

16

The European Union's Eastern Accession and Neighbourhood Processes: Do Post-1989 Experiences in Central And Eastern Europe have Lessons for the Arab Spring?

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I. Introduction

The momentous 'Arab Spring' uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)¹ have frequently been likened to the 1989 uprisings in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)² and the Former Soviet Union (FSU), which resulted in the subsequent collapse of Communism throughout almost all of Europe. Whilst the scope and depth of the political transformation in the MENA region continues to unfold, comparing the role of a key external actor, the European Union (EU), in both historic processes, can help give an idea of how the Arab Spring might develop. This chapter will argue that the two sets of uprisings are only partially analogous, and that the EU, the major external actor involved in the political and economic transformation of CEEs, is likely to play only a partial and limited role in the transitions in most MENA countries.

¹ The MENA region includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Yemen.

² CEE includes the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia (now the separate Czech and Slovak Republics), Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Estonia. Often included within CEEs are the successor states of the Former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo (although not recognised by many states), and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

The 1994 Corfu EU Summit recognised that there was a greater risk of instability from the EU's southern, rather than eastern, neighbours.³ This is attributable to over-population, high unemployment, low educational standards, small and weak private sectors, weak civil society, and underdeveloped democratic structures and governance. Indeed there have been repeated warnings of instability, particularly in North Africa: "The demographic explosion in North Africa in particular will have major social, political, economic and cultural implications across the Mediterranean and beyond. If the potential for instability is to be superseded, the EU should pay more attention to the region. This must include creating a conducive atmosphere, within which the peoples of the region are able to express themselves freely."⁴ Yet, the EU's political ambitions, policy instruments, financial and human resources have been far more substantive for the EU's Eastern candidates and neighbours, than for its southern neighbours. The question is whether the EU, most recently in its May 2011 Neighbourhood Policy Review, is doing enough to mitigate these risks.

II. Similarities and Dissimilarities Between 1989 and the Arab Spring

Like the Arab Spring, unrest, following the breaching of the Iron Curtain, first in Hungary and then most famously at the Berlin Wall in 1989, spread across regions sharing many similar historical, structural and cultural characteristics. The 'contagion' of uprisings in both regions was rapid, but not universal. Secondly, the initial spark for revolutions in both cases was the increase in

³ The EU's southern neighbours commonly refer to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The six eastern neighbours are Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and the three South Caucasus Republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

⁴ Calleya, Stephen; Hopkinson, Nick, 2007: "Challenges and Opportunities for Stronger Co-operation Between the EU and Southern Neighbours", *Report on Wilton Park Conference 878*, Malta, 12-15 November: 2.

food prices and the inability of autocratic regimes to improve living standards, which in turn cast doubt on the ability, and subsequently the legitimacy of autocratic regimes to serve their populations. Thirdly, technologies played an important part in both revolutionary waves, arguably more so in the case of the Arab Spring. In 1989, for example, the ability of East Germans to receive television and radio broadcasts from West Germany contributed to the undermining of Communism in the German Democratic Republic. The widespread availability of 'third generation' mobile phones with video capabilities allowed Arab Spring protesters to organise themselves and to communicate, both domestically and internationally, on the scale and tragedy of protests. Finally, autocratic regimes in both regions helped suppress underlying ethnic, religious and tribal tensions, for example in Romania, the former Yugoslavia, Bahrain and Syria. These tensions were 'unfrozen' in both revolutionary waves.

There are, however, more dissimilarities between the Arab Spring and the 1989 uprisings in CEE. Whilst there was a single, albeit declining, regional hegemon in CEE in the 1980s, the same cannot be said of the MENA region today. The FSU became the single hegemonic power in CEE as a result of victory in World War Two, and its position was confirmed by the allied powers at the Yalta Summit in 1945. Although Egypt and Saudi Arabia are the major Arab powers in the MENA region, neither is predominant and a number of influential external actors exist. The EU is important given some common policies, but primarily because key member states, namely Germany, Italy, Spain, France and the UK, have significant investments and trading interests. France and the UK, as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), have played leading military roles enforcing the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 concerning the 'No-Fly Zone' over Libya. The US is a key player, both militarily and economically, and enjoys close relations with Israel, a major regional military power. Turkey, the regional hegemon a hundred years ago, is regarded by many as a possible model for democracy in Islamic states. Its recent economic growth makes it an increasingly important investor, for example, in Syria. Iran has

pockets of influence throughout the region, notably as a sponsor of Hamas. The Russian Federation retains some influence in the region, although far less than during the Cold War. The recent rapid economic rise of China makes it an increasingly important actor. The small Gulf States also play an important role as investors and donors, and Qatar is important as mediator/bridge-builder, home of *Al-Jazeera*, and even as military participant in the Libyan operation.

Secondly, whereas the collapse of Communism in CEEs (except in Belarus) ultimately led to the collapse of the FSU, the 'Arab Spring' will not result in the collapse of a regional hegemon. The roles of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the MENA region are hardly comparable to the dominance of the FSU in CEE. While the EU filled the vacuum following the collapse of the FSU, the transition in Egypt will largely have domestic implications together with the relative stability in Saudi Arabia. Although political transition in Egypt may serve as an inspiration for domestic transitions elsewhere, the 'days of rage' in Saudi Arabia have not, to date, resulted in mass popular mobilisation. In any case, the Saudi ruling family, fearing a spill-over from events elsewhere in MENA, increased government social and educational spending by \$130 billion in early 2011. To date, this strategy appears to have worked.

Thirdly, unlike the Communist regimes in CEE, which shared similar political and economic structures, the pre-2011 political structures in the MENA region are more heterogeneous, ranging from absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia), autocratic republics (Libya, Syria, Yemen), to regimes with some aspects of democratic governance (Jordan). Thus, the uprisings and subsequent collapse of communism in CEE appeared more like a set of falling dominos than the transformations in the MENA region, which are appearing more uncertain, patchy and lengthy. To date, there has been regime change in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya (which succeeded with NATO air support); civil war in Syria and Yemen where autocratic regimes are taking all measures, including substantive force, to stay in power; little

apparent change in Saudi Arabia; no or only minor disturbances and change in the Gulf States (except Bahrain where the ruling family has stayed in power with Saudi military intervention); and promised but uncertain constitutional reform in Jordan and Morocco (the February 20 Movement in Morocco, for instance, doubts how meaningful the monarch's proposed reforms may be).

Finally, the key factor that distinguishes the Arab Spring from the 1989 uprisings and the subsequent collapse of Communism in CEE and the FSU, is the absence of the carrot of EU membership. In the wake of the collapse of Soviet influence in CEE, the EU was in a unique position to fill the resulting power vacuum. With no substantive power vacuum left by a declining regional hegemonic power, and with EU Membership not a possibility for southern neighbours, the role that the EU can play in the MENA region is limited from the outset. Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates: "Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6 (1) may apply to become a member of the Union."⁵ 'European' has been interpreted by the Commission and Council in strict geographic terms. Morocco's application to join the EU in the late 1980s was quickly declined. Turkey qualifies for possible membership of the EU on grounds that only 4 per cent of its landmass is in Europe, and its European vocation was confirmed by the European Economic Community in Article 28 of Turkey's 1963 Association Agreement, and a decision of the 10-11 December 1999 Helsinki Council. However, the geographic criterion has not always been applied. Cyprus, for instance, which is more contiguous to the Asian continent than Europe, was deemed as having a European vocation and was eventually granted membership.

The rest of this chapter examines why EU membership is such a powerful means of promoting political change and prosperity, and why the EU's neighbourhood policy falls well short of this. It

⁵ Article 49, European Council (2010, December 17). *Conclusions of the Brussels European Council*. Available at: <http://www.ec.europa.eu>.

will aim to demonstrate that what the EU is offering its southern neighbours, in its May 2011 review of its neighbourhood policy, remains insufficient to promote change which in turn will mean that the EU will have to endure costs, such as continued uncontrolled migration, growing refugee flows, and continued uncertainty over energy security.

III. EU Accession in Central and Eastern Europe: the Context

The eastern enlargement of the EU has been its most difficult enlargement to date. The EU faced a historic economic and political challenge in the wake of the collapse of communism, with the imperative to integrate democratic market and autocratic command states, and to transform the latter into the former. In spite of the historic challenge, enlargement was very much in the EU's own self-interest: economic (having access to cheaper labour and more markets and consumers), political (enhancing democracy and stability in neighbouring CEE), and security (ending the artificial and costly militarised division of Cold War Europe).

Making the transition from communist planned to market economies involved considerable economic adjustment in CEE. Gross domestic product (GDP) collapsed in most CEE countries, as the transition proved both deep and painful, and many were sceptical whether such a transformation would be possible. Professor Richard Baldwin famously argued, that EU enlargement to the East would be unlikely for another 30 years because countries in CEE are so poor, populous and agricultural, and they would place unsustainable demands on the EU budget.⁶ Many countries took a decade or more to return to pre-1989 GDP levels, and 8 CEE countries joined the EU 10 years later in 2004.

⁶ Baldwin, Richard, 1994: *Towards an Integrated Europe* (London: Centre for Economic Policy Research).

The Eastern enlargement of the EU is widely hailed as the EU's greatest foreign policy success, which extended peace and greater prosperity throughout most of Europe. However, at the time, many CEE states regarded the EU accession process as falling short of the post World War II Marshall Plan. Nonetheless, the circumstances were different. The vast sums of the Marshall Plan were in part intended to generate economic growth in Western Europe to stem the spread of communism, whereas the EU accession process took place against a background of declining communist influence. Similar calls have today been made for a Marshall Plan in North Africa, but again the circumstances are different. In the immediate post World War II period the need was more one of financing reconstruction, whereas in the wake of the collapse of communism, the priority was structural reform. Given the prevalence of more market-based systems in the southern neighbours, which however have weak developing economies, the need in much of the MENA region is arguably for a hybrid of the Marshall Plan and post-1989 approaches.

IV. EU Accession in Central and Eastern Europe: the Process

The EU's approach to its eastern enlargement was elaborated in the June 1993 European Council in Copenhagen, which stated "the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe that so desire shall become members of the EU. Accession will take place as soon as the associated country is able to assume obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required. Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the

aims of political, economic and monetary union”.⁷ The Copenhagen Council also noted that the EU would need the capacity to absorb new members and to maintain the momentum of integration. Central to accession, was having a functioning market economy requiring candidates to adopt the entire *acquis communautaire* (all EU legislation, regulations and customs), which in turn facilitated greater trade and foreign direct investment.

There is no *prima facie* reason why MENA countries, if they wanted to, could not replicate the success of many former Communist CEE states in meeting EU accession criteria. However, without the motivating carrot of EU membership and the intrusive conditionality of having to transpose and implement the *acquis communautaire*, the thinner instruments of the EU’s neighbourhood policy and the lower sums available for aid, transformation in southern neighbours is likely to be less substantive. The process of eastern accession is, nevertheless, of illustrative value to the EU’s southern neighbours, especially as the May 2011 Neighbourhood Policy Review introduces more incentives for further assistance.

A year after the breaching of the Berlin Wall, the EU opened negotiations on associate membership with the four most advanced CEEs, namely the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic. The Europe Agreements established institutional frameworks for political dialogue and economic co-operation, including aid and trade. Essentially, the Europe Agreements were conceived as frameworks in which the CEEs could be prepared for accession. Later, the December 1999 Helsinki European Council confirmed Turkey as a “candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to other candidate states. Building on the existing

⁷ Article 7 iii), European Council (1993, June 22). *Conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council*. Available at: <http://www.ec.europa.eu>.

European strategy, Turkey[...]will benefit from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms”.⁸

Market access, rather than aid, is the best form of assistance the EU can give candidates and its neighbours. The 1993 Copenhagen Council agreed to accelerate the EU's efforts to open up its markets to neighbours and candidates. More balanced EU-CEE trade was achieved through relaxation of EU tariff and non-tariff measures; the creation of an early-warning system for trade conflicts; elimination of subsidies for EU exports; increased support for privatisation and economic adjustment; greater flexibility in applying export quotas, and initiating negotiations for improved access of EU exports.

The liberalisation of trade with CEEs resulted in a rapid reorientation (often doubling) of trade with the EU. Asymmetrical trade preferences were extended more rapidly to associate member states over a 10 year period. Certain 'sensitive' products, notably textiles, coal, steel and agriculture, were regulated by special protocols. The Agreements aimed to enable associate countries restructure their economies and make them more competitive. However, special protective clauses guaranteed the protection of nascent industries and associate countries could take unilateral measures, such as raising duties, to protect them temporarily. In all sectors, except notably banking and insurance, associate member states granted 'national treatment' for EU firms. The parties guaranteed the repatriation of profits and capital connected with foreign investments for companies. The 1993 Copenhagen Council also established a high level system of co-operation in matters within its competence, including Trans-European Networks, energy, environmental protection, Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs (JHA).

⁸ Article 12, European Council (1999, December 11). *Conclusions of the Helsinki European Council*. Available at: <http://www.ec.europa.eu>

The Hungarian and Polish Association Agreements were the first to be ratified by all EU Member States. Believing they had made sufficient progress in meeting the preconditions for membership, the Hungarian and Polish governments submitted formal applications for membership in April 1994. The December 1994 Essen Council adopted a Strategy for the Integration of the Associated Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which resulted in the Commission's May 1995 White Paper listing 150 key internal market measures and standards for the CEEs to introduce as legislation and implement. Candidates remained free to move at their own pace, and to set national priorities. Some key elements of the EU *acquis* (free movement of goods, services, capital and people) were only gradually implemented, sometimes not even until several years after accession, as was the case with Germany which only allowed the free movement of labour from Poland in 2011.

The first step in the accession negotiations involved an in-depth analysis (screening) of EU laws with which candidate states had to comply, followed by a full screening report undertaken by the Commission (which also provided regular advice). The candidates later submitted a negotiation position and the Commission submitted its report to the Council, which finalises negotiations on each legislative area with the chief negotiators of candidate countries. Each candidate's progress is considered in an annual report issued by the Commission.

The latest EU accession negotiation with Croatia involved 35 negotiation chapters, which relate to areas of EU competence and common measures including: free movement of goods, capital and labour, right of establishment and freedom to provide services, intellectual property rights, competition policy, financial services, agriculture and rural development, fisheries, energy, economic and monetary policy, trans-European networks, regional policy and coordination of structural instruments, justice, freedom and security, environment, consumer and health protection, customs union, external relations, foreign, security and defence policy,

finance and budgetary provisions and financial control, and institutions.⁹

In a sense, styling the accession negotiations as ‘negotiations’ is misleading, largely because candidates’ ability to negotiate concessions is limited to the possibility of securing a few minor derogations and bidding for longer, sometimes shorter, transitional periods. Accordingly, some of the candidates used to refer to the structured dialogue with the EU, as more akin to a ‘structured monologue’. The ‘take it or leave it’ conditionality of the accession process though, was central to ensuring successful CEE transformations.

While the front runners, such as Poland and Hungary, started negotiations as part of an earlier ‘Luxembourg group’, a second group started negotiations after the 1999 Helsinki Council. Ten countries, namely Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, ultimately joined the EU in 2004, with Bulgaria and Romania joining later in 2007. Croatia completed accession negotiations in 2011, and is hoping to join subject to a national referendum in 2012 and its satisfactory progress, before the July 2013 target accession date. Iceland is hoping to complete accession negotiations in 2012, but a subsequent national referendum could reject membership. Turkey’s long-standing bid to join the EU is controversial, and is unfortunately stalled. Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA), akin to the Europe Agreements for CEEs, are intended to prepare many West Balkan countries for possible accession. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Montenegro are currently candidates. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo (UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99) are potential candidates. Serbia has radically improved its chances of commencing accession negotiations in light of its co-operation with the International

⁹ See http://www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/Croatia/key-documents/index_en.html.

Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in particular following the May 2011 arrest of Ratko Mladic.

Kosovo is a potential candidate, but its candidacy is hampered by its lack of recognition by a handful of EU Member States, and the fact that any negotiations will be inextricably linked to negotiations with Serbia (which also does not recognise Kosovo). Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, currently Eastern neighbours, could also in theory qualify to join the EU on geographic criteria, as do the three countries of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). The Russian Federation also qualifies on geographic criteria but it has demonstrated no interest in applying to join the EU, and in any case the absorption challenges for the EU would be almost insurmountable. Norway and Switzerland have withdrawn their applications to join the EU, and Greenland, even though part of Denmark, withdrew from the EU altogether.

V. EU Neighbourhood Policy

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched in 2004, bringing together the Barcelona Euro-Med Framework for the EU, candidates and southern neighbours (established in 1995) and the six Eastern neighbours. After the accession of 8 CEEs in 2004, the EU did not want to create new dividing lines in Europe so soon after the dismantling of the Iron Curtain. However, countries are either inside or outside the EU, and this is underlined by the substantive difference between membership and neighbourhood provisions and processes. Those outside 'geographical Europe' have no prospect of joining the EU, and therefore cannot be subject to the same strict conditionality of the accession process and the greater investment, aid flows, trade and development benefits that derive from it.

The ENP builds upon existing agreements between the EU and partners, whether through partnership and co-operation agreements, regional or association agreements. It offers neighbours a privileged relationship, building on mutual

commitment to common values (democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development), and deeper economic integration, increased mobility and more people-to-people contacts.

The core of the ENP is a set of bilateral agreements between the EU and partner countries, each with its own specific Action Plans. Individual Action Plans involve an agenda of political and economic reforms with short and medium term 3-5 year priorities. For more advanced countries, further plans were being adopted, while others such as Algeria, Belarus, Libya and Syria have not agreed to Action Plans.

Neighbours' Action Plans broadly mimic the accession chapter headings. However, ENP Action Plans fall far short of the accession framework, both in depth and scope of the provisions. Some issues are notably absent, such as the free movement of workers, customs union, institutions, economic and monetary policy, and provisions for a Common Agricultural Policy. There are also additional chapters on regional co-operation for instance with reference to the Agadir process promoting South-South trade, and conflict resolution.

VI. The 2011 Neighbourhood Policy Review: the Financial Context

In light of the Arab Spring, and the widespread perception that EU assistance had previously not succeeded in helping promote change in both southern and eastern neighbours, the EU was obliged to rethink its neighbourhood policy, in particular with regard to its southern neighbours. Given the current austerity in several Member States, widespread reluctance to increase spending at the EU level, as well as the Greek debt crisis and its potential for financial market contagion, the EU is not in a position to increase neighbourhood spending significantly. Nevertheless, the new neighbourhood policy, announced on 25 May 2011, identified an additional €1.242 billion until 2013. The

new “more funds for more reform” approach, gives the EU greater flexibility to channel funds to countries proceeding most with reform, as funds are no longer pre-allocated to individual countries in advance. “Increased EU support to its neighbours is conditional. It will depend on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU.”¹⁰

The prospect of EU accession increases the provision of EU aid, lending and investment, and mirrors a gap in fortunes between new and candidate members, and neighbouring countries. EU assistance is given through a variety of channels. For example, between 2007 and 2013, Poland would have received a total of €60 billion in structural funds, five times what southern neighbours receive. In the 2007-2013 Multi-Annual Indicative Financial Framework (MIFF), candidates and potential candidates received €1.5 billion in EU funding, through the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) for transitional assistance and institution-building, cross-border co-operation, regional development, human rights development, and rural development. In 2006, the European Investment Bank (EIB) lent €1,800 million to Turkey alone, compared to the €1,400 million lent to all nine southern neighbours.¹¹ Turkey is set to receive €1,681 million under the MIFF in 2011 and 2012. With lesser adherence to the *acquis*, investment levels in southern neighbours outside the energy sector are lower.

In the 2011-2013 period, the May 2011 neighbourhood review allocates €5.7 billion for EU neighbours, with a third of the total earmarked for six Eastern neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine), and two thirds for the southern neighbours (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia). However, this amounts to per

¹⁰ European Commission, 2011: *A New and Ambitious European Neighbourhood Policy*, Press Release IP/11/643 (Brussels: European Commission): 2.

¹¹ Calleya, Stephen; Hopkinson, Nick, 2007, art.cit.: 14.

capita grants to Eastern neighbours of €3.47, which is more than double of that received by Southern neighbours (€1.57).¹²

The Neighbourhood Review calls for additional lending from the EIB and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), including an extension of the latter's mandate to selected southern partners. The EIB has been lending to the MENA region for more than 30 years, and has more than €10 billion invested.¹³ The European Council agreed to increase EIB lending to the Southern Mediterranean by €1 billion in the 2011-13 period. The EBRD has agreed to extend its operations into the MENA region, starting with Egypt, and it expects annual lending volumes (primarily to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) could reach around €2.5 billion by 2013.¹⁴

Aid and debt relief to North Africa is also being offered by Saudi Arabia, the US and others. Saudi Arabia has pledged an extra \$4 billion in emergency funding (soft loans, deposits and grants) to Egypt.¹⁵ The US is offering \$1 billion in debt relief to Egypt, to give its transitional leadership a financial cushion to support food subsidies and absorb almost a million unemployed in an enlarged civil service.

VII. The 2011 Neighbourhood Policy Review: Provisions

For the EU to play a substantive role, domestic populations and leaderships have to want change. "The EU has in fact been trying to promote democratic and economic modernisation in North Africa and the Middle East for many years, though without conspicuous results. The main reason for the EU achieving so little is that most of the rulers have not wanted to embrace serious

¹² Available at: www.eubusiness.com/new-eu/diplomacy-arab-aida64.

¹³ Grant, Charles (2011, March 11). A new neighbourhood policy for the EU. *Policy Brief*, Centre for European Reform:6. Available at: www.cer.org.uk.

¹⁴ European Commission, 2011, art.cit.: 1.

¹⁵ Saudis lend Egypt \$4bn to bridge gap, *Financial Times*, 23 May 2011: 9.

reform.”¹⁶ The Review makes disbursement of funds conditional on progress in “‘deep and sustainable democracy’ (which involves a strong and lasting commitment from neighbour governments to free and fair elections; freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media; the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial; fighting against corruption; security and law enforcement sector reform and establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces[...])”.¹⁷ However, some still question the EU’s ability to deliver these goals: “new mechanisms to do this have not been defined in operationally meaningful terms, and the institutions seem unable to agree on what to do.”¹⁸

The EU will also “undertake comprehensive institution-building programmes, similar to those implemented with the Eastern partners; launch a dialogue on migration, mobility and security with Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt (as a first step towards a Mobility Partnership); strengthen Euro-Mediterranean industrial co-operation; launch pilot programmes to support agriculture and development[...]; (support) sustainable economic growth and job creation, trade, and sectoral co-operation to advance economic integration[...]; promote direct investment[...]; negotiate Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with willing and able partners, further develop trade concessions, especially in those sectors most likely to offer an immediate boost to partners’ economies[...]; develop a[...]; well managed legal migration, capacity-building on border management, asylum and effective law-enforcement co-operation[...]; and pursue the process of visa facilitation for selected ENP partners and visa liberalisation for those most advanced.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Grant, Charles, 2011, art.cit.:3.

¹⁷ European Commission, 2011, art.cit.: 1-2.

¹⁸ Emerson, Michael, 2011: “Review of the Review – of the European Neighbourhood Policy”, in: *European Neighbourhood Watch*, 71: 3.

¹⁹ European Commission, 2011, art.cit.: 2.

VIII. Conclusions

The Arab Spring is more a hybrid of the 1989 and the mid-1950s uprisings in some CEE countries. Whilst the revolutions in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt have brought regime change, the outcomes of the more violent revolutions elsewhere, notably in Syria, appear uncertain. There is little evidence of any substantive change in a number of countries in the MENA region, most notably in the Arabian peninsula, apart from perhaps Yemen.

The EU, one of many key external actors, has fewer levers to offer countries in the MENA region than was the case in CEE after 1989, where it filled the power vacuum left by the FSU. This article has argued that the prospect of EU membership is the key lever that helped secure and lock in political and economic transformation in CEE. Unless one day there is a radical (and highly unlikely) rethink of the EU's potential geographical *finalité politique*, the role of the EU in the MENA region will be limited, and a powerful external incentive for reform will not be available.

In the absence of a membership perspective, the EU should seek to be more generous and ambitious with regard to its southern neighbours, thereby bringing the instruments of neighbourhood policy closer to those of the successful accession process. The May 2011 Neighbourhood Review is, therefore, too little too late. The EU should in particular accelerate market access for MENA goods and services, even if it is politically difficult for EU governments to face down special agricultural and other vested interests.

If the EU is really serious about tackling uncontrolled migration and securing energy supply in southern neighbours, its actions should be more substantial and urgent to take full advantage of the unique historical juncture that is the Arab Spring. However, the geographical structures of who can join the EU, the limited funds available in an era of EU austerity and a Eurozone in crisis, the absence of a collapsed regional hegemon, and continuing enlargement/neighbourhood fatigue, seem to suggest a

historical opportunity to advance significant political and democratic transformation in much of the MENA region, which may not be seized.