt, aside from Israel, is seen as a strategic partner, but interest in other states is secondary. Washington made that very clear in connection with the Libyan war, which it would have preferred to leave completely to its European allies.

China, India and South Korea all share rapidly growing economic interests in the region: Chinese trade with the Middle East and North Africa increased tenfold during the first decade of the century, India’s eightfold and South Korea’s threefold. All three run a trade deficit with the region and are consequently seeking to increase exports and win more contracts for major construction and infrastructure projects. But they will pay little attention to political processes in these countries.

This leaves Europe as the only major international actor that is tied to the region by both political and security relations as well as trade, economic and development interests. We are immediate neighbours. After the Arab societies themselves it is Europe that has the strongest interest in the success of these political uprisings.

The Arab Spring therefore continues to represent a serious test for the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and Neighbourhood Policy. As far as joint action by the EU and shared positions among its member are concerned, the EU has not made a good start. But the Union has often demonstrated its ability to learn.

EUROPE’S TOOLBOX

Especially where the consolidation of democratic initiatives, economic development and social stabilisation are concerned, there is a role for Europe. The political, social and economic problems that sparked the Arab uprisings offer useful starting points for European policy initiatives. It is also important to ensure that the new democratic governments in Tunisia, Egypt and other states are not dragged down by problems inherited from their predecessors.

Political and institutional reforms are essential. States that guarantee individual liberties, human rights, rule of law, democratic participation and transparency give their citizens greater confidence and thus release greater development potential in society. Outside support is needed here, but must involve more than good advice.

There is a great deal that the European Union and its member states can do to support the political transformation process in the Arab states. As well as numerous measures already in the EU’s tried and tested toolbox, so to speak, there is also a need for stronger political messages and a clear general stance towards the region and its societies. Europe needs to set its priorities clearly.
First and foremost **support must be given to states that are moving towards democracy** or attempting to consolidate nascent democratic processes. In other words, the EU should concentrate much of its political energy and resources on making a success of **Tunisia and Egypt**. A successful transformation process in these two states will radiate out across the region. Given fortuitous political developments, that could mean the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Morocco, and perhaps one day even Syria. Not all of these states will need or want the same kind of support. If Jordan joins the Gulf Cooperation Council it might not exactly be “lost” to Europe (which would suggest it was “ours” in the first place) but would probably tend to rely on help from the Gulf and show little interest in meeting European conditions for support and demands for reform.

Such a European orientation would also send **a message to other states**. It should contain a clear statement of intent that relations with states on a democratic development trajectory will become closer as they progress. This can, and should, include the option of **a new form of association with the EU**, to open up the **prospect of full access to the internal market** with its freedom of movement for goods, capital, services and people.

Europe has its own experience with democratic transformation processes and can supply much that is needed to support such processes in other countries, starting with assistance organising free elections and election monitoring, and also including help in reforming the police and judiciary. And it encompasses a whole series of rather unexciting but very important topics: general legal reforms; drafting a modern labour law and regulating relations between employers and trade unions (including rules for strikes and collective bargaining after the legalisation of free trade unions and industrial action); anti-trust legislation and rules for transparency and responsibility in business; and not least the establishment of effective social insurance systems. **Market-opening measures remain important, but should encourage job creation and must**, if they are not to undermine the political process, go hand in hand with a **credible social policy**.

The overall importance of the Arab states for the European economy is likely to increase, especially considering the **demographic structure** of these countries.

These are young countries that are set to become more dynamic as they shed the chains of authoritarianism. In Egypt, Morocco, Syria and other countries in the region 20 per cent of the population will enter the labour market for the first time during the next ten years. That is an economic and labour market challenge of course. But this generation will also be seeking education, housing, consumer goods and communication, opening up new opportunities for the producers of consumer and investment goods as well as for businesses involved in housing construction, health, education, energy infrastructure construction and electricity generation. European businesses involved in the region’s growing markets can (and should) themselves support the democratic transformation process, for example by committing to the working conditions, employee rights, environmental protection and transparency standards that apply in their home countries, and by offering proper training themselves or supporting training in state-run institutions and in local companies. Most companies know that such investment will literally pay for itself.
AN OPEN EUROPE: COOPERATION FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT

The political transformation processes that have taken hold in Egypt and Tunisia will take time and effort, and they are themselves contested. Their details will be controversial, triggering disagreement, opposition and disappointment, and they can and will experience setbacks. In order to encourage progress towards democracy Europe must make it clear that that is what it wants itself.

The EU should present itself as an “open Europe” and offer the transformation states a new form of partnership that is not only intergovernmental but also draws in the societies involved. Openness should relate to people as well as goods. Although the EU has concluded free trade agreements with Tunisia, Egypt, and other Mediterranean states, it still maintains protectionist rules that need to be abolished. For example agricultural imports from Egypt are restricted by seasonal quotas.

Relatively speedily after the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt the European Commission presented plans for a “Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity”. This correct approach needs to be concretised and implemented, including financial assistance and improved market access. Greater openness to the people of these countries is even more important: of the “three Ms” discussed in European institutions – money, market and mobility – the latter is certainly the most important in connection with the Arab transformation states. The region as a whole is not poor, and a “Marshall Plan” of the kind often proposed would be more likely to make these states dependent than to solve their core problems. The EU and the international financial institutions are rightly willing to lend financial support to help these countries overcome their economic difficulties, but they cannot offer more than Saudi Arabia or Qatar. As already mentioned, the issue of market access still causes some difficulties in Europe, with a certain degree of competition between countries south and north of the Mediterranean. The abolition of particular trade barriers would help, but hardly more than an increase in the number of European tourists or granting young people from these countries easier and sensibly managed access to the European labour market.

What Tunisia, Egypt and other states setting out down the road of democratic transformation need most is a strengthening of their own capacities. This could be supported by a comprehensive pact for training, work and energy designed to promote vocational training in these countries but also including a programme directed directly at university graduates from Arab transformation states whose lack of professional experience makes it all the more difficult to find a job matching their qualifications. Tens of thousands of young engineers and doctors, architects, accountants or MBAs are unemployed.

Europe by contrast, because of its own demographic structure, needs immigration (be it only temporary) of young and skilled workers, above all in technical professions and in the health service. A programme for several tens of thousands of graduates annually should therefore encompass traineeships in European firms as well as multi-year work permits, allowing young skilled workers to acquire sufficient experience to go on to found a business in their own country (possibly with the aid of a business start-up loan from a European Development Bank) and themselves provide jobs and training to others. A long-term programme of this kind would send a clear message that there are better alternatives to illegal immigration.

Young people in Tunisia or Egypt would instead be motivated to complete their studies in order to apply for a programme that promises them several years of legal employment in
Europe, the acquisition of new skills and a certain amount of start-up capital. And it would be a programme that benefited both sides, Arab and European.

The same applies to a longer-term energy partnership. Europe’s energy relations with the southern Mediterranean region remain very one-sidedly focused on oil and gas imports. But that could be changed. Europe needs clean energy and will not be in a position to produce all its own needs. The countries of North Africa also need energy, especially electricity and new transmission grids for urban and industrial development. And they offer the best conditions for large-scale solar thermal electricity. “Desert electricity” can be produced more cheaply than renewables in Europe and is cleaner and safer than electricity generated from coal, gas or uranium. It must, however, be transported over great distances. In the long term that will be worthwhile; in the short term European investment in solar (and wind) power in North Africa should serve above all to improve the local electricity supply.

**Basic Rules for European Policy**

There are, to conclude, a couple of general rules that Europe should take into account in its dealings with the states of the region, especially in the wake of the Arab uprisings.

*European states and politicians should avoid expressing abstract support for democratic transformation processes in one or other Arab country while at the same time wishing for a particular outcome.* Foreign actors must understand that they cannot pick the winners of democratic processes, and must avoid creating the impression that they would like to. The credibility of the young Arab democracies will depend on the acceptance of decisions by foreign partners, including election results that may run counter to the preferences of these partners or donors.

Instead *mutual confidence must be built*, even with actors we do not yet know and to whom we should extend a “trust bonus”. That will not always be easy for European leaders, especially when these actors belong outside the traditional client base of European institutions and are perhaps sceptical towards Europe or the West. It might be helpful to remind ourselves now and then that the problem in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Algeria and elsewhere was not these new unknown actors but actually persons who had been known in Europe for a very long time and often held in high esteem.

Amidst the detail of the region’s political, economic and social transformation processes, *Europe cannot and must not ignore its geopolitical rivalries and conflicts.*

Nor can Europe rely on the United States, as the most important external actor, always automatically doing the right thing. It is true that the United States are indispensable here. They have greater influence over regional actors and can give individual parties credible security guarantees. But in order to achieve fair solutions and securing them politically and economically, Europe has to play its part. Only a fair solution that can be accepted by both sides, Israelis and Palestinians, can bring about lasting resolution and eliminate this permanent source of tension in the region. Until Israel and the future Palestinian state have settled their territorial dispute – which is the core of the conflict – Israel will never be regarded as a full and equal regional partner. Which also implies that many sensible and necessary opportunities for cooperation will remain untapped: in commerce and trade, environmental protection and regional water management, and of course in the realm of security.
Although the uprisings and revolts in the Arab states have transfixed international and regional attention, the Palestine conflict (specifically the occupation of Palestinian territory and the unfulfilled aspirations of the Palestinians to independence, liberty and dignity) remains the most important element of radical Islamist and nationalist mobilisation. Indeed, Europe’s credibility in many Muslim societies still depends substantially on it at least actively attempting to bring about a fair resolution.

Europe is well advised to work together with regional actors, especially concerning efforts to resolve protracted conflicts. This will naturally also involve states that have to date evaded or resisted political change.

The EU (and even more so the United States) should avoid repeating the mistake of dividing states into “moderate” and “radical” on the basis of their geopolitical orientation, which often led the West to overlook the deplorable state of human rights and political development in regimes classed as “pro-Western” or moderate. Europe, like the other international powers, cannot therefore simply renounce cooperation with important regional states.

In dealing with Saudi Arabia, for example, much more use should be made of existing good relations for an honest dialogue that makes it clear where shared interests and differences lie while at the same time offering support for a domestic reform process that is still much too cautious. Criticism of human rights violations, discrimination against women and members of the Shiite community, or repression of civil protests in a neighbouring state is not interference in internal affairs; not even when the recipient is such an important trading partner.

Europe must also be open and honest about its own interests. European states, like all others, have economic, political and security interests that sometimes require cooperation with authoritarian regimes. Even under Mubarak, we needed Egypt for the peace process, as a trade route and as an economic partner; we will continue to need Saudi Arabia for its oil, but also as an export market and for its regional influence. Similar considerations apply to other states in the region. There is nothing reprehensible about that, as even the citizens of Arab states protesting against their regimes acknowledge. But it would enhance the credibility of the EU and its member states if these interests were clearly stated, rather than cloaked behind sugary declarations.

In its on-going dealings with this region, which is such an important part of its neighbourhood, Europe will have to redefine its understanding of “stability”. Europe has a vital interest in political and social stability on its borders, and regional stability is a central concept in European policy. Fundamentally there is nothing wrong with that. But Arab autocrats hijacked the concept, presenting themselves as guarantors of national and regional stability and often enough asserting that their regimes represented the only alternative to Europe’s fears: instability, chaos, terrorism and the victory of radical Islamism. As it turned out, these regimes were stagnant rather than stable. Many a European leader confused stagnation with real stability. Europe should on no account abandon the goal of stability, but instead develop a dynamic understanding of stability – an equilibrium that permits change and transformation. Europe knows from its own experience that political systems are most stable if they are based on a division of powers, public and parliamentary control of the Executive, and naturally regular elections that allow a peaceful change of government.

One may doubt whether politicians and the public in Europe have really understood that the people who made the uprisings and revolutions in the Arab states have sounded a political
signal far and wide beyond the Arab world, and in the process done a great service for European democracy.

China’s rising power in the worldwide competition of political models had increasingly forced Europe’s democratic market economy model onto the defensive. Many thought that the authoritarian capitalist Chinese model based on harmony, growth and wise leadership (as opposed to individual freedom, human rights and democracy) was the more promising. Although the political transformation process in the Arab world has just begun, the revolts have shown that the great Chinese narrative of harmonious authoritarian growth capitalism, so popular among Arab elites as well as in Iran, Central Asia and many African states did not offer a perspective to the young generation. Instead this generation showed how vital the desire for democracy and liberty remains, even in states that have long sought to repress it. Many a European leader confused stagnation with real stability.

Euphoria is a poor political counsel, but fear is worse. Transformation processes are always difficult, and always take longer than their protagonists and outside supporters would wish. That was the case in Russia and Ukraine, it also showed in early political initiatives launched by the European Union with an eye to the Mediterranean region and the Middle East. But Europe’s interest in the success of these transformations is hardly smaller than twenty years ago in Eastern Europe.

THE ARAB REVOLTS IN YEAR TWO

Since the fall of Tunisia’s Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak in the first weeks of 2011, it has become evident that the political transformation of the states of the Arab world is and will be a complex, often violent, and protracted process - and that it has only just begun. The concept of the "Arab spring" that gripped many western observers from the early stages is in this respect much too seasonally limited, and thus guaranteed to breed impatience and disappointment rather than the deeper understanding required. This time-restricted notion also discourages Europe and the United States from thinking about their long-term strategic engagement with the region.

A larger and more long-term view - which draws on the experiences of other regions in transition - suggests that the Arab world still finds itself within "the first five minutes" of its historic hour. In this perspective, as the Arab revolts enter year two, four factors seem especially important to watch - and for Europe and the United States to take account of in their policies.

A fourfold reality

The first factor is socio-demographic. The popular revolts in the Arab world have mainly been the work of the generation of 20-35 year-olds. This contingent is more numerous and generally better educated than any of its predecessors, but has fewer social and material opportunities. Yet so far, the fall of the old regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya has not improved its economic and social situation. Moreover, the "2011ers" among them - the political activists that triggered the revolutions - have not been among the winners of the first post-revolt elections. Thus it shouldn’t be a surprise if this generation, which has already tasted its power, sets out to challenge the newly elected authorities as well.

Europe and the US would do well to support and encourage the transforming Arab states in efforts to provide opportunities for this young generation, both with regard to employment and to political participation. They should also realise that comparable socio-demographic
developments will almost certainly occur at different times in different Arab countries. In Saudi Arabia for example, a generation akin to Tunisia’s, Egypt’s (or Syria’s) "2011ers" is only now being educated, and will reach its full strength only in a couple of years. It is vital then to avoid complacency with regard to countries that today seem stable.

**The second factor is the military.** In Tunisia and Egypt, the army played a positive role in the revolts against the old regimes; in Syria and Yemen, decisions by key elements in the military will largely determine further developments. In many Arab states, the military has enjoyed more trust than governments and other institutions, and has been seen as a factor of national unity. But, as Egypt shows, it is neither a neutral nor a democratic actor; it wants above all to preserve its interests, and its leaders have no understanding of modern government or economics. The military may be needed to prevent chaos and to protect the transformation toward a new political order; but it is not prepared for the role this institution is supposed to play in democratic states.

Europe and the US should neither court nor ignore Arab military leaders. Rather, and without overestimating external influence, NATO’s existing dialogue and partnership formats should be used to cautiously engage its Arab counterparts. Central and eastern European NATO member-states should have a special role here by offering to share their experiences with military reform after a political transformation.

**The third factor is political Islam.** It is likely that more Arab states will become both more democratic and more conservative in the coming years. In one form or another, religious conservatism has a constituency all across the region, and election results in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco also suggest that Islamist parties enjoy an "image advantage" with regard to morality - which registers highly in an era of uncertainty. At the same time, the opening and pluralisation of the political systems has opened and broadened the spectrum of political Islam itself.

This raises the question of how mainstream Islamist groups and parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood will develop in face of strong political competition from ultra-conservative Saudi-inspired Salafism. Are they going to move towards the Salafists and lose in the political centre; or will they seek pragmatic answers to their countries’ social and economic problems in order to establish themselves (in a way akin to Turkey’s AKP) as broad-based conservative parties?

Europe and the US should try if they can to support the latter type of development by seeking honest dialogues with mainstream Islamists, and with any new government in the region that emerges from free elections - regardless of its political colouring.

**The fourth factor is regional geopolitics.** The changes in some Arab countries, and the ongoing revolts in others, have an impact on regional politics. Egypt, Turkey and emerging Qatar already play a more active role than before. The Arab League, which so long has served as a club of autocrats, is being transformed into a regional organisation that no longer shies away from the "internal" affairs of member-states.

The stance of the league against the regime in Damascus, there seems little doubt, has as much to do with geopolitics as with humanitarian motives. Again, this is no surprise. What is happening is a heightened politicisation on all levels. As originally local revolts immediately attain a regional dimension and new regimes tend to review their foreign-policy approaches,
the interplay between domestic politics and regional geopolitics certainly promises more turbulence. This is particularly so as neither the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nor the struggle over hegemony in the Persian Gulf has moved closer to a solution.

Israel has become more isolated since the fall of Mubarak. Whoever comes to rule Cairo is likely to be more supportive of the Palestinians and tougher on Israel than the old regime. The two Palestinian administrations in the West Bank and the Gaza strip seem to be on a path (albeit thorny) to reunification. This is happening under popular pressure, and it is a necessary precondition to forming a government that represents the Palestinian territories in its entirety. But the support of Hamas for such a government will not make the Israeli government any more prepared to reach out to its neighbours; and frustration with the lack of progress in peace talks can easily translate into renewed violence.

The on-going revolt in Syria, and the widely-shared expectation that the Bashar al-Assad regime is approaching its own endgame, has initiated a new regional struggle over Syria that involves (among others) Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Iran. Just as Tehran is worried about losing its main ally and foothold in the Levant, so the Saudis (as well as the US and some Europeans) regard the prospective fall of Assad primarily as an opportunity to weaken Tehran’s regional position. The uprising in Syria is thus being directly connected with the power-struggle over the Persian Gulf. This conflict will also continue to impact on the situation in Bahrain, to the detriment of those who seek peaceful change in that country; probably even on that in Yemen; and certainly in Iraq, where both domestic conflicts and competition over regional influence have begun to increase after the withdrawal of most US forces.

A threefold task

Western actors should have learned by now that simplistic models, such as the distinction between a supposedly "moderate" and a "radical" camp in the middle east - a model that guided US policy until the fall of Mubarak - do not actually aid understanding of regional politics. It is enough to observe that Iraq -- still an American ally -- is also the strongest Arab supporter of the Assad regime in Syria; and that Saudi Arabia, the main regional rival of Iran, is the main backer of Salafism, whose electoral successes trouble some less extreme Islamists as well as liberal and secular forces.

What is needed from the United States and from Europe is threefold:

- Careful crisis management in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
- A return to diplomacy rather than escalation with Iran;
- Active attempts to shape the conditions for a peaceful transition in Syria that spares the country a descent into civil war.

[in “Open Democracy”, 9/2/2012]

BEYOND NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST:
THE SOMEWHAT LONGER IMPACT OF THE ARAB REVOLTS

Slightly more than one year into the Arab revolts, some lessons can be learned for international politics and Western, particularly European, foreign policies. Ten initial theses:

No unknown unknowns: Almost everybody was surprised by the protests and revolts in the Arab world, although all the causal political and socio-economic factors were well-researched. There were no “black swans”. As so often in crises that become systemic, we
knew the phenomena but did not understand their interaction. Add to that the unwillingness of politicians and pundits to anticipate ruptures: The familiar is held to be stable even when it is known to be problematic. Consider only the unchanged will of international actors to regard Saudi Arabia as an island of stability.

**False geopoliticisation:** The revolts in different parts of the Arab world have made a mockery of the division of these states into a “moderate” camp that supported and a “radical” one that did not support Western policies. This false dichotomy made U.S. and also European leaders blind to many of the weaknesses that rendered these systems unstable – especially among the “moderates”. A better rule of thumb would be: Beware of regimes that claim to guarantee our geopolitical interests.

**Influence:** Western states had no influence on the outbreak of revolts and cannot determine their outcome. Even in Libya, despite NATO’s decisive intervention, local actors will decide whether a democracy, another dictatorship, some kind of communitarian confederation, or chaos emerges. Limitations of external influence may be healthy in the long run: The legitimacy of the political and social orders that emerge from the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere will largely depend on their being perceived as the outcome of authentic national political processes. At the same time, limited influence does not relieve Europe from its responsibility toward its Southern neighbourhood. Benign neglect will lead to unwanted reminders.

**Unknown actors:** We will have to learn to deal with and even trust actors whom we do not know yet. This is particularly difficult when new, influential actors have not adopted our Western cultural codes. It might help to remind ourselves that the problematic actors in those states weren’t these unknown people but rather those well-known elites whom Europe and the United States as much as Russia or China have trusted much too long, often against better judgement and only out of fear of the unknown.

**Confident players:** Arab countries that have cast off their autocratic regimes will remain unconsolidated democracies for some time. But their leaders will act with great self-confidence, often refusing the wishes of the Western powers. They will point out that they, too, are primarily answerable to their own population. The United States and Europe will not necessarily get more support for their policies just because there are more democratic or pluralistic states. Rather, the democratic part of the world will become more pluralistic. Just like Turkey, India, Brazil, or South Africa, transforming countries in the Arab world are likely to pursue a rather nationalist agenda. Europe and the U.S. need to increase their efforts to reach out to societal actors in these countries and find common interests, rather than taking them for granted.

**Contagious revolutions:** Revolutions tend to migrate. Regime elites in states like Azerbaijan, Senegal, or Ethiopia, perhaps even Vietnam, and certainly Iran might better prepare for trouble. States with a youth bulge, relatively good access to news and information, growing social inequality, widespread corruption and authoritarian governments will not be stable forever. At least some regimes that fit this bill will regard the Arab revolts as a warning and preventatively step up repression, restrict the flow of information or try to divert attention from domestic politics.

**Externalising conflicts:** Arab autocrats have long instrumentalised regional conflicts to their own repressive ends. But, as the Syrian example shows, revolts and revolutions can no longer
be stopped by pointing to external enemies. It would be equally false, however, to assume that regional conflicts would easily be resolved with the disappearance of authoritarian regimes. Syria after a change of regime will certainly be no less adamant than the current regime in calling for the return of the Golan Heights. It might even pursue this claim more vigorously.

Interventions: The Libya war has re-opened the debate about international military interventions. For the first time, the support of al-Jazeera was more important for the regional legitimacy of such an intervention than the consent of two veto powers in the UN Security Council. We may see a similar development with regard to Syria. The question of when the responsibility to protect not only legitimises an international intervention but makes it imperative will arise in all kinds of forums. NATO states and others will have to decide whether they are prepared to act even in lack of a Security Council mandate if there is broad regional support for an intervention to protect civilians or even overthrow a regime.

Stability: The Arab revolts have called the understanding of stability into question that has long guided European policies toward the region. Arab (and other) autocrats have been rather successful in presenting themselves as guarantors of stability. Especially European leaders have too often confused political stagnation with stability. Europe will still try to promote political and social stability in its neighbourhood. But it needs to develop a concept of dynamic stability that allows for change.

Values: The Arab uprisings have demonstrated the vitality of the desire for democracy, individual freedom, justice and dignity. The fear of many a Western observer that the rise of China would go along with a global value shift towards an authoritarian capitalist model has clearly been exaggerated. The activists who triggered the Arab revolts may give little for European policies, but they absolutely regard the democratic ideas that Europe cherishes as their own. This is another reason why Europe should support political transformation in the Arab world as openly as it supported the transformation of Eastern Europe twenty years ago.

[In April 2012]

On SYRIA
INTERNATIONAL DILEMMAS, UNSATISFACTORY ANSWERS

The Syrian regime continues to murder. The ruling clique around President Bashar al-Asad, challenged since a year by a still largely peaceful uprising, decided to clamp down on its rebellious citizens with extreme violence. The siege of the industrial city of Homs was perhaps only an initial highlight.

In the light of the continuous use of brute force by the regime, parts of the Syrian opposition now demand an international military intervention. It is proper to exclude no options in the European debate. At the same time, beyond the desire “to do something”, decisions on concrete measures and within a correct timeframe must be seriously contemplated to reach a given political goal. This can only be done with a cool analysis of the situation in the country.

Whilst remaining careful when expressing statements on the current developments, Syria’s return to a state before the start of the protests -- albeit with a few constitutional cosmetic adjustments -- is no longer a given and rests no longer rests in the realm of probability. The protests against Asad have become over the past year a veritable eroding rebellion wearing on
the regime, which continuously grows despite the brutality of its crackdown. Asad still has a formidable base, supported by not only members of his own religious community but also including groups that fear the unknown alternatives. Ever more violence wielded by the regime also fuels greater protest and drives further the economy into the abyss. Where ever the regime pulls back its troops, then and there the opposition takes over the streets.

*The regime can no longer win.* It is only unclear when and in what way it comes to an end and concomitantly how much of the country is drawn into the abyss. Therefore, the morally acceptable aim of *the international community must be to allow for early regime change* in Damascus in order to avoid a long civil war.

One of the options -- favoured particularly by Saudi Arabia -- is to arm the deserters who compose the "Free Syrian Army" and hence table on further military escalation. There is however much reason to believe that the regime seeks to provoke exactly this same outcome.

The rebels are not an organized “army” who could win in a foreseeable future a civil war even with an inflow of weapons from abroad. Despite the militarization of anti-regime protests, the uprising has preserved its mostly peaceful character. This gives it a moral superiority that armed deserters can also claim as long as they focus on the protection of demonstrations and besieged cities. A full-fledged civil war would change this situation with international actors imposing arms-length equidistance between the parties to the civil war, making it easier for the regime to mobilise larger sections of the regular armed forces which, so far, it could not count upon to fight against unarmed compatriots.

When reviewing options, *military intervention* from the outside is envisaged ranging from air strikes against military installations to the setting up of a protection zone by foreign troops. Military measures are not that easy to implement as the political situation would require. In any case, there will be no military intervention "on the cheap". And a military intervention that accelerates the fall of the regime would compel NATO or an allied coalition with member countries of the Arab League to prevent revenge, civil war, or a collapse of the country.

*If only because there is no simple military response, the tedious option of further political and diplomatic work remains the only option available.* So far, Asad and his followers seem not to have realised that their time is over. After all, they were successful in mobilizing some ten thousand supporters in Damascus or in staging a "constitutional referendum" serving mainly as a show of normality for the regime.

As its first task, *the international community will need to explain to the regime the political hopelessness of the situation* even if it has military superiority: this will not stop the country’s isolation. Also, a further tightening of sanctions is on the agenda including discussions with representatives of the regime. Russia should use its continuous contacts with the top regime leadership to usher in a politically unpleasant but perhaps conflict-shortening option of a "Yemeni solution" - a temporary transfer of power to a deputy Head of state and the exile of the President and his family. The new Special Representative Kofi Annan must be ready to engage a dialogue with both the government and the opposition. Arab and Western countries should seek and encourage high officials in government and the armed forces to jump.

*Political involvement also implies that the opposition be prepared to assume political responsibility: it must be assisted.* A government in exile must prepare the takeover and be in a position to present convincing plans for the immediate months after the regime change.
These changes include clear statements on Rule of law and civil rights, the exclusion of revenge measures or further use by police, armed forces and bureaucracy. The group of countries operating as "Friends of Syria" can already set up an assistance fund to support economic stabilisation and rehabilitation programmes. These measures would signal that a collapse of the Asad regime would not lead automatically to chaos and civil war, but enable a proper transition where minorities and other groups -- upon which the regime’s support relied – to have nothing to fear.

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On IRAN

INTERMEDIATE STEPS, NO BREAKTHROUGH: WHAT NEW NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN COULD LEAD TO (AND ON WHAT THEY COULD STUMBLE)

It is not certain that the new talks in mid-April expected to start in Istanbul between the "5 +1" Group (the five permanent Security Council members plus Germany) and Iran are truly the last chance to avoid war over Iran's nuclear programme. But undoubtedly the risk of military conflict increases should this new round of talks be as fruitless as the last meeting held in the same format which took place in early 2011.

The conditions are a little better this time. The EU countries and the U.S. government continue to see, though dwindling, the possibility that Iran through negotiations be deterred in its nuclear capability, or build even a nuclear bomb, thus decreasing the risk of a military confrontation between Israel and Iran. The Iranian leadership seems more interested for a number of reasons to start discussions with clearheaded goals than a year ago.

The harsh sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council as well as the U.S. and the EU on Iran have meanwhile started to bite most of its business transactions with the world. The Iranian leadership wants to rid itself at least in part of these sanctions. Iran experienced that its threats such as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz had failed to alleviate these sanctions.

Also, the regional situation has not improved in favour of Iran although Tehran continues to celebrate the "Islamic awakening" in the Arab world. One cannot overlook that Islamic parties and movements such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinian Hamas by no means follow a pro-Iranian agenda. Iran fears the loss of its only strategic ally in the region, the Assad regime in Damascus, and witnesses how actively the Arab Gulf States are engaged in their rollback of Iranian influence in the region.

Within Iran, President Ahmadinejad is so weakened that even a successful negotiation would no longer make his opponents restless. The Iranian negotiator Said Jalili has already made it clear that he as a direct representative of and is acting on behalf of the religious leader Ayatullah Khamenei.

In his letter to the European foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton who leads the “5+1” Group, Said Jalili notified with clarity that Iran was ready -- as proposed by Ashton -- on a "step-by-step" approach and "reciprocity" when engaging discussions on its nuclear program.

In fact, just such a gradual approach, defined by what steps Iran must undertake so that individual sanctions be revoked, suspended or not even applied, is the only chance of success.
However, to envisage a "solution" to the nuclear dispute even after serious negotiations is still very far away: mutual distrust is far too large and positions far too far apart. Iran, as the Security Council requests, will not abandon its uranium enrichment programme. However a few agreed steps could bring back a minimum of trust that allows for a constructive diplomatic process.

The most important breakthrough would here be that Iran interrupt its 20 percent uranium enrichment threshold, purchases such medium level highly enriched uranium from foreign countries and allows the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect facilities that could serve to produce nuclear weapons. The idea that Iran could swap its enriched uranium with fuel rods for a research reactor is likely to come again to the table. Further steps on such a roadmap could apply to the ratification of the Additional Protocol of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which grants the IAEA full inspection rights.

All these steps will not be achievable in a round of negotiations, but would require a multi-month process, which however is only feasible if both sides behave constructively in the first round of talks. Iranian officials occasionally deflect from the actual problem by recalling an imaginary "Right to enrich." The Group of Six has repeatedly confirmed that Iran enjoyed of course a "right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy under the NPT". However, the Security Council has imposed on Tehran since 2006 a suspension of its uranium enrichment – considered a particularly dangerous nuclear activity -- until lost confidence was restored and justified doubts by the IAEA that Iran's program was exclusively for peaceful purposes be eliminated. This outcome could be reached through this very step-by-step process.

This will also apply to “reciprocity”: Iran will want to know what it gains, should it engage in such a sequential approach. It would be helpful were the Group of Six have convincing answers to propose – such as explaining which specific American or European sanctions could be suspended should Iran stop its 20 percent enrichment. But by just promising not to impose additional sanctions will hardly constitute a major incentive; and a total lifting of UNSC sanctions is hardly to be expected today any more so than a full halt of Iranian enrichment activities. One should also be prepared, at least hypothetically, to talk about the ultimate goal: on insurances and guarantees required by the international community in order to accept any Iranian nuclear program which includes limited and controlled enrichment activities.

Given the lack of basic elementary trust, the new discussion process remains fragile. A permanent risk rests on the Iranian domestic political scene which led to the failure of the last 2009 internationally negotiated compromise. The current process can also crash if the Group of Six fails to make clear that it is really about limiting the spread of nuclear weapons and not about a regime change in Tehran - as assumed by part of the Iranian leadership. If the Iranian leadership is firmly convinced that all sanctions only serve only to weaken or overthrow its regime, why would it abandon a program that concerns so much Israel and the West? The opposite, from the regime perspective, would be far more logical.

And of course, one should not lose sight why Iran was put under sanctions. One hears, here and there, that the Iranians only returned to the negotiating table in order to avoid sanctions. This is probably correct. But the last round of sanctions adopted by the EU was also precisely the intention to persuade Iran to negotiate seriously.

[In mid-April 2012]