



EUROPE IN THE NEW MIDDLE EAST

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Economist

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TOM NUTTALL: If everyone could take a seat, I think we're going to get started. Thank you for coming, everybody. My name's Tom Nuttall. I write the Charlemagne column for the Economist. We're joined by three distinguished speakers tonight. To my right, Richard Youngs, who's a senior associate in the Democracy of Law Programme, Carnegie Europe, and the author of this fine work here, *Europe in the New Middle East*. To Richard's right, we have Christian Berger, who is director of the North Africa, Middle East, Arabian Peninsular, Iran and Iraq desk at the European External Action Service. And to his right, Nathan Brown, who is a non-resident senior associate in the Middle East Program at Carnegie.

It's an interesting time for European foreign policy, of course. In Brussels, we have a new team, we have a new high representative and we will soon have a new President of the European Council. Also, I think, there's a general sense that after several years, in which foreign policy was on the back burner a little bit – Europe was consumed with its own problems, not least the Eurozone crisis – I think there's a sense that foreign policy is back. Now, this is largely, of course, because of what's happened in Ukraine, and the difficulties we're having with our Russia relationship.

There's no shortage of events further south, as well. In Israel, Palestine, in Iran over the nuclear program, the ongoing violence in Iraq and Syria, and a general sense of shifting sands, changing regional alliances, so I'm hoping we're going to be able to get into some of this stuff tonight. So without further ado, Richard, please.

RICHARD YOUNGS: Thank you. First of all, thanks to Tom, Christian and Nathan for taking time to engage with the book and have some debate around it. The book is not specifically on what's happening at the moment with the Islamic state and Syria and Iraq; we can talk about that more specifically. Rather, what the book does is to take a step back and try and offer a general assessment of how the EU responded to the Arab Spring, how it changed its policies. It tries to look at the reasons why the EU adopted certain approaches to the Arab Spring. Also, to address the crucial issue of how effective the EU has been and what kind of impact it's had on political trends in the region.

The assessment is fairly balanced of EU responses to the Arab Spring. On the positive side, the book argues that EU policy did change in fairly meaningful ways after 2011. The kind of support that the EU offered to democratic reform across the region was not negligible, in terms of political commitment, new resources, newly conditioned incentives, sanctions, in some cases. So these were important changes. There was some qualitative change as well. The EU looked at new ways of orientating its policies more towards the civil society damage and tried to learn some of the lessons of approaches to reform that had not worked in previous years. And, of course, started to develop a much fuller engagement with political Islam; the various movements and political parties representing Islamist movements.

So the book argues that, in some ways, the EU tried to strike a balance between too intrusive, on the one hand, and on the other hand, doing enough to respond to the aspirations of reformers across the Middle East. A difficult balance to strike, but I think the EU went some way in striking this right kind of a balance. That's on the positive side. The book also then points out that there were clear limitations to how much European policy changed. The EU has not tended to try to pre-empt reform. It's supported reform where reform has begun to happen, but it hasn't really tried to push very assertively to get reform moving where there is clear resistance to democratic openings. There has been no major overhaul of EU instruments in the last three or four years.

The EU has tried to be more effective in the way that it's used instruments it has, rather than dramatically or fundamentally changed the way that it operates in the region. The book suggests, and perhaps this is one of the key headlines to come out of the analysis, is that in some ways, the EU,

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perhaps, underestimated the influence it could have had on the Arab Spring, rather than having overplayed its hand. From all the research in the different Middle Eastern countries that I carried out for the book, it was very interesting that there's almost a mismatch between European diplomats saying we have to be very cautious. We mustn't overplay our hand. We cannot impose models of change on the region. And a feeling from reformers within countries that the EU is actually really behind the curve, in terms of the demand for change that was coming from domestic actors themselves.

And one often heard, in these countries, that European policies were, in some ways, very appreciated for being sensitive, for being nuanced, for listening to local voices. But sometimes, and perhaps Christian will disagree on this, but perhaps sometimes, being a little bit too neutral, a little bit too even handed. And because of that, the impact they were having was sometimes to militate against reform, almost unwittingly to help anti reform forces. So that's a kind of positive and negative in terms of how EU policy has changed and how they didn't change.

What did all this mean for European interests? Here, the book argues that the EU responded to the Arab Spring as a kind of uneasy mix of risk and opportunity. That in terms of how trends affected Europe's own interests, there were clear positives and negatives, and significantly, because of this uneasy mix, European governments, member states, have tried to regain more control over European policy in the region to try to calibrate their responses to different parts of the region, with this very fluid geostrategic interests in mind.

So for a period of time, in 2011 and 2012, it looked as if EU policy had, to some extent, been freed from this overwhelming focus on security and counter terrorism. But the security dimension was still there, in the extent to which member states' national governments varied their responses to different Middle Eastern countries with very specific geopolitical and economic interests in mind. And again, if one extrapolates from this, there's quite a significant broader conclusion to come out of this, and that is that as a result of the Arab Spring, the EU as a foreign policy actor has become a little bit more eclectic, a little bit more mixed in terms of the kinds of dynamics that are driving EU foreign policy. Part of the response to the Arab Spring happened at the European level, at the EU level, it was about genuinely trying to kick-start or reenergise the search for a genuine Euro-Mediterranean partnership. But another dimension of it was much more about national governments, member states governments, trying to regain a certain role, greater role again, in overall European policy, thinking of exactly how to balance this mix of opportunity and risk. And again, perhaps one of the things we can pick up in the debate is whether now, because of events that have happened in last six to nine months, the dynamic now is swinging too much back to a security first dynamic. So that's interests.

Impact. The book argues, and of course, it's not news, in this sense, that the EU's impact was relatively modest on the insipient trends across the region. But the EU is not entirely irrelevant. The EU did stop becoming an obstacle to democratic reform, as arguably, it had been previous to the Arab Spring. Where change did begin to happen, the EU is not the main enabling factor of that change. But where change did not happen, where change was resisted, neither was the EU the main culprit of why that change was not happening. So in a way, when reform advanced, Europe was there to help reform. It didn't do anything to try and limit reform too much. But when reform remained blocked, the EU was not really assertive or unequivocal enough to overcome these major blockages to reform.

Of course, many critics have said in the last three or four years that the EU has lost all influence in the Middle East and it really counts for nothing. The book, my book, doesn't go as far as that. It says that of course, the EU's influence is relatively circumscribed, but the EU is not completely irrelevant. The conclusion, I think, is more subtle than that. It's that Middle Eastern countries look at the EU in a different way today. They are far more balanced. They think carefully about bits of the EU cooperation they want to incorporate, and the bits of the EU they are not so keen on. So relations, in

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this sense, have become much more instrumental between the EU and the Middle East, and the Arab Spring didn't really unlock the potential for creating a common security community, a common political space, a political space based on common political values that, as you all know, was the original vision of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

I argue that hasn't really happened and the relations have become much more balanced, much more varied, much more instrumental between Europe and the Middle East. The EU is not alone in its impact being fairly limited. We'll hear from Nathan about the US policy, which I think, also, has been fairly limited in its impact. Everyone has talked about Turkey's new role and significant influence, but I think even Turkey has found that it has, perhaps, over sold the kind of impact that it has on the region.

So that's interests, impact and final observations. Just to think about this affects European policy in a longer-term perspective, and just two or three very brief thoughts on this. It seems to me that if you're looking at this in a broader historical sweep, I think the changes that have been unlocked by the Arab Spring represent the beginning of a kind of loss of influence and a loss of European influence in the region, the EU still does count for much, but I think this is probably a point at which the EU's influence will begin a gradual decline in the region. The impact of that is not necessarily entirely negative.

I think a second point is that the Arab Spring, in my view, will probably leave less of a permanent mark on European foreign policy than did the experiences in Eastern Europe or in the Balkans in the 1990s. I think these experiences both gave a prompt forward for deeper EU foreign policy cooperation. I don't think the Arab Spring will have the same kind of formative influence on European foreign policy cooperation. I don't think it represents any kind of major inflection point in European foreign policy. I think the lessons to learn from the last three or four years are much more to do with the tactical level of how the EU should and should not be supporting economic, social, political modernisation. What kind of tactics work and what kind of tactics do not work.

And final, final observation, just to kick off some debate. The story is clearly not over yet in the region. Many articles today would argue that the Arab Spring is definitively dead. But I think the region is actually far from stable. I think there are likely to be many twists and turns over future years in favour of reform, against reform. We will see these movements ebbing and flowing, and therefore, I don't think this is the definitive end of a particular period of European foreign policy. But that the EU still needs to think carefully how it can best position itself to influence what would be a very complicated long-term period of change in the region.

TOM NUTTALL: Thanks, Richard. And just before turning it over, I should have mentioned what the format will be. We're having our interventions from the various panelists. We'll then talk up here for a little bit, and then we should have at least half an hour for a Q&A with the audience, if not, a little bit more. So turning it over to Christian for some perspective from inside the machine.

CHRISTIAN BERGER: Thank you very much and thank you for the presentation of the book. In short, I think I can agree with most of what you're saying in the book, with one big exception; that is the title. It should not be Europe in the New Middle East, it should be the New Europe in the Middle East, and let me explain why. When you look at the world from Brussels and you look around, what do you see? You see a very stable and safe Europe, but you see around Europe once crisis after the other. As somebody said the other day to us, the only safe land border we have is the land border with Norway. Everything else seems to be a bit problematic in one way or the other.

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Now, we also have gone, in the last five or six years through... we have seen a number of new crisis situations and conflicts arising. We have, when we look, again, when you look from Brussels, you'll see five types of conflicts that have been played out in the region. There are two that have been around for quite some time. One is the classic, the Israeli Palestinian issue, the peace process or the absence thereof and the second one is the nuclear dispute with Iran. So both have been around for quite some time. What has come new into play, after, let's say, 2010, 2011, on the one hand, a religious conflict, a Sunni-Shea conflict is playing out all the way from Baghdad to Beirut, which has become, more or less, one large battlefield for that type of conflict.

The second one is Islamists versus modernists. And the third one is a population that doesn't really like its leadership anymore or doesn't like autocratic or machines, autocratic tendencies.

Now, the latter one, I think, has been translated, particularly in the Arab Spring or in the uprising of the Egyptians in January 2011, it has been translated into two key demands for a better relationship between the individual and the state, so a re-definition of the relationship between the individual and the state. So that goes under the heading; political dignity. And the second one, a better life. Maybe this was even more important than the first one. A better life, social and economic dignity for a large part of the population. So these three conflicts, the three new conflicts you see, more or less, every country playing out in every country across the region, with a different level of degree.

Now, how has this transition, and during the period that you're describing in the book, how has this been realised? I think it involves the former Jordanian foreign minister, Muasher, who classifies them into four types, or three types, and let me add a fourth one. I think he uses the word inclusive transition, and the example here is Tunisia where, despite all the problems, in the end, they came around and managed to set up a political system that includes the larger part of the population. Then you have the exclusive transition, and the model for that or the sample for that seems to be Egypt, where there is transition, but part of the population is not really part of that. And then there is the elusive transition. An example for that is Yemen, where everything seems to be fine on paper. There is a national dialogue document that has been concluded, work is being started on the constitution, but it just doesn't seem to have gelled in one way or the other.

Then, of course, there is the disastrous transition, this is what I want to add, and that's what's happening in Libya and what's happening in Syria. The other ones, I think you described them in your book as well. The kingdoms, Morocco, Jordan and the Gulf kingdoms, seem to be less effective, but then have to be managed pretty well to get out of this conflict scenario.

Let me briefly go into, because I think it's part... I think I saw this in your invitation, actually, to this evening, Syria and Iraq and ISIS, and how we see this from the European Union perspective. I think what we are supporting is, of course, the fight against ISIS, and we see this as a major threat, by the way, not only for us, as the European Union, but also for our partners in the region that we are cooperating with. This is Jordan, this is Israel, this is Egypt. There are many other countries where we think they are under threat from what is happening in Syria and in Iraq, under the control of Daesh.

Now, the fight against them, and I think that's important also to see how the European Union works, as you know, we have no military mandate, so we have no military possibilities here. We support the fight that is going on. We have supported already in August the endurance of weapons and the military equipment of the Kurds who were fighting against Daesh. We support, of course, what the Arab countries are doing, the Emirates and others, and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, in the fight. But we deeply believe that there must be a political solution to this, and the political solution, you can find both in Iraq and in Syria.

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I think you mentioned the... you coined the phrase; the shifting sands and the shifting alliances. I think when you look at Daesh, this is a very good example because they have shifting alliances almost every day. It's a hard core group. Figures, very high, they are, but they built very much on those shifting alliances with Sunni tribes, with urban population, with ex-baathists, new baathists, and I think that's exactly where we should come in; try to use this, in a political sense, and trying to break these alliances. There's one opening here, that's the new government in Iraq, that is reaching out. They want to be more inclusive and work with, not only the Kurds; I think they've just reached agreement with them, but also with the Sunni tribes, and not repeat the mistake of 2008, when they were promised all sorts of things that were never delivered. So I think that's one very strong element that we have to continue working on, and we have put, as an external action service, we have put a lot of focus on our work with the new Iraqi government.

In Syria, the situation, obviously, is slightly different because there is no government that we can work with or that we recognise as a legitimate government to work with. So that is far more complicated for the European Union. We have elements of a strategy, or we do various things, so that if you put them together and made the [unclear 00:20:52] strategy, and the most important, that one, is support and maintaining [?] support. I know it's not really known publicly, but it's the biggest [unclear 00:21:01] operation ever for the European Union, with about €3 billion spent so far.

The second element there is sanctions. We have a rather elaborate sanctions regime on Syria. The problem with that sanction regime, however, is it's not universal, so it can be easily circumvented by others who do not abide by the sanctions. The third element is the political one, and that comes in two forms. One working with the opposition, and I think you referred to it in your book by saying that we were too slow supporting the moderate opposition at the beginning of the uprising. But politically, it was simply not possible at that time. And the second one is supporting the work of the new envoy of the United Nations, Staffan de Mistura, who was in town today, and he told us what he is going to do. So these are the two political elements, but the point here is it has to be a Syria led solution, and that, maybe, is also the only hope of turning around and roll back ISIS.

Let me briefly go into, since it was mentioned, I think, into Egypt, and then Middle East peace process, and then finish with what you started to talk about, the review of what we want to do next and how we see this development in the new Europe that is going to come. Now, on Egypt, I think, and I'm sure Nathan has a lot to say about this, so I'll be short. We have a choice to make, and the choice was; do we just do nothing and let this thing develop and wait for better days? The other choice was; do we turn a blind eye and just cooperate with whoever is in power? And the third choice was; do we recognise that Egypt is a very important country for us, a strategically important country, and partner for us? Not only for us, but also for the Arab world and for the whole region. But nevertheless, insist on our values and insist on what we think is necessary, in order to achieve democratic, implement a democratic roadmap that Egypt had set out to do.

I think we have chosen the third one, which is the difficult one, because it's a very delicate balance to extract between working with the country, but at the same time, always pointing out where we think things are not going in the right direction. I think that's where we are with Egypt. You can question the results and impact. I think I come to what you said at the very end, this is not yet over; this will go on for a long time. And particularly as Europeans, we should understand this in our countries as well, that this is not a matter of a few years, this is, very often, a matter of generations. Simply because we see this all on Facebook, on Twitter, doesn't mean it goes faster. I expect [?] it will take much longer than we hope and the way we are reacting to these issues.

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On the peace process, I mentioned it earlier on as one of the conflicts that could have been around for a long time. Many will argue that this is a conflict, if it were no longer there, then many things will be better in the Middle East. I know the Israeli argument that this is not the case and I think they're quite right, that there would be certainly something else that would be used as an excuse for whatever radical forces want to do. But nevertheless, it's a conflict that can be solved and we have put a lot of emphasis into that. And if that conflict were solved, at least there would be a nucleus of stability, at least between Israel and the Palestinians, which would have a positive effect on the rest of the region.

I don't want to go really into our position, because that will require, I think, a separate evening, but it's fairly simple. We believe that the conflict can only be solved through that we have two state solution, integration of the other state that is not there yet. And that argument, that we hear time and again, that we want to be players, but not payers, I think that argument is a bit funny because along the fact that we've been paying for that other state to be established is already a very strong political involvement in this conflict.

Briefly on what comes next. You mentioned the review. For me, this is also a sort of déjà vue. I joined the Commission many years ago. The first thing we had to do, we had to write a review of the Barcelona process, this was in 99. I think the document was called Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process. So I think we are now again at the stage where we have to reinvigorate the European Neighbourhood Policy and find something new for it. That's just a lot of complaints about the way the European Neighbourhood Policy has developed and the link between the south and the east. Particularly the southern countries are not very happy about that conditionality. It's more for war principle that I think they have been debating on our evenings here.

And all these are issues that I think will have to be looked into. But also one feature of the previous review, that was quite important, when we had to go into the specific needs of the partner countries will be important. And also to get aware a little bit about the rather strict and rigid approach that we have planned [?] in the enlargement process and not use that for the neighbouring countries, countries that, by definition, cannot actually join the European Union. I think these are all issues that will have to be looked into in the next few months and reviewed, and see how we can do this.

Now, final point, and coming back to your book, could we have done anything different in 2011? That is the question. So what happened in 2011? As you say, and I think you're quite right, we were taken by surprise. Yes, we should have known it, nevertheless, we were taken by surprise that this was coming. So what happened was we looked at the tools and instruments that we had available at the time, mainly under the neighbourhood policy, and we focused it a bit. We put a little bit more money in, we put more incentives in, focused more on governments and human rights, on democratisation. And then that was it in 2011. Maybe it was enough in 2011.

But then after that, maybe some thoughts should have been given to what could be a much stronger incentive in bringing those countries closer to the EU. Again, I think you mentioned them in your book, the four freedoms or economic space and things like that. It didn't happen. What we offered was more money, market access and mobility. Now, more money, we were very quickly running out of money, and when you look at it today, it's difficult to compete with \$10 billion or \$12 billion that is flowing out of Egypt, when we pay about \$100 million to \$150 million a year. When you look at mobility, I don't have to tell you what the debate in the European Union is about mobility at the moment. Even inside the European Union, there's a debate about mobility. And the third component, trades. Again, there was a question of competition.

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So all these three elements that we tried to... the three Ms that we tried to offer, I'm not sure they had the attraction that they were meant to have because I'm not sure we were ready to give as much as we were supposed to give. So it left us with the other two Ms, more for more. And there, again, when you listen to a civil society, we are told that we are not serious about this, we never used our leverage. The question was; did we have any leverage? And I think your book here is, again, quite right. I'm not sure we had much of that leverage. I think the strongest leverage we have is not the money, it's the partner countries in the region want to work with us, want acknowledgement from us and want legitimacy from us. And I think that's the strongest leverage we have, which we have to work on in the coming period. I'm sure the Americans are doing the worst [?] things.

TOM NUTTALL: That's where we're going to turn it over to Nathan, who is going to tell us what us crazy Europeans have been doing wrong.

NATHAN BROWN: I'm very familiar with things, I guess. Let me begin, before I get into addressing some of the same things that Christian just did. First, a piece of good news about the book, for me, but then a piece of bad news for you. A piece of good news for me is that when I listen to Richard describe the book, apparently, the book that he thinks he wrote and the book that I think I read, are very, very similar, almost identical. So that's good news for the author and good news for me, as a reader. And I think he captured the flavour of his own book very well, the idea of a mixed record. And, essentially, it's a story of politicians who are struggling to keep up with reality, and not doing a bad job of keeping up with reality. The problem is that reality keeps changing, so that's the reason the record is mixed.

So that's the good news and it's an easy to grasp story. The bad news is that there's an awful lot of complicated detail here, that Richard's got a mastery of, and that he's got a very good way of explaining it very clearly. That's bad news because it means, despite that clear summary, you still have to read the entire book; it's worth your time. We haven't saved you much time, I'm sorry to say. What I want to do in my remarks, then, is to basically start a little bit with the book, say what's interesting about the country [?] region here. Then take a little bit of a step back and say; why is there this mixed record of policy? And a mixed evaluation that I think you [mic distorts] similar things about uprising [?]. A lot of the policies are different in [unclear 00:31:52] camera. In theory, I want to wind up in the same place as [unclear 00:31:55] looking at what is the scheme for the future?

So first, what's interesting about the book, to me, the countries [unclear 00:32:04], it takes a familiar story, so foreign policy in the Middle East, but it... The book takes a familiar topic, but it takes, at least for me, as an American reader who's focused on the Middle East, some interesting and unusual angles. Number one, it really focuses... it starts the story not about [unclear 00:32:35] concerns; it focused on reform, democratisation and government. And it does this, in part, because I think that's Richard's interest, but also because it's a period that he's really focusing on. The period between 2011 and 2013 was a period when the region itself was really focused very much on domestic politics within the states of the region and on how they were governed.

The second thing that's interesting is that it really actually starts, again, as a product of this period. Although it's a book on European policy, it starts with politics in the region. I mean, what is going on in the Middle East, kind of, the driving part to his story, and then how is it that Europe manages to react and how is it that Europe manages to shape the policy that achieves... and doesn't manage to achieve what it wants to achieve. And the third thing that was very interesting for me to read, and I only noticed it about half way through the book, is the United States is mentioned in the book, but kind of in passing. The Americans turn up in this and they were trying this policy, but the Americans had a slightly different take. And I'm not used to being on the margins. Perhaps the healthy way to tell

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the story, but again, a little bit unusual for me. again, what you see is a fairly clear overall line, and it is one of mixed record of, as I say, struggling to adjust to a reality, but a record that is mixed because that reality keeps on changing.

So what I want to do is talk a little bit about why it is that you have that mixed record during that period, and do that by stepping back and taking a look at the big picture. What I read when I... what happened when I was reading this book is that it was a book that, as I say, centres on questions of reform, democracy and governance, and does it with a vocabulary that is, to me, a little bit unusual. Democratisation occurs; it's right there on the title of the book, but there are phrases that are a little bit unfamiliar to me, like expanding the zone of governance. This is just not the way that the issues are understood or debated in the United States.

But essentially, what I understand is, and essentially an approach to political reform in the region that might be referred to as a change through osmosis, that you have a core of political practise and some political values here, in Europe, that by expanding engagement with the Middle East, gradually those institutions, those practises, those values, will spread to the region. The idea, interesting and distinct American approaches, like democratising countries by invading them, these don't occur in Richard's account. So the vocabulary is far more subtle, the mechanisms are sometimes an awful lot more subtle, but again, it's the idea that there are fundamental problems with the region, some of which have roots in unhealthy domestic political systems, and that there may be some extra role in addressing that situation.

Prior to 2011, it seems to me that there was an obstacle, or two sets of obstacles that people would talk about. Whether or not they were real obstacles or not is a little bit less clear. But that people would talk about to this approach of political reform through osmosis. First, was the idea of values. Were societies in the region really on the same page when it came to fundamental, political and social values? And there, you would hear talk all the time, a lot of it that would focus on religion and religion and politics. If there is some kind of political vision, set of political visions, that animate a political voice [?] within the region, they seem to mix and bring religion into the political realm an awful lot more and in different ways than people in Europe would have been comfortable about. So this idea of spreading, expanding the zone of governance, might bring practises and values that weren't necessarily desired. That was the argument that was often made. Again, I'm not passing judgement on the argument itself.

And the second obstacle was, of course, existing governments in the region, which saw themselves, understandably, as, perhaps, a little bit as targets. Willing, very much, to engage with Europe and seeing all kinds of positive ways that engagement with Europe and the security and economic level, would bring positive benefit, but not exactly pounding on the door to get reformed into political systems that would, perhaps, greatly transform and perhaps put them out of business. So prior to 2011, to pursue the gentle, subtle policy of what I'm describing as fundamental political change through osmosis, would run up against... the criticism often was, or the feeling often was, was against the societies and the governments in the region.

Suddenly, in 2011, both those obstacles seemed to suddenly change and fail and fall. And the atmosphere of 2011, in much of the region, was one in which, suddenly, very familiar vocabulary about accountability, about human rights, about political reform, about government abuses, about the need to write new constitutions, about the need for security forum [?], about the need to fundamentally reconstruct political systems, so that you would have rulers who had some kind of democratic legitimacy and who were held accountable to their own populations, through recognisable constitutional mechanisms that involved regular competitive elections and this sort of thing. This

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seemed to be the currency of political talk within the region, without necessarily having been taught these concerns. So suddenly, societies didn't seem to be so much an obstacle, but ones that were grasping for any kind of opportunity to reform in the kind of ways that external actors in Europe and, I would say, in the United States as well, thought would be in the long-term interest of these societies.

And second, governments fell. So rather than being an obstacle, the regimes either stepped out of the way, they collapsed, or some of them panicked. Even the ones that remain, some of them panicked and suddenly found themselves pressed off for real concessions to domestic political constituencies that were pressing to reform. So suddenly, the kinds of policies that were pursued at the margins and in very gentle ways, could become much more central to external actors, like the EU and the United States. And Richard actually documents this very, very well. You have a string of confessions, mea culpas, breast beating, saying we got it all wrong. We made our peace with authoritarian regimes. This served the societies well, they served us well, we have so much to make up for. We should not have downgraded these concerns, we should not have had all these programmes that were, essentially, fig leaves or palliatives, that we damage our credibility. We were hypocritical by preaching one set of values, but practising different ones, and so on.

So you have this extraordinary period, not simply in the Middle East, but an extraordinary period of self reflection on the part of foreign policy elites that dealt with the region, but you think; I got it all wrong. And this was a chance, perhaps, to correct the past and get it right, it was this opportunity. And what Richard traces in his book is the attempt to take that period of self reflection and translate it into policy. And again, what he finds is if you look at records of actual governments and of huge bureaucracies, a fairly impressive record of adjusting very, very quickly, but again, very mixed results because it wasn't quite clear exactly what they were adjusting to because the region was changing so much.

By 2013, I would say, a little bit of the old reality seemed to be coming back. So this idea that you have a community of values where it turned out that these societies were grasping at the same kinds of political solutions that existed in Europe and the United States, was one that seemed to have a little bit less purchase. There was a resurgence of identity politics, a resurgence of sectarianism, a sudden realisation that those people, those political forces, in the region that presented themselves as liberal and seculars, were not necessarily all that liberal when it came to their opponents, but harshly authoritarian.

And that they weren't necessarily that many real seculars in the region, the question was just how they were going to use a religion. And that as politics in the region got an awful lot nastier, it turned out that some authoritarian regimes, this was particularly true in Egypt and the post July 3rd regime in Egypt, authoritarian solutions seemed to have popular support. So this idea that there was a community of values suddenly became a little bit more difficult, and governments within the region returned to their own role of being hostile, or suspicious, or even criminalising the kinds of programmes to spread reform. What seemed to be happening in 2013, basically for the last year or so, is a return of the old pre 2011 politics with a vengeance.

So what is the lesson in this? What does this mean for the future? Well, reading Richard's book now, in the fall of 2014, even though it's really hot off the press, he comes up and covers part of 2014, basically, your account... the book must have gone to press somewhere in the summer, I think. I'm trying to remember the last event you mentioned. It's very current, but there is still this element in which the mea culpas of 2011, which featured so prominently at the time, play a large role in the book, but I think they have largely been forgotten. What has happened over the last year or so, and I think

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with particular force over the last few months, is a return to the pre 2011 thinking in two particular ways.

Number one, the focus on domestic politics of the states of the region is now secondary, once again. It's not as if it's been completely forgotten, but suddenly, the issues that people are concerned about are much more regional in nature. Sectarianism is not simply a domestic problem, but a regional conflict. The rise of Daesh is a regional challenge. And the second thing is, of course, the return of security based issues. Terrorism, political violence, warfare, suddenly, these issues are being viewed, once again, through, primarily, a security prism. Now, governments are particularly complex things. My own government is extremely complex, and every time I come to Brussels, I come away more confused than I... I leave more confused than I came because [?] of the complexity of mechanisms here. So I'm painting with very, very broad brushes.

What I see in the United States and what I suspect may be happening here, if I could see through the complexity, is a situation not in which the period of 2011 to 2013 has been completely forgotten, but that it has been pushed a little bit down the run of priorities and pushed a little bit down the bureaucratic ladder. When you talk in the United States about what issues in the Middle East occupy the attention of the most senior officials, they are now military and security and regional in nature. And it is not as if people are blind to the return of problematic domestic and political systems, but this is now dealt with at a slightly lower level of priority.

Let me go back to the pre 2011 period, and in some ways, I think the self criticism of 2011 to 2013 went a little bit too far. It was never really the case, I think, that western governments embraced authoritarianism in the Middle East and bad governance with enthusiasm. They didn't. They were resigned to it and they managed to build over, perhaps, the decade or so prior to 2011, a host of lower level bureaucratic mechanisms that were really, kind of, aid programmes and dialogues and so on, that were designed to ameliorate some of the effects. These were not necessarily, except for a few brief periods, the centrepiece of policy, but they were ways, perhaps, of trying to hope that there could be some long-term processes and long-term mechanisms set in store, while short-term immediate security crises were dealt with. And it seems to me that we're right back there.

We come, then to, I think... this is, in a sense, where I wind up in a similar place where Christian did, but with, perhaps, a little bit more of a critical tone to it, where you talked about the three paths. And the final path, you said the one that they're taking, is one that says; look, and it's focusing specifically on Egypt, so I will as well. This is an important country. There are all kinds of important things that have to be dealt with in the country. There are all kinds of security, regional and economical issues. So, of course, you have to engage with the government, but you can raise a dialogue on these issues, pull out the roadmap and use it as a bedrock and make it part of the dialogue. And that's an approach that I think makes an awful lot of logical sense.

But I think if there's any lesson of the pre 2011 period is that it's not going to work. It's not going to work because it gets pressed so far down the list of priorities that what it does is probably create a series of edgy conversations, which are then forgotten on the Egyptian side. Let me be blunt about the Egyptian roadmap. The Egyptian roadmap is a dead letter. To be pulling it out and measuring progress. If you actually read the text of the roadmap, it falls into two... that was announced by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, then Minister of Defence, on July 3rd, it consists of... I would categorise the commitments in two kinds.

Number one, a series of commitments to a process of political change. Those of elections and constitution writing that have been, in a sense, literally fulfilled, robbed of all meaning, and we know

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the outcome. And second, set up other kinds of commitments for broader reform about the media, about inclusion of youth and so on, about national reconciliation, that have been completely and utterly forgotten. So pulling this out and engaging a dialogue about them is probably an exercise in frustration and futility on both sides.

Is there an alternative? I'm not sure that there is an easy alternative, but I can sketch one out in the vaguest details. What it would amount to would be instead of quiet dialogue on these nasty outstanding issues, taking a little bit of the element of the mea culpas of 2011 to 2013 a little bit more seriously, and instead of making these questions of quiet dialogues out of the public eye, a far more forceful public line on these issues, one that doesn't necessarily eliminate the engagement on all kinds of other issues, but in the American case, calls a coup a coup. In the European case, doesn't monitor elections that we know, in advance, are not going to meet international standards. And being far more forceful publicly in raising these issues. Not pretending that there is some kind of meaningful dialogue on these questions, but being very clear to governments, like the Egyptian. Yes, we want to deal with you on all these kinds of issues, but we can't use that as a fig leaf for masking the fundamental and problematic nature of the domestic political choices that you are making.

What would be the outcome of that much more aggressive path? I do not think it would have any immediate effect in Egypt. That is to say I don't think it would make the Egyptian government fundamentally recalculate its path. What it might do, however, would be to position western governments a little bit more effectively, if there is another round of political change when it comes, when these political systems begin to perform very, very badly and come under pressure, western governments would have a far more credible record at that time. And I also wonder if the steady, but strong drum beat would communicate very effectively to governments, like Egypt, that are fundamentally dependent on strong international relationships for all kinds of security and economic reasons. That they are paying us very significant costs to their international reputations by engaging in the sorts of deeply problematic authoritarian practises that don't merely recreate the pre 2011 period, but in my mind, actually worsen the political system.

That would just read the spirit of Richard's book and say; what is it that the people who were saying, in 2011 to 2013, we got it all wrong. What advice would those people be giving today? If they remember their words from that period, it would probably be something like that. So I offer it as an alternative, not with any great guarantee of success, but with the idea that it, perhaps, is the only really viable alternative for governments that have a whole host of interests in the region. Security, economic and so on, but who are still very, very deeply concerned that engagement with these governments identifies them with fundamentally dysfunctional political systems in ways that in the long run, will benefit nobody. Thank you.

TOM NUTTALL: Thank you, Nathan. I've got a couple of questions from the panel, and then we can turn it over to the audience. There's a theme that's lurking behind some of the points that were made. Richard touched upon it. This is a very Brussels question, but we're in Brussels, so I think that's okay. It's the distinction between the actions that certain member states may take or the diplomacy that they may conduct in the Middle East. And what the European Union, whether it's external action service or other parts of the commission they do. One theme that we hear about in this town is the so called re-nationalisation of foreign policy. That's certainly something you hear a lot with regard to Russia and Ukraine.

So I'd be interested to get the panel's view on; to what extent this is something that we also see with regard to the Middle East. And to the extent that it is, what room does that leave for the various components of the EU's foreign policy to have an impact in the Middle East? What is the added value,

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to use a horrible jargon, that the EU can have, beyond what the member states are able to do? Maybe Richard, if you've got any thoughts.

RICHARD YOUNGS: That's one of the key themes to the book. When we assess Europe's position in the new Middle East, I think a very important part of that is the EU dimension, the various common frameworks developed at the EU level, the kind of thing Christian has been involved in for many years. But we shouldn't forget the fact that there is the member state dimension as well. But the book argues that it isn't necessarily a zero sum relationship. It's not always the case that you have the EU dimension nicely focused on long-term reform. Member states are doing something entirely different. The relationship between the national foreign policies and the EU dimension varies a lot. It depends on which country you're talking about, what kind of security interest is at stake.

Often, member states are trying to utilise the EU dimension to advance particular interests themselves, and other times, they are basically content with seeing a deepening of the EU dimension, but also trying to parallel that with their own national initiative. Sometimes, actually, when you go to the ground and look at the way that concrete initiatives are being developed in particular countries, they work in a very flexible way. You, perhaps, have the commission delegation, or now the EU delegations, perhaps cooperating with a select group of four or five countries that are interested in a particular reform topic.

So yes, to a degree, re-nationalisation, to a degree, but I'm not sure re-nationalisation would be the right phrase. I think it's more member states wanting some degree of hold on the way that the overall European response isn't led by an embedded institutional dynamic, which is how many academics would explain EU foreign policy, but does start from a more outside in dynamic. It looks at what's happening in the region, that's what the book tries to do, to understand what's happening politically and geostrategically in the region, and then build a response from that. But actually, it's based on an understanding of what's happening in the region, that's how I see it.

TOM NUTTALL: Christian, the EU's added value.

CHRISTIAN BERGER: Well, I wouldn't say that critically with re-nationalisation of foreign policy. I think what you see is that you have a broad agreement among member states and institutions, what to do in certain regions and in relationship with certain countries, the different nuances. There are domestic interests by member states or security interests that may be different from country to country, that play into that. But by and large, what I can see is that, particularly in the Middle East, there is a broad consensus of how to move forward and how to engage with the partner countries. You see this now that with the review of the ENP, this is carried by the member states, the suggestions coming in this is carried by the institutions understood this has to be done. So I would not be too critical about that.

Sometimes it is also helpful that for quite some time, I think our partner countries had to do with just the EU delegations or with Brussels. I think it's sometimes pretty healthy to remind partner countries that are 28 Western European countries behind all this, and sometimes, the bigger ones are making the point. So I think this is very helpful to push European Union policy in those countries. So I think a combination, particularly in foreign policy, of member states and new institution that, in my view, at least, seems to be working pretty well in the Middle East.

TOM NUTTALL: One other question before I turn it to the floor. It's the interaction between foreign policy and domestic policy. Domestic, as in pan European domestic policy. The Middle East problems often have a way of washing up on European shores. You've mentioned the security

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dimension. Obviously, we have a lot of concerns over the potential dangers of returning fighters from Iraq or Syria and what they may do in their countries of origin. There is also the migratory pressures. We've seen repeated tragedies, obviously, across the Mediterranean, and I know that the new High Rep has made a point of suggesting that she thinks that Libya could be one of the most serious problems that she faces during her mandate. And we obviously have a hell of a lot of Syrian refugees in Turkey, many of whom, may like to enter the European Union via its borders. So any thoughts on how our foreign policy in the Middle East may make it a little bit easier to deal with some of these domestic problems? I don't know who wants to start on that one.

RICHARD YOUNGS: I think the focus was primarily on the migration issue before 2011. At least for a period after 2011, it wasn't so overwhelmingly about that issue. And I think the trouble is, some people would have argued that seeing reform processes proceed too fast and too abruptly, could be the main trigger for outward migration, and that would be the thing that affected the domestic agenda in the EU. But I think, to its credit, the EU made the point, actually, where you get an expectation from social actors that there would be a degree of opening up, and then that being curtailed. That tends to be the thing that drives the biggest outflow of migration. So it's often suggested that either you support the form or you try and dissuade migration. That's a rather false dichotomy, to my mind, and I think the EU did try and strike the right balance.

But I think you're absolutely right, because of what's happening now with ISIS, the focus has come back much more to a domestic lens. Clearly, one legitimate concern is about the return of Jihadi fighters, but it does mean, as both Christian and Nathan said, there is much less priority focus on the big systemic level driving forces of what's really underpinning the rise in instability and conflict across the region. I agree with both Nathan and Christian. I don't think we're completely back to the pre 2011 days, but the region, itself, today is so much more complicated. And the threats to Middle East order are so much more profound that deliberating a response to that is much more difficult today than it was in 2011.

CHRISTIAN BERGER: I think what we've all seen in the last three or four years is that the European councils or the heads of states and governments, are looking far more into foreign policy issues than before. And they do this because it has a very strong domestic component. And that's exactly what the two points that you mentioned, the returning fighters and the refugees, when you look at the conclusions of the European Council, these are the two points that very often come back to it because it has a very strong domestic... As we know, quite a few people have complained that foreign ministers are no longer taking part in the European Council, but I think this will bring back the foreign policy dimension into that event, and I think it's quite important.

So I'm not sure what the future will bring and how foreign policy will be included here, but this is definitely, these are two points where it becomes, actually, crucial that foreign policy is taken into consideration.

TOM NUTTALL: Nathan, anything to add? I think we've got a couple of mics, so I'll turn it to the floor. Who has a question? Here we go, in the front.

NAWAB KHAN: My name is Nawab Khan, I'm a correspondent, here in Brussels, of the Kuwait News Agency, KUNA. My first question is to you, sir. You have called your book the New Middle East. Is it a geographical connotation or is it a political one? What I want to say is do you expect more countries emerging from the turmoil in Syria or Iraq. And, Mr Berger, to you, my question is about the cooperation between the EU and GCC. Don't you feel that there should be a much more vigorous cooperation between the two organisations? Thank you.

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TOM NUTTALL: Maybe we can take a couple more before we turn back to the panel. Any more questions? Over here.

ROMANA MICHELON: My name is Romana, I'm with the German Marshall Fund. I'm interested in the Arab Spring, as well as the Arab Israeli conflict. And my question is; to what extent, if at all, would you say, the Arab Spring has impacted the dynamics of the Arab Israeli conflict? And in which way, again, if at all, do you think the European Union should tap into those changes? Thank you.

TOM NUTTALL: Richard, I think the first part of the first question was directed to you.

RICHARD YOUNGS: When I was writing the book, the concept of the new Middle East was referring to the kind of social dynamics that Nathan was outlining. The fact that, clearly, the Arab Spring hasn't triggered a wave of wholesale democratisation across all of the Middle East. We haven't seen that kind of regional dynamic. And there has been a lot of authoritarian resilience, a lot of push-back, against political reform and social protest. But one still feels that something has changed in the Middle East, even though most of the regimes have retained themselves in power. In Egypt's case, we had a kind of a transition, and now swing back to something is a very much purer form of authoritarianism.

I still think there is a degree of social vibrancy and social debate, loss of fear or contestation or whatever one wants to call it, that is qualitatively new, and I don't think it's something that will... it's a genie that can't be put back in the bottle. So it was with that in mind, rather than the broader issue of whether we're really looking at borders being redrawn and the end of Sykes-Picot and all this kind of thing, although that's clearly an issue that's come more to the fore.

To Romana, I have a chapter on the impact that the Arab Spring had, both on the Arab Israeli conflict, and also the lens, the way in which the EU approached the conflict. It's quite a complicated question. Christian has the details better than anyone, but my impression is that in the early days of the Arab Spring, it looked as if there could be a positive spill over. Because the narrative of the Arab Spring was about self determination, it filtered in in quite a natural way to what was going on in the occupied territories. It unleashed several months of social protest in the occupied territories. And citizens, fed up with the less than democratic tendencies, let's say, within both Fatah and Hamas. And the EU did cotton on to that and try to bandwagon with that degree of social protest.

As Christian was saying, the EU has put a lot of money in it. It raised the amount of money it was putting into the occupied territories to try and build a set of institutions that were both more resilient, but also more democratic, to back the holding of new elections. Very importantly, the EU did something the US did not do, which was to try and facilitate the unity deal between Fatah and Hamas. The thing is, the overwhelming security dynamic and some of the trends on the other side of the equation, were not particularly helpful. therefore, there was the pushback against this social mobilisation in the occupied territories, and very quickly, we got back to the status quo.

And it's not that the EU was not doing a lot of very valuable work on the ground, but it, I think, reverted to a template of institution building that it was following before 2011, so the Arab Spring didn't really unlock a lot of new potential in terms of resolving the conflict. And because the focus suddenly switched to the issue of self determination in the United Nations and the EU, of course, didn't have any kind of unified line on that, struggled to regain any kind of influence Israel, I think that if there was a moment of opportunity, it was fairly fleeting and it wasn't one that the EU really was able to harness fully.

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TOM NUTTALL: What do you think of these parliamentary votes on the recognition of Palestine? Did that have any sort of impact on the internal dynamics of this issue?

RICHARD YOUNGS: It's a very sensitive question. My feeling is that because of the way in which the talks wound down last year, it would be time to look at a slightly more direct way to try and achieve peace than was built into the Oslo Accords. I think the EU has been fairly patient, but it is perfectly legitimate to be looking at these ways. My only question, my only observation would be that that may be a necessary part of the equation, to look beyond the current template, but we shouldn't forget... and that may set up things in a longer term perspective to influence a more productive road to peace. But I don't think the EU should give up on improving the way it actually operates on the ground in the territories and looking at...

Making sure that the, as Christian said, the EU has put so much money, so much political effort into building proto state Palestinian institutions, but it needs to look at ways of doing that in a more effective way. Getting right it and the way in which it engages now in Gaza after the conflict in August. Getting right its relationship with Hamas. If we're talking about supporting a genuinely balanced unity deal. There are a lot of short term imperatives and challenges the EU needs to be dealing with more effectively, and the recognition issue may be part of the equation, but we shouldn't get too diverted by that. That would be my...

TOM NUTTALL: Christian, I think the second part of the first question on the GCC was for you.

CHRISTIAN BERGER: I think you're absolutely right, there should be more vigorous cooperation between the EU and the GCC. I think, over the years, on the political side, we are seeing this. There is close cooperation, there was close cooperation, in the case of Yemen where there was a close engagement with the EU and the GCC countries to bring about the agreement that then led to the change of government or the fall of President Saleh and, later on, the election of President Hadi. And I think this is one example where there was a very important cooperation.

The second one is now. I mentioned it earlier on, it's the fight against Daesh, where we are supporting what the countries in the region are doing, both in military terms, but also in trying to cut off the financial support to Daesh and the political support that is there as well. Of course, the downside of that is that we have been trying for almost 24 years to renegotiate a free trade arrangement or free trade agreement. It must be the longest negotiations of a free trade agreement and we don't see the end of it. So I think there was a very strong signal for that cooperation, that finally this free trade agreement would be agreed upon.

So institutionally, between the EU and the GCC Secretariat, I think we have a close cooperation, regular exchanges and meetings. We have ministerial meetings. We didn't have one last year, that was cancelled, but there will be one early next year. But I think we have to build on this. It looks as if you have two regions, the GCC and Europe. They know they exist, but that's it. We know we're there, but I think more can be done in working together, particularly on the world stage, in the UN, but also in the region.

May I, just briefly, on the Arab Spring, because I think that's an interesting question, what impact it had, or could have had, on the peace process. I think, at the beginning, in 2011, the argument that we were making is because the surrounding countries, I mean the countries surrounding Israel and the Palestinian territories were in turmoil. It would have been very good for both of them to come to an

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agreement, to stabilise the centre of that region. We also saw an influence of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian side.

First of all, President Abbas was pretty, not scared, but he was anxious that the Arab Spring would also hit him in the sense that the population was not happy with [unclear 01:12:17] performance, was not happy with... The slogan, in March 2011, in the streets of Ramallah and Gaza, was; enough with division, enough with occupation. So the modelling on what they had heard in Cairo. And the division part was quite interesting. It was addressed, actually, at the PA, that they wanted the division bit of Gaza and the West Bank to end. The demonstrations in Ramallah were pretty small, but the demonstrations in Gaza were pretty big, so there was a very strong message there.

The other impact you could see on President Abbas was that he lost his friend Mubarak. So a big supporter, and then you have Morsi, who was actually supporting Hamas, so the other side of the Palestinian equation. I think now, with Sisi in power, they might be back into a normal... enter into a normal relationship. The message, I think, that has come from us was; we believe that both sides can make peace. If they do make peace, it has a very important stabilising effect on the whole region. The argument that we heard from many Israeli colleagues was; because we don't know where the region is going, it's so difficult to make peace with the Palestinians, because we don't know what their territory would be than used by regular [?] forces. And again, therefore, it is very important what we are doing, that we are building the institutions of a Palestinian state that is reliable, whose foreign policy and behaviour will be reliable and predictable and in good cooperation with all neighbours. I think that's where our added value is in the situation.

TOM NUTTALL: Nathan, do you want to...

NATHAN BROWN: Let me weigh in on that last question. The first part, I'll just be very brief, I come down where Christian and Richard did. There was a sense in early 2011 that there might be some kind of effect, and deep effect, of the Arab uprisings on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. For both the reasons they mentioned, and not simply the absence of Egypt as a political force, but the return of Arab public opinion as a very potent political force that would force Arab governments to take a far more active role in this. It is clear that by 2014, that is not the case. It's not simply that that would say that Sisi has gone back to the Mubarak period, but he's actually gone even further, and done so with popular support.

So at this point right now, under the Mubarak years, the policy on Gaza was one that was not all that salient in Egyptian policies, but to the extent that it was and people noticed it was unpopular. Now it's extremely popular and there is a strong anti Palestinian strain in the Egyptian public life, which isolates Palestinians still further. Where this is looking a little bit more towards the future, I think where the situation is right now is partly as a result of the turmoil of 2011, the rise of other regional issues. At this point right now, the Israeli Palestinian conflict is, essentially, isolated and my own sense is that Palestinians, at this point, are not simply without a viable strategy, but even without a viable leadership.

And a couple of months ago, we did have a gathering where we tried to bring some Palestinian intellectuals together to try to get to grips on what sort of options Palestinians were talking about. And the impression that I came away with was that they weren't. That there is a deep despair within Palestinian society. A sense that all the solutions, the peace process, the Fatah path, the Hamas path, the idea of [unclear 01:16:17] had been proved fruitless and there was nobody who was really able to organise and mobilise Palestinian society in the support of any kind of vision. And it's not as if the

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Israelis have all that viable a long-term strategy either. The American led peace process has clearly run into a crisis and the number of believers, I think, is now extremely small.

So I think we're now at a period in the Israeli Palestinian conflict where it's time for fundamental rethinking. And I don't know what that fundamental rethinking will look like, but an idea that we can simply go back to the Oslo process, that we can pick up negotiations at a particular point, I think, is no longer really viable and it's time to start thinking about, I think, the fundamentally different approaches. Again, I'm being deliberately destructive, partly because I don't have an awful lot of very constructive suggestions, but I think that the formula of the last five years or so, which was to pursue a peace process, pretending it existed, allowed those negative trends to develop far more deeply and it's time to stop pretending that there is some kind of viable process on the ground that just needs to be revived.

TOM NUTTALL: More questions. Over here in the front.

RAGNAR WEILANDT: My name is Ragnar Weilandt. I'm a doctor of research at the University of Warwick and here, at the UAP in Brussels. You've been talking a lot about Egypt; not so much about Tunisia. Considering the recent elections, I think that would be something that should probably be touched on as well. It seems to be the only country in the region, which is somehow moving in the right direction. The only thing that might potentially... or one of the main things that, potentially, might be a problem in the medium term is economic development, and I was wondering how you feel the European Union could counter that. And one of the thoughts I have in this regard is that I'm not sure how much financial aid is still flowing to Egypt, but I think it might be a good idea if it be diverted to Tunisia instead.

Not just in order to support Tunisia, but also projects, for instance, like the metro in Cairo. The EU is supporting the construction of an additional metro line in Cairo and everybody who knows Cairo knows that this is a good idea because the traffic is even worse than in Brussels. These kinds of projects are actually helping the regime because they are associated... things are getting better for the people, but this is not associated with the EU because there is some very tiny EU flag somewhere on the construction side, but no one even knows what that means. So it might actually be harmful in terms of creating support, or at least, giving successes to the incoming regime.

TOM NUTTAL: Thank you. Do we have a question somewhere over here?

SOPHIA KABIR: Sophia Kabir, Friends of Europe. I was a little bit surprised to hear about, at the beginning, correct me if I misunderstood, that the Arab Spring or this region has decreased on the agenda of the European Union currently and that the discussions about the domestic situations of the individual countries have been replaced by discussions about the security implications to ISIS, etc. But you've touched upon this on ISIS and home grown radicalisation for a second, and you've touched upon the migration issues. And a lot of analysts draw dark parallels between the breeding ground of home grown radicals and migrants. They actually stem from the same issues within the countries, that they're not so different in what motivates them.

But doesn't that, basically, hold up a mirror to the European Union and should trigger a second wave of interest in the region because it has such direct... the security implications are so closely interlinked with the domestic situations in the country and those have such a direct impact on the security of Europe. Shouldn't that rather kick off a second wave of interest instead of decreasing the interest?

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TOM NUTTALL: Maybe we'll take one more question and then some brief answers. Over here, please.

BERENIKE SCHOTT: Thank you very much and thank you for the interesting presentations. Berenike Schott, currently with SWP. I have a question about the Gulf countries, which were mentioned. Also one more for Mr Berger. With the new commission and the review of the neighbourhood policy, the Gulf countries not being part of the neighbourhood yet, obviously, playing a critical role in the region. How do you think the partnership with the Gulf countries will be looked at? And what would be the main pillars? What is most important in that regard? I would be interested in seeing how, maybe, you see this has changed or hasn't changed much and where you see this headed. And a question for Mr Brown. You said there needs to be a steady, strong drumbeat towards Egypt for the credibility of the European Union. Thinking about the Gulf countries, Gulf states, how would that translate to that field? Could it, shouldn't it? What's your view on that, in terms of having a more value based foreign policy? Thank you.

TOM NUTTALL: So for time reasons, I think we'll have to keep the answers very short. So maybe if we can just go through the panellists one by one. We had a question on Tunisia. We had a question on security and home grown conditions. And a question on our relationship with the Gulf countries. So you may pick and choose which of those you answer. Richard.

RICHARD YOUNGS: Shall I just take a couple? On Tunisia, I agree. I think Tunisia is, more or less, the sole success story in terms of reform, but I think it's a qualified success story. There are still unresolved issues in Tunisia. The governing coalition now looks a little bit fragile. There are certain tensions in the new constitution, but we've got secular and religious rights that will still need to be ironed out. I think with Tunisia, the EU has done a reasonably good job, but it is a country where the EU still counts and where you get this meshing together of EU dimension, and particularly, the French and the Spanish putting in a lot of funding, and, to some extent, things working together fairly coherently.

For me, I think what the EU could have done better in Tunisia, particularly to address the social economic situation, was to move a lot faster on opening up access to European markets. To its credit, the EU offered a very comprehensive free trade agreement with Tunisia, but it's such a complicated and bureaucratically heavy agreement, that it's taken so long even to get through the fairly preliminary rounds of negotiations. I think Tunisia would have done better, perhaps, with a less far reaching agreement, but one where the benefits were delivered much more in advance. I think the EU is beginning to switch on. There's a huge conference in Tunisia, Invest in Tunisia conference, just a month ago. Because of the elections and the stability there, investors are finally beginning to look at the Tunisian markets. So things are moving in the right direction.

And I agree completely that the issue of home grown radicalisation should be an incentive to look with greater intensity at the Middle East in terms of the foreign policy agenda. Before 2011, I think it was all about counter radicalisation. After 2011, it was more about trying to foster reforms within individual countries. I think now we're back to more of a counter radicalisation agenda. For me, the question is actually how you synthesise that focus on counter radicalisation, as Nathan was saying, while keeping in focus the need to look at more structural, political, economic and social reforms in the regions themselves. That doesn't provide an easy panacea or antidote to home grown radicalisation, but I think it's one necessary part of the equation.

TOM NUTTALL: Christian.

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CHRISTIAN BERGER: One and a half answers, if I may. The half answer is on the metro line in Cairo. I think it's a loan, actually, from the European Investment Bank and not a ground [?], so it's difficult to shift it to Tunisia. But we have taken a deliberate decision to support socio-economic activities in Egypt, a decision taken about a year ago. And I think that whatever you do in that area, in the end, can... the [unclear 01:25:18] government can say this is to their benefit. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. It's a very difficult decision to make. For example, we're running a major school feeding programme in upper Egypt. It's for the kids, but the government can say, you know, it's also for us. So it's a very difficult choice to make, but I think you're right, the traffic is far worse in Cairo, so I think a good metro line would really help.

The full answer is on the Friends of Europe, on the security aspect. I come with a boring answer that we've been discussing all last year, which is we need to have a comprehensive approach to things in third countries. Security is at the forefront, and of course, member states have a particular interest in this. But when you go and address economic issues, democratisation issues, human rights issues, governance issues, in general, I think you also address, in a way, the security issues. I think that's where our task will be in the future, and effect [unclear 01:26:18] as well. Security sector reform, for example, is a development cooperation activity, so I think we should not forget that it would, then, also help to improve the security. So looking at it and what's happening in the region through the lens of security would not give credit to what's happening in the region, so we really have to have all our tools and instruments to address security issues.

TOM NUTTALL: Thank you. Nathan.

NATHAN BROWN: Just a quick response on the question about the Gulf and Egypt. The question's a good one; much better than any answer I could give, so I will just make two observations that are germane to the question, rather than answer it directly. The first is that, interestingly, the Gulf is one region where the domestic politics still is a lot. Because we're not talking about GCC here, we're talking about individual Gulf states and they are very, very different. Sometimes, because of their own domestic politics. You're talking about Saudi Arabia, and especially the UAE. You're not talking about Kuwait, for instance, which has its own brotherhood [?] movement. So you're really talking about a fractured GCC in individual Gulf states.

The second observation is that we are entering a strange period for that reason, when the strategic vision of many of these states and that of the western states that have been so closely aligned with it, have begun to diverge on domestic issues in Arab states, and especially about Egypt. My guess is that the kind of policy that I was arguing for, which would be a much more robust public raising of governance, democracy and human rights issues with Egypt, would be much more successful if there were any possibility of coordination with the Saudis and the Emiratis. And there is not right now, so that's why I'm advocating it as a long-term, rather than a short-term policy. With that kind of cooperation, which is, of course, unlikely and impossible, I think Egypt would come under very, very severe pressure. It's not going to happen now, partly for that reason.

TOM NUTTALL: I'm afraid we're going to have to wrap it up there. But I've been told that there is a delicious Middle Eastern spread waiting for everybody, so hopefully, that will entice some of you to stick around, and I hope some of our panelists will, as well. But for now, thank you very much.