



CARNEGIE EUROPE

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Transcript

# DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN THE ARAB WORLD?

FEBRUARY 23, 2011

6:00 P.M.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

**WELCOME/MODERATOR:**

**Sinan Ülgen**

Visiting Scholar  
Carnegie Europe

**SPEAKERS:**

**Marwan Muasher**

Vice President for Studies  
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**Steven Erlanger**

Paris Bureau Chief  
*New York Times*

Transcript by Way With Words

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests, welcome to Carnegie Europe. We are very pleased today to see such an interest in the topic. We have with us two very distinguished speakers. First of all, let me introduce to you Marwan Muasher, who is currently the Vice President of the Carnegie Endowment. He is in charge of Carnegie's work with regard to the Middle East. Carnegie also has a centre in Beirut with a number of scholars.

Before that, however, he was a Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Jordan, and also he had a four year stint with the World Bank. When we initially talked to Marwan about coming to Brussels, the idea was for him to really share with us his experience regarding the Middle East peace process.

He was the spokesperson of the Jordanian delegation at the time, and although he has done quite a bit of work on political reform in Arab countries, when we first started to talk about this, we were a bit reticent, because at the end of the day, this was a talk that we had, but without any real substantial outcome. Reform in the Arab world, a nice word, but at the end of the day the governments were not fully intent on implementing some of those reforms.

So we really asked him, initially, to talk about the Middle East peace process, and how the EU could engage, how to move forward, but now that we have him here, and we've had a number of meetings with him already, talking to the officials at the EU, at the Commission, at the Council, in Parliament, as you can imagine, with all the events unfolding in this geography, people are much more interested to hear about his real thoughts regarding political reform, in addition obviously to his insights regarding the peace initiative and the Middle East peace process.

Then we also have the pleasure of hosting Steven Erlanger, who is the bureau chief of the New York Times in Paris since 2008. He has been reporting on the events in the region. Today when I took my International Herald Tribune, I saw that he was reporting from Morocco. So I was a bit worried that we might lose him, but we are certainly very happy that he was able, against all odds, to make it to Brussels, so thanks a lot for being here, Steven.

Having said that, he also has a lot of experience in the region, having been based in Jerusalem and reported on the many different dimensions of the region. So, without further ado, Marwan, may I ask you to take the floor?

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Thank you very much, Sinan. It is such a pleasure to be here and to see so many old friends and colleagues, distinguished ambassadors. There is so much to talk about in a region that is unfolding in a very, very rapid pace. I think it was Churchill who once said that a diplomat is one that can predict what will happen tomorrow, and then when tomorrow comes, explain why it did not happen. So, being an ex diplomat, I'm free to say what I think will happen without you holding me accountable for it.

The Arab world, in my view, is undertaking a huge transformation, and whereas we still don't know what the outcome of that transformation is, without doubt, to me, the Arab world will no longer be the same after the last few months.

What I would like to do is maybe not focus as much on the day to day events that are happening in the Arab world, and we can talk about them if you want in the question and answer session, but attempt to draw some lessons, even if they might be a bit early, but I think there are already some lessons to be learnt from what has happened in the last few months, what is happening already, as they apply to the

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

reform issue in the Arab world, but also as they apply to the peace process as well. So, I will manage to somehow bring back the peace process as we speak about all these issues.

The first lesson, in my view, is that whereas the protests might have been triggered by dire economic conditions in the Arab world, whether because of the global financial crisis or the high energy and food prices, and whereas every Arab country is different and has different political and economic conditions and systems of government, different layers of legitimacy, if you will, but there is one underlying theme that cuts across everything that we have seen so far, which is one of governance.

Obviously people are calling for better governance in the area. Obviously people are not satisfied with the level of governance that they are seeing in the Arab world, and that is manifesting itself in different ways, different degrees of intensity. Some people are less satisfied than others, but there is hardly an Arab country today where people can tell you we are satisfied with the system of government, with the level of governance that exists in our countries.

I think this is a very important lesson because addressing the problems cannot be done through financial means alone. You cannot just say people are hurting for money, let us give them more money and we solve the problem. That obviously is no longer sufficient, if it ever was. There is a widespread movement that wants a reform process that is serious, that is sustained, and that is gradual.

I don't think people would like to see the kind of upheavals that you are seeing in the region, but these can only be prevented in the future if Arab countries embark on a serious and sustained reform process that, in my view, has not happened until recently.

The second lesson I can draw from the crisis is that economic reform without political reform, the bread before freedom argument, has failed in the Arab world. Whether it has succeeded elsewhere or not, people sometimes invoke the Chinese model. I don't care.

It has not succeeded in the Arab world, and it has not succeeded, in my view, because it was coupled with the move to globalisation that we have witnessed in the last 20 years, to privatisation, to trade liberalisation, at a time when, in the absence of a system of checks and balances in the country due to the absence of political reform, the benefits of economic liberalisation have not been felt by the average citizen, have not triggered the public at large, and have been restrained and contained, and went to an elite few.

This was very clear in Tunisia, this was very clear in Egypt, and is the case in many other Arab countries as well. So, economic liberalisation today is a bad word among the Arab public. You talk about economic liberalisation and people say this has only increased corruption, this has only brought the selling of the State's assets without benefits being felt by us.

Therefore, any movement in the future by Arab governments, in my view, need to be very aware of the fact that from now on, if economic reform is to work, it must be coupled with political reform. The two must go hand in hand.

The third lesson that I want to point out is the Islamic scare tactic, if you will. Islamic organisations, Islamic political parties have been used by the west and by Arab governments alike as a scare tactic. You open up the system and the Islamists come in. Therefore, the formula is to keep the system closed.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

Basically that argument has been, in my view, seriously undermined, seriously undermined with what has happened in Tunisia and Egypt. One, we did not see the Islamists, either in Tunisia or in Egypt, lead the revolution. We have not seen them even claim to hijack the revolution after it took place, and if they did, they would have had created a big backlash among people who truly felt they did this on their own.

Not to diminish or belittle the importance of Islamists. I think they are an important part of Arab society and will continue to be an important part of Arab society, but to use them as a scare tactic and say if the regimes go, then the Islamists come in, is a huge exaggeration, in my view.

So far, the Islamists in Egypt have acted extremely wisely. They said they will not field a presidential candidate. They will not run for more than 20% of the seats in the next elections, and I believe them, because this is what they did in Jordan. In Jordan in 1989 they wanted to be a force, still want to be a force in Jordanian politics, but they don't want necessarily to be the majority, nor are they a majority when you look at their popular support.

Ambassador Shahid is with us. If she will allow me – Hamas won in 2006, not because of their own strength, but probably because of the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Palestinian authority at the time.

In a pluralistic society, the Islamists will actually lose support, because if you have a closed system where the only two alternatives are either a political establishment without a system of checks and balances, or an Islamic opposition promising clean governments, people will naturally flock to the Islamists, not always because they believe in their ideology, but because they are the only protest vote available.

In a pluralistic system, such as I hope will evolve in Egypt, where people will be given third and fourth and fifth choices, I would assume, I would expect the strength of the Islamists to be confined to what their percentage in the street is, which in Egypt today is probably about 20%.

They will be a formidable force, they have every right to be a formidable force since they are advocating their views through peaceful means, but they will not be a majority in Egypt. I don't expect that this will happen.

The fourth issue I want to talk about is the argument by the political elite, by the traditional forces who do not want change in the Arab world. The argument that they used in many places, including in my own country when I was in government, said we have all the time in the world to reform. How do you see people out in the street, do you see people complaining? Why are you in such a hurry to partake in a reform process that might bring instability?

Well, it is clear today that that argument cannot be used anymore. People are in the street, we don't have the luxury of waiting, and we don't have the luxury of a turtle-like pace as far as political reform is concerned. We either, I can't say we, I'm sorry, I'm not in government, but Arab governments can either partake in a process where they manage it in an orderly fashion so that they achieve stability and reform at the same time, or they will see a street managing it with results that are not sort of orderly, and are not smooth, do not result in a smooth transition.

I think this is a huge, huge wakeup call for everyone, and whereas I do not expect what has happened in Tunisia and Egypt and Libya necessarily to migrate immediately to other parts of the Arab world because of different conditions, in Jordan no one is questioning the monarchy, in Saudi Arabia no one is questioning the monarchy, in Kuwait they have a very vibrant Parliament and channel to voice their

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

views, but that does not mean that because the systems are not threatened, that does not mean that Arab governments can sit and do nothing.

It means that there is a chance, there is a huge opportunity to undertake a serious and gradual reform process, as I said. What do I mean by serious? I mean a process that results in strong parliaments, a process that results in diluting the dominance of the executive that we see in the Arab world today.

Without dilution of this power, without a system of checks and balances evolving in the Arab world, you cannot hope to address issues such as corruption, such as equitable treatment, and you cannot address these if you don't have in place the necessary tools to do that through strong parliaments.

So, in my view, this is the first sign of seriousness that we can expect is, is there a move not to create an overnight transformation in parliamentary systems in the Arab world, but is there a move that we see that in five years or ten years will result in a strong Parliament, able to exercise oversight authority over the executive, or will we continue to see weak parliaments that are service oriented and that are not party ways and that depend on the State to give benefits and to give services to their constituencies.

The last issue I want to talk about is peace. Conventional wisdom today is that this is not a time to talk about the peace process, that this is not a time to invoke a new element into what already is a very complex situation taking place in the Arab world. In my view there has never been a better time to invoke peace, and why?

The argument that Israel has used for the longest time, that it is the only democracy in the Arab world, cannot now, after what is happening in the region, be reconciled with support that Israel has shown for the continuation of Mr Mubarak and the suppression of the emergence of a new democracy.

The sympathy that the international community today has for the Arab public yearning for freedom across the region, you cannot exclude from that sympathy for the Palestinians who are also yearning for freedom in their own countries. If there was a double standard policy before, this is today very starkly felt by public in the region.

If the international community does not want to repeat the mistake of Iran in the 70s by supporting the Shah for such a long time until they lost the trust of all Iranian citizens right after the revolution, then the international community cannot just focus on the issue of reform among the Arab public and exclude from that issue also sympathy for the Palestinians and support for the Palestinians in their quest to also get their own freedom and occupation in Palestinian territories.

Therefore, as the international community today revisits its policy towards the Middle East, and I know that both here in the EU and in the US there is a feeling that they have missed the boat, despite the fact that the signs were all there. Nobody can say that the international community has not been warned about this, about the stagnation that has existed in the Arab world for so long.

Today, as the international community at least realises that they have missed the boat and that there is a strong need today to revisit the policy so that at least if they missed it on Egypt and Tunisia, or Libya now, they will not miss it on other parts of the Middle East.

If such a policy is being revisited, it must abandon the old policy which has prioritised stability over democracy and achieved neither, and treated peace as if it is a separate track that has no connection to the first two.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

If you want to achieve the three elements of stability, reform and peace, they must be handled through a policy that looks at all three at the same time. You achieve stability this time not by being blind to reform and peace, but by supporting a gradual but serious reform process, and you also achieve stability by supporting an early resolution of the Arab Israeli conflict.

If that is not done, I don't think there is hope that the new regimes that will emerge in the Middle East, that in my view will not even think about abdicating the peace treaty with Israel, this is not on the table. The peace treaty with Israel remains an Egyptian national interest, and remains a Jordanian national interest, but they will be far more critical of Israel than they are today.

They would be far more representative of their public when something like the US veto last week in the Security Council takes place, they will not defend that or ignore it or keep silent about it. Therefore, a policy must be consistent across all these tracks, peace reform, and to achieve the stability that I guess is still the main objective of the international community in its dealings with the Middle East.

Stability cannot be achieved through old policies. We have a new situation in the Middle East. Old policies cannot solve new realities. There must be new thinking by everybody. There must be new thinking by the Arab States to finally embark on a serious reform process and stop playing games with reform, to be blunt.

There must be seriousness on Israel's part in understanding that it will find it increasingly more difficult to justify an occupation in this new atmosphere of freedom that is sweeping across the Arab world, and there must be seriousness by the international community in looking at all the challenges facing the Middle East, and address them at once rather than compartmentalise them and deal with them as if they are isolated and not connected.

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** Thank you, Marwan. You've really left us in a quandary with this new paradigm, which initially is a bit counterintuitive, but this is perhaps exactly the spot where I turn to Steven and ask him to help us with this quandary about how he sees the situation, but more particularly how he perceives the new realities on the ground, to paraphrase Marwan's statement. You have just been back from Morocco so you were on the ground, and we'd very much appreciate your insights.

**STEVEN ERLANGER:** Sinan, thank you. The nice thing about Morocco is that it's a very quiet ground, and I didn't get to taste the local teargas. I had enough of that. First of all, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. I hope you can all hear me. It's a great crowd and a lovely place, and it's always a pleasure to listen to Marwan talk.

I think you are right, first of all. Egypt has been sitting there as a problem for a long time. I had been warning friends in the Clinton administration about the Shah of Iran-like quality of Mr Mubarak, so that goes back three years, and I talked to Tom Donilon about it two years ago. It's not his field, but I said to him you'd better press the system on Egypt because I'm very worried about it.

The problem is, you press the system and you still don't come up with an answer when the events come. It is worth saying how exciting all this is, how exciting it is to be a young Arab man or woman today, how proud they are of themselves, what they have accomplished. They've gone against, I think, many years of expectations and many years of I think patronising assumptions about who they are and what they care about, and there's real excitement there.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

I think this is worth saying – I kept thinking, there are two things of an analytical nature that struck me and two things of a warning nature that struck me, and I thought this may help. The first thing I thought about was Wordsworth. Bliss was in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven. This was Wordsworth during the period of the liberal revolutions in 1848.

Two things to be said - 1) you cannot understand, it seems to me, what is happening without understanding the demographic bulge in Arab societies, which is basically true across the region. Everyone talked about it. They talked about it in terms of a problem of employment, but 25% youth unemployment in the Mena region, it's the highest in the world, overall.

In Egypt, the number of new people entering the job force was about 4% of the population a year, last year. Unemployment in Egypt is almost ten times as high for college graduates as it is for people with elementary education, strictly true among urban youth who are educated, the people you see in the streets. 65% of the population in the region is under the age of 30, 65%.

Now, this is a snake that's now calming down. These people are not having as many children as their parents did, but think of it this way. The population in Egypt grew from 30 million in 1966 to 80 million. I mean, it's been an enormous influx. The system cracked. It couldn't produce the jobs, it couldn't produce the investment.

There's a good indication when you look at median ages. Again, these things, I think, matter and you get very excited by Tahrir Square and so on, but these things cut across. The median age in Yemen, that's the number of people who half the population is older than this and half is younger, let's make an age, it's 16.4 years of age. In Egypt it's 24. In Morocco it's 26.5. In the US by contrast, it's 37. In France it's nearly 40. Spain it's 40 and Italy it's 44.3, and by the way, in Gaza it's 17.5, median age, so half the population is under 17.5 years of age, in Gaza.

So this creates an enormous pressure cooker, and when you combine that with education, because most of these kids are pretty well educated, the literacy rates are much higher, and with access to some kind of Internet, Al Jazeera, suddenly the world is not a strange place. The problem with being part of this virtual world is you think you can reach out and touch it, and it's very frustrating to know how people live there, but it's not yours, and you're not sure how to get it.

I think this is a very important motivation. It's one of the reasons this has happened, and you combine that with – as Marwan quite rightly said – the lack of legitimacy of most of these governments that are under threat, or have fallen. Basically they were coups, mostly, and the people who ran the coup, or inherited the running of the coup, sat there for 40 years.

In Egypt the coup was, I think, in 1952, and nothing much has changed since then. We know in Libya it was 43 years ago. Ben Ali was there almost as long, and then inevitably what happens is they become kleptocracies of a fashion. Even when you have real economic growth, and let's not misunderstand, economic growth was rising in Egypt, it was rising in Tunisia. This is the old revolution of rising expectations where you can see the money but you can't get it because you are actually not allowed access to it.

It goes to the army, it goes to the family, it goes to the friends of the king, if you are in Morocco, and a lot of people are very angry about it because they feel they are being lied to, and they feel they don't have access to something, and legitimacy is not democratic. Legitimacy was founded on pan Arabism for a while, and then it was founded on religion for a while, and for a long time it's been founded on the Israeli Palestinian issue, but that wasn't working anymore.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

As everybody notes, those issues, Israel, Palestinian, I think Marwan is quite right though, there is a time and there is new pressure to try to move ahead on this score, but these were not the big issues of these revolutions. They were internal, they were youth driven, they were Internet driven, they were frustration driven. Educated people couldn't get started. No mastery of their lives and no sense of any control over the people running them. So, that's to me an important point.

The other point I would like to make, which is more about warning, is Wordsworth is right, it's wonderful, the revolutions of 1848, but 1848, the spring of nations, that why we call it the Arab spring because of the 1848 spring of nations, was followed by probably the worst Century Europe has ever been through.

I mean, who wants to predict, but most of these revolutions were put down, they created nation States. Nationalism became very virulent. Democracy won out, but it took nearly a Century to do that, and that was in educated Western Europe, which had a pretty high standard of living.

So, this is part of what worries people. It's part of what worries not just Israelis, but Americans. Democracy is great, it will make the Arab more stable and everything else, but let's make sure we get there, and what will the transition be like and how many landmines will there be between the glory of this revolt?

It's hard to call it a revolution, except in Libya, because in Egypt you could argue you have an army coup, not a revolution, but how do you get from there to a truly representative functioning democracy with all the controls, rights for the individual, protections for business, the middle class, freedom of speech and press? I mean, there is quite a long way to go.

So, one wants to be very optimistic, and I am. One wants to be very proud, and I think people ought to be, but one really needs to help. This is where the EU is struggling, and I hope Carnegie can help figure out how to help, how to help in a real way and not in a patronising way. It seems to me also where Turkey becomes so important.

Everyone talks about Turkey and none of us really quite understand Turkey very well. It's very complicated, and if you are a Turk, you might feel that the European Union is pushing you away rather than pulling you in.

It's always seemed to me that Malaysia is too far away, and if you want a functioning Muslim, roughly secular democracy that has economic growth and progress, you have to look at Turkey. So, how do we help Turkey help Egypt, Tunisia, etc, move toward this great synthesis of religion, democracy, nationalism, and do it keeping ties to the west and keeping cold, if you like, relations with Israel?

How do you make sure, and this is my last point, and it's really more of a question, how do you make sure that as in Iran, I covered the revolution in Iran, nice people lost in Iran, or even in Gaza, a lot of nice people lost in Gaza, that circumstances don't lead to a kind of hijacking of the revolution for other purposes.

I mean, it is true in Gaza, and it's true, as Marwan said, the victory of Hamas was more about the failures of Fatah. It's actually about Fatah running to many candidates, actually, in too many constituencies, which gave Hamas a majority it didn't actually earn, but never mind. What happened in Gaza was quite something else, and we now have a very different kind of State in Gaza, which is very severe, very intolerant, which just banned men from cutting women's hair.



*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

One wants to be careful. I don't want to presume Hamas is a model for anything, certainly not for the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, but there are reasons for people to have anxieties about what happens, particularly as I said, in this great transition to democracy, which, if we are not careful, will be full of all kinds of unexpected landmines or IEDs. Thank you.

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** Thank you, Steven, and before I turn the floor over to you, I just want to take two minutes of your time and ask Marwan a question that was raised by Steven. Marwan, if in front of you today were a college of commissioners, and we know that they have met very recently, what would be your words of wisdom in terms of how an external actor like the EU, could actually positively influence the developments on the ground?

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Well, first of all we need to first, I think, agree on the point that if the countries are not ready to help themselves, there's nothing that the EU can do, and there's nothing that the US can do. If the countries do not understand that it is in their own national interest to embark on a serious reform process, there is nothing that the international community can do.

Having said that, once the countries realise that stability in their countries can no longer be achieved through keeping the systems closed, once the countries realise that there is a lot that the international community can help, financially because there will be a need for a lot of money to address some of the economic hardships that the region is facing, institutionally, because as we embark on a reform process, we need to build institutional capacity for governments, that is not there in the Middle East, and has not been there for a long time, precisely because Arab governments have not created the political space for these parties and leaderships to emerge.

One of the best things that the international community can do beyond money is help bring about a settlement to the Arab Israeli conflict. We today know what the solution to the Arab Israeli conflict is. We know it. If I ask any of you, you can probably tell me more or less the red lines, the parameters for such a solution. We are not looking for a solution.

What we are looking for is a political will to put it on the table and finish with this. Until we do, this region is going to continue to suffer. The Arab Israeli conflict has been both an impediment to reform and an excuse for it. Both. Let's take the excuse away and start with the reform. That's mainly an Arab responsibility, but then, if it's an impediment to reform, it's also an international community responsibility to help bring it about.

I am very worried, still, that we might not be drawing the right lessons, that we might not see what has happened in the last two months as a transformational event in the Arab world, that we might think that this is a storm that will pass away. I am very worried still about that, about Arab countries, not the international community.

We need to internalise that the Arab world, in my view, after the events of the last two months, will never be the same as the Arab world before. We might not take the 1848 route or a 1989 route or a 1979 route in Iran. I don't know the route that we will take. I do know it will not be smooth, and I do know whereas we have seen so far a peaceful transition in Egypt, it's not probably going to be a peaceful transition in Libya.

So, different conditions will dictate different outcomes, but I do hope that all Arab governments will take this very, very seriously and understand that the pace must be accelerated, that we don't have the luxury

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

of waiting any longer. I believe once that first step is taken, then there's a lot that the international community can do to help.

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** Now, what I would ideally like to do is to have two or three rounds of Q&A, so I will ask for your hand. We have a microphone. Claire, you have the microphone. You already have somebody next to you, and if we can start with a question, and please present yourselves.

**STEFANI WEISS:** Stefani Weiss, Bertelsmann Stiftung. I've got a question for Steven. Everyone seems so fond to drop in Turkey could be an example and Turkey has a role in it. For example, I find it a little bit un-historic, because with regard to Libya it was the re-claimer attitude we got to know, who suppressed this kind of independence and nation building Libya for example tried to establish under the Osmanic Empire. So I am not quite sure if it's really good to point to Turkey as a solution and an example, and a role model which would help in the region. I think they are not appreciated there.

**MATTHEW KOPETSKI:** I'm with a consultancy at Hume Brophy. This is a question purely on my own behalf. If I were a 25 to 35 year old Arab person living in this region today, I don't think I would have any incentive to trust that the existing regime in whatever country I lived in could manage a process of greater political liberalisation. What sort of incentives do either of you see that these regimes can create to sort of facilitate that trust, rather than continue on the streets today and taking up arms against the establishment?

**PIERRE GOLDSCHMIDT:** My name is Pierre Goldschmidt from Carnegie. I would like to ask a question to Mr Muasher. Going into how Egypt is supposed to proceed, of course the first thing, I understand one of the first things, is to change the constitution. Now, normally a constitution would be approved by a fairly elected Parliament, but you can't have fair elections with the present constitution, so there is a chicken and egg problem.

Do you think the new draft of the constitution should first be voted by referendum in Egypt, or in another way, and how far do you think the constitution will be changed? Article II of the constitution refers to Sharia Law. Do you think that will remain, and what would be the consequences of maintaining Sharia Law as Article II of the constitution?

**UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER 1:** Two comments – one on Turkey. Turkey, if I'm not mistaken, never had a transition period like we see right now in the Middle East. So, not necessarily that much experience when it comes to transition. As a model, absolutely yes, but transition probably a bit less.

On the other issue, which is what the EU or the US could, should do, is be ready whenever people ask you. Take the constitutional reform, it's pretty simple. What you do is you do a multi step approach, you amend the current constitution by whatever undemocratic regime there is still in place, and whenever there is enough space to organise a constituency and a Parliament that can actually draft a fully democratic constitution, then this happens down the road, a couple of years probably.

This applies not only to the constitutional reform, but to all sectors of public life, starting from banking system and judiciary reform, and linked with local governments. One needs to be ready about it, and we have, in Europe at least, quite wide experience just on the constitutional issue, taking the Venice Commission. They drafted quite a few of those constitutions in theories.

**PIRKKA TAPIOLA:** Thank you, Pirkka Tapiola from the EAS. A question on the military, what role for the military, because the Turkish model of course was mentioned already, and somehow my feeling is

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

that a model where the army hovers around somewhere and ready to intervene if secularism comes under threat may not quite function in the Internet era.

If you look at Indonesia and the Indonesian transition model where the military played a stabilising role and then retreated to the barracks, could this be some kind of model which could be emulated in the region, especially in Egypt?

**MARWAN MUASHER:** I will leave the Turkish question to you, Steven, and I will answer the other ones. If I am a 25 to 35 year old citizen in the Arab world, I agree with you that I have every reason to not trust the existing regimes, but I wouldn't go as far as saying I am not ready to be patient if there is a serious reform process.

You take my own country, Jordan, no one wants the monarchy to leave. It serves a very unifying factor. Everybody, even the most ardent opposition of the government policies will tell you this. So, people do want to reform the systems, they don't always want to overthrow them.

In order for the situation not to come to a point where Egypt did, you need to start a reform process, but you cannot expect the President to run for office when he is 83 years old to flag that he wants to bring his son to power to elect a Parliament that had 88 members of the Brotherhood in 2005 and to one that had zero members of the Brotherhood today.

You cannot engage in such activities anymore and expect to keep any trust. So I don't think it is too late for a serious reform process to start, but I do think that if these reform processes do not start and are not seen as serious, then the situation will get worse. There is no question about it.

On Egypt, I will give my views as an analyst of course. I am not an Egyptian and I am not involved in the preparations that are going on. I also don't think it is realistic to have parliamentary elections in six months in Egypt at a time when political party formation is not there.

The only organised party is the Muslim Brotherhood, and of course the ruling party, which will no doubt reinvent itself and present itself, as has happened in Eastern Europe. They will get rid of the controversial elements, they will probably bring in a more youthful leadership and present themselves in a new light, and that has happened in Eastern Europe as well.

So, I don't think it is realistic to expect that parliamentary elections will take place in six months. The problem of course is that if they don't, if there is no process, that people will start fearing that the system is regressing on its promises to transition to democracy.

I do see other solutions. I was just reading an article today regarding this. There is talk today in Egypt about a process that might look something like this. One, you amend the constitution to get out of the chicken and egg scenario. You amend at least the most problematic elements of the constitution that did not allow people to stand freely for president, that did not have the judicial oversee the election process. You know there are five or six amendments that probably are close to being done. Then you elect the President, not Parliament, and then the President oversees a process of a rewriting of the constitution from scratch by – I don't know by whom – but by people who are credible. I can't decide on this today, but by a committee that is credible. You put the new constitution to a referendum, and then by that time you would have had time for political party formation and then you hold Parliamentary elections.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

This was done in Spain, this was done in Portugal. Franco died in November 1975. Parliamentary elections in Spain were not held until 1977, a year and a half afterwards. People will wait, in my view. People will wait so long as they see a serious process, and so long as they are confident that somebody is guaranteeing that this serious process will not be reversed.

Here I come to the role of the army. The army in Egypt can play, ironically, but it can play this guarantor capacity. It can play it because there is no other choice, not because the army is necessarily democratic, but this is the deck of cards they were dealt. The system made sure there are no choices, made sure there is no alternative leadership.

I am glad the Indonesian model was mentioned because the Indonesian model can actually be a very, very good model to follow, where the army indeed guaranteed the process and then went back to the barracks. I do expect the army to do the same in Egypt. The army has always, in Egypt, advocated a policy of not shooting civilians, and despite the fact that it is conservative and despite the fact that it was close to Mubarak and all that, so far the army has more or less been wise in guaranteeing a process, and I think in realising that any regression is going to put people back on the street again.

After what has happened, I do not think that people will be satisfied to go back home and accept a process that will not lead to such a transition. Now, in two years time you will have a pluralistic system. Will it be smooth? Of course not. You will have lots of bumps along the way, but there is no other way of going through the process. You will have to go through a transition like this.

Sharia Law, again, I don't know. I have talked to Egyptians who have told me they don't want Sharia Law, they want the new constitution not to mention Islam at all, and I have talked to Egyptians who have said this is unrealistic. Frankly, in Jordan this is not a problem. The Jordanian constitution also talks about Sharia Law, not as the source, but the major source of legislation, and a Christian in Jordan, I don't feel threatened by that at all.

What is important is a pluralistic system. You can have Sharia as a source of legislation and a pluralistic system. You can have that. Sharia does not advocate a particular system of government. I mean Islam has been vocal on many things, but not on a particular system of government.

So, I don't think they are incompatible so long as no party, no group can impose their religious or cultural views on the rest of society. I do think this is what needs to be in the constitution, regardless of whether Sharia Law is there or not. I do think that the constitution, any constitution in the Arab world must have two principles enshrined - a peaceful rotation of power, so, a commitment to political and cultural and religious diversity at all times, and of course peaceful means.

Nobody is allowed to carry out, if you want to be part of the political process. If these two principles are in the constitution, nobody should feel alarmed by any group coming to power if this is done peacefully and in a rotational way.

Whether the Egyptians will do this or not, I don't know, but the initial signs are positive. The initial signs are positive. I think that the groups at least who have been leaders so far in the uprising have all said that, including the Brotherhood, by the way, have all said they want a pluralistic society.

They don't always say they want a secular society. I mean the whole idea of a secular society anyway is problematic, is more problematic than of course - it's not problematic here - but it is problematic, but I think you can have a pluralistic society with all these, if you want, constraints.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

**STEVEN ERLANGER:** Just briefly, I was in Moscow when the Soviet Union collapsed, and spent the next four years covering what my friends called our common psychiatric space, because no one else knew what to call it. There was a man who was part of the old guard named Arkady Volsky, who was pretty clever, and he would say you know, they say we should follow the Chinese model or the Swedish model or the British model.

He said, the problem here in Russia is we don't have enough Chinese and we don't have enough Swedes and we don't have enough Britons. So, I get very shy about models. Indonesia is a very long way away, and the army in Indonesia has a lot of sins in its history also. So, I'm not sure that's a perfect answer.

I'm talking about legitimacy. That I think is the key issue. We were talking about monarchies. Monarchies do, I think like Jordan and Morocco, even Saudi Arabia, I mean they seem more stable in part because the legitimacy question is resolved, which it never was in Egypt or even Libya. It is also true that reform – I won't speak for Jordan – but Morocco certainly has stagnated over the last few years, and there is stuff bubbling under the surface.

The young king, who is only 47, has softened the regime that his father left. Hassan II was a very tough fellow, and the son is respected. He is considered on the side of the poor. However, his friends have gotten very wealthy, he's gotten very wealthy, and they have stopped reform out of fear of radical Islam, out of fear of Wahhabism, but they don't like talking about that, and out of fear of the conservative reaction of the countryside to changes even in family law.

Now, if they are clever, and I think people are clever, they will co-opt this new wind of change and try to use it as an accelerant to break through this resistance to create a new kind of reform of the judicial system, of corrupt officials, of petty corruption on the model of we heard you, now let's do it together. Now, legitimate places can do that.

Turkey – I don't mean to overstress the model. I am simply saying you are quite right, I don't think we need the army hovering, but in the Middle East in general, I think it's true of most of the countries, the armies tend to be the main force of stability. Sometimes stability is a bad thing, but they are also, as we saw in Egypt, they are also an instrument of social mobility. People get drafted, they move through the army, they get education, they get smarter, their families do better, etc, etc.

So, one should be careful not to throw away this area of rising in a society where it wasn't so clear otherwise. Otherwise it was a matter of who you knew and who your father was and so on and so on.

I do think the Turkish model is interesting, and I'd like Sinan to talk about this also because he after all knows much more than both of us about it. It's interesting because it is democratic, because it respects Islam, because it's pluralist, and now it has moved a bit in a way some people don't like, to reflect its neighbourhood better, but I think in that too it is a model for any new governments that emerge from these social revolutions. Would you talk a bit about Turkey?

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** This was a surprise, given that I have the Carnegie hat here, but nonetheless, perhaps two words on the Turkish model. I also do read some of the analysts that happen to write about Turkey as a model for the region. I am struck by the easy way that Turkey has been put as a model to the region. We have to be careful when talking about the Turkish model, because in a way, it is a much more complicated picture than that.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

One side of the picture is about the legacy, the starting conditions. I think the Turkish development has been very much a past dependent development. In this, I mean that before the transition to democracy, Turkey went through the Ataturk era reforms. Here we talked about the principle of secularism, laïcité, as we call it.

That has been very well embedded in Turkish society, and then the democratic transition started after that. This is a fundamental difference, in a way, which perhaps reduces the relevance of the Turkish model to the region, because as Marwan just pointed out, it may be very difficult at this point in time to impose secularism in a top down manner, which is what we did almost a Century ago.

However, where the Turkish model is very relevant are in two dimensions. One is really the political reform process and the political development that Turkish society took. There I think there are a number of lessons in terms of political parties' law, how the parties are structured, even with all its problems, the elections law and so on and so forth. So, how do you create a contestable political market? There I think Turkey has some lessons.

The other one, and this is also something that we touched upon, is State market relations, which goes a long way to explain the success of the Turkish model. How the State market relations have been structured, have been modified and have really reached a degree of, I think, refinement, is what characterises the success of the Turkish model, especially economic success, but also its political success, because at the end of the day, if you don't have economic success it's much more difficult to talk about political stability and political success. So, the next round of questions.

**UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER 1:** I would like to ask both Steven and Dr Muasher whether they really think that of course the assessment that you both described needed on the part of the Arab governments is matched with at least a consciousness of the need of reassessments, also of EU policies. I talk of the EU because we are in Brussels. I will leave the US for Carnegie in Washington.

Do you have a feeling from what you have seen since the upsurge of all these revolutions that there is really a real conviction and a real desire on the part of the college of commissioners or the new external service to review the basis of their ENP policies and their Euro made policies, which ultimately were the major support of the regimes that you are seeing falling down.

If we just look at what happened with Libya in the last years, that reached a point where it was totally put off the legal system of international relations and was totally brought in again because of a very, very – I would say – egoistic and selfish reason, which is that Libya proposed its services as a shield from migration, which took a big part of the discussions of the EU this Sunday.

I am not sure the EU is convinced that stability in the Mediterranean will come from political reforms and economic development, because if you look at the way policies have been run since the partnership with the southern Mediterranean have been practiced, it has been part of the disaster, I think. I am not sure that the lessons on the part of the north have been well understood, at least not from what I have seen myself around the institutions until now. I hope I am wrong.

**KARIM HEGAZY:** My name is Karim Hegazy from the Egyptian embassy in Brussels. I would like to ask Steven about the EU response to what is going on nowadays in the Middle East, or in the Arab world, and whether he agrees that the EU needs to tackle every case in a different way than other cases, because I think, and we do think that every case is really different, based on different elements, and has its own character.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

So, this is one thing. There are two other comments, that we think, I think personally, that the EU needs to change the kind of traditional ways of dealing with the reforms and support of democracy in the Arab world because now the change, or the substantial change came from inside, came without big support, not without support, but without a big interference, I would say.

So, this is just a comment, that it needs to be reframed and it needs to be reconstructed, I do think that. The other comment is that implementing pressure right now by announcing holding different conferences, of different meetings, this is what I meant by traditional tackling of the issue, is that helping right now, or should it be better to wait and see how the fluid situation would go in every country, and then try to respond case by case to the needs of the reforms in such places?

**MOHAMMED RAIJAD BARAKAT:** My name is Mohammed Raijad Barakat. I am a former economic expert at the Saudi Arabian embassy. What are the main mistakes that the European Union and its Member States have done during the last ten years in their relations with Arab countries? Do you think that continuing to apply and preventing the agreements with these countries and the agreements of WTO, are they going to help our countries to be developed and to go out of this crisis that they are living in now?

**JOHANNES VOS:** My name is Vos, I am a retired official of the Council of the European Union. Referring to the Egyptian army, I read, as usual with big interest, a recent article in the Herald Tribune about the tremendous economic power, as you said also, as a way of education of the Egyptian army. In the new situation, are they going to give in or to give up some of the power, and how do you see this developing, as in your beautiful interesting paper was described as a potential, not too sure element in the ongoing democratisation process?

**CHARLES:** Good evening, my name is Charles. I'm a French student from the College of Europe in Bruges. My question would be related to the previous one in terms of the EU relations with the Arab countries. For many years, the main legal tools of the EU were the conditionality, the positive conditionality to pledge for reforms in the Arab world. Obviously it did not work.

My question would be, do you think the EU can afford to keep the same tool when it comes to a transition government or to a realistic government which will have to face very, very difficult conditions in terms of stability and security, or do you think a completely new approach has to be used when it comes to relations with the Arab countries?

Also, other people are asking for reforms, and Europeans and the United States are applying reforms in the Arab world during the last ten years. What are the differences? Do you think that there is any difference between reforms wanted by Arab people, and the reforms asked for by Europeans and USA?

**STEVEN ERLANGER:** Let me try to deal with some of these in a sensible way. I'm an American. I have lived in Europe for a long time, I've covered lots of European countries, I have watched the quartet, such as it is, do what it is trying to do. I think the European Union has a terrible quandary in the Middle East. It has for a long time.

It has been reluctant to confront the Americans on policy issues. It has let Washington lead the way, even if sometimes Washington goes to the left and then it goes to the right and then it comes around and spins, it doesn't matter. There is just a perception that, and Salafists complained about it but it didn't matter. There is a perception that the Israelis will only listen to the Americans, and frankly, most of the powerful

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

Arab governments like the Egyptians and Saudis would only listen to the Americans too. The EU's basic role was to fund the Palestinians.

Now, it would frustrate the EU and sometimes I think the EU did a tremendous amount of harm. It funded Hamas in Gaza. There was an agreement, whether one liked it or not, after the Hamas victory, to stop aid to Hamas, to a Hamas run government, and the EU couldn't take it anymore. A few months in they started funding it quite openly because they said we can't see this much pain.

Well, the whole point of it was to create pain, and it broke whatever. I mean I didn't agree with the policy, but the fact is the EU broke it, and the EU paid for all the things Hamas couldn't pay for, and it helped keep Hamas in power. Let's be honest.

Now, I don't know whether the EU thought about this, thought it through, I doubt it, but that was the reality of the situation. Now, I do think there has been an ugly spectacle, if I can put it this way. The EU is trying to figure out what its foreign policy should be, Catherine Ashton is trying to figure out what her job should be. She is trying to get staff, she's trying to get money, she's trying to get ambassadors. She is told she has to have people from different countries, whether they speak the language or not. It's not easy for her.

You may think she is the right person for the job or the wrong person, but even the right person would have a hard time doing this job, because frankly, the governments don't want a Foreign Minister of the EU. There has been this ugly spectacle, in my view, of everybody racing around to hotspots just so they can be on TV. You know, who would get to Egypt first and who would get to Tunisia first, and would the Americans get there first and why isn't Cathy Ashton there before the Americans, or why is she there a week afterwards, and of course the press feeds this, by the way.

In the larger sense, I would hope that the EU would think very hard about what it can provide, in a serious way, that it would make distinctions between countries, which I think has to be done. Tunisia doesn't need the same thing as Egypt, that's for sure, and frankly, the other ugly thing I must say, it's partly because of the Italians, which one understands, given their proximity and their relationship with Libya, but rather than celebrating what's been happening, there has been moaning about illegal immigration.

I don't know why the EU doesn't welcome people for the period of time where they feel in danger and then help them go home again. That seems to me a logical thing the EU could be doing that would look very nice to the people of the region instead of looking like a bunch of scared people who don't want to share the wealth. That's what it looks like. I say this harshly, I am sorry, as an American.

American policy is a problem too. We can talk about that, but in general, the EU and the US have been quite interested in oil and quite interested in no problems and quite interested in keeping immigration down and controlled. So now, as Marwan said, none of it produced real stability, and now it has produced lots of problems, and there needs to be a real rethinking.

At the same time, I think we should not be arrogant. There's been a lot of arrogance in all this, and we should let people tell us what they need from us, and we shouldn't just think money is the answer, because there actually isn't that much of it around. Even if there were tons of it around, it would disappear very quickly and wouldn't produce very much.



*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

So, I don't have lots of real answers in terms of what the EU should do, but I think they should think very, very hard about each country, whether there are economic trade issues that could be done. Why can't Tunisian goods come into the EU duty free for a period of two years or something? One can think about these things anyway.

There is a lot of knowledge, as you say, about writing constitutions and institution building. The EU has been very useful in Kosovo and other places, but it's a different world here. I would say only last two words about the army. Mohamed ElBaradei, again, whatever you think of him, did an opus [?] for us the other day in which he expressed a lot of concern that the Egyptian army was moving too slowly and was not quickly enough bringing in representatives of civil society and opposition figures.

I think the worry is, for some people, but the benefit is for other people, that the army intends to manage this transition to democracy very carefully. The army does not want to see the Muslim Brotherhood have too big a role in Egypt, and it has its own interests to protect, some of them corrupt. It's going to be very hard to have oversight that the army is not going to allow it to have.

In other words, one thing we and the EU and the US can do is to keep pushing the military leaders with whom we have very good relations to be brave, to open up, to take a risk, to kind of trust a little more and worry a little bit less about instability.

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** The wisdom of large numbers.

**MARWAN MUASHER:** Most of the questions on the EU, I can't claim that I am an EU expert, but I have been having lots of meetings, thanks to Sinan, the last three days with different arms of the European Union, Parliament, Presidency Commission. I see a lot of similarities in the reaction today to the situation in the US as well, which is to say that both the EU and the US administration today realise that their policy has failed.

In fact, I think the neighbourhood policy in particular has been under scrutiny even before the recent events. People were sort of realising it is not achieving what they had hoped to achieve. Having said that, both don't know what to do. They know they have to do things differently, but they don't know what to do differently and how to do it differently.

My concern with big organisations like the EU, where you need to develop consensus with 27 States, that while this thinking goes on, while they are engaged in discussions about what to do, events on the ground are not going to wait for them. The Arab world today, after a long period of slow movement, is moving faster than the EU decision making process.

That's a concern because you don't want, after you have reached a decision, to see that the region has changed already, not waiting for you. So that was one thing I said, is think about it, but don't take too much time. You don't have too much time. This is not a luxury. Let's wait until the dust settles down. Let's wait three years until we see what the new regimes will look like. We don't have that luxury.

They are still very cautious about migration. They are very, of course, worried about what's happening in Libya because of migration. They are very concerned about conditionality. I mean, even though I can hardly call the action plans that were signed a few years ago, I was a Foreign Minister when I signed the first action plan between Jordan and the EU, and I can tell you, there was no conditionality at all. It was so mild that even I thought that we were doing more things than they were asking us for.

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

So, that does work anymore. You need to get beyond this conditionality and agree on a serious process. That of course once again has to start from the country. You cannot impose it from here, but you cannot pretend there is a process when there is none by just abandoning all talk about conditionality and assuming.

That brings me to the question of what is the difference between reform efforts in the Arab world and those that were attempted by the EU and the US. Let me be openly blunt here. The US went through three sort of positions during the last decade. It started with the Bush Administration sort of greater Middle East initiative and what was seen in the region as a push to impose reform from the outside, and was, in my view, justifiably resisted by the region.

Then you went through a second iteration when Hamas won in Gaza and the Brotherhood won in Egypt, and the Bush Administration sort of lowered their rhetoric and their push for reform. So that was the sort of strong pressure approach by the Bush Administration, at least in the first term.

You had the weak, or mild pressure approach by the European Union through action plans that talked about reform but really did not include much in them. In both cases, whether it was strong pressure or weak pressure, let's be honest, the Arab world did not do any reform, did not do reform by justifying it at first that we don't respond to pressure, we need to have our home-grown process, but the home-grown argument, which is a very valid argument, has also been used as an excuse for doing nothing.

With the mild pressure approach by the EU, we didn't feel any urge to do anything anyway because we were not asked to, in a serious manner, to do so. Both did not work, and once again, I cannot emphasise this enough, no one can start this except the Arab world. No one can start this except that this time hopefully there is an urgency that the Arab world did not have before, because people are out in the street.

There is a new situation that Arabs can no longer afford the luxury of time, hopefully. I am eagerly waiting to see. Is there any Arab government today that is undergoing a comprehensive reform process, not individual programmes on women here, on giving computers to the judiciary there? Is there a comprehensive process of reform going on today? No, there is not. If there is one, please let know, because I'd like to use it.

The one close to it is what Salam Fayyad is doing. That is true, that is true, but also, the occupation is being done under impossible conditions. Other than that, we don't have, and we need to have it.

I think the UE needs to, and I have said that, but I have said it in a different manner, any new approach, once the Arab States indicate seriousness about the reform, the EU needs to up the incentives, because the incentives before in an action plan were not that great, frankly. The access to the markets of the EU was very much controlled. No agricultural products. I mean there was no incentive for Arab governments, really, to do the painful political reform, even as mild as they were, in return for incentives that did not give them much.

So, increase the incentives of market access, increase the chances for a peace agreement. If you do this, then you can also talk about an increased reform process that is more serious, but with the incentives being the way they are today, I am not very optimistic. I will stop it there.

**SINAN ÜLGEN:** Some of these meetings in that particular region of the world, and with people bowing their heads and murmuring Insha'Allah, now, Insha'Allah as a word does not necessarily contain the

*Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

urgency that Marwan has so elaborately and eloquently set out. That is until you go to Latin America where there is a very similar word called Mañana.

However, a very good friend who also knew about our region, described the meaning of the word Mañana to me, and said it's the same thing as Insha'Allah without the sense of urgency. So, I think I would like to end this session with a sense of urgency that things must be done, and certainly thank our panellists for sharing their thoughts with us about what must be done.