

DEBATE

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*

Thank you very much. To be fair, I do not think that any European or American has said that they are going to rescue the Arab world. That would be quite arrogant indeed. I think that the concept you have brought up of complementarity is a very useful one to follow. We should indeed laud the Arab League for taking decisions on Syria which the United Nations Security Council, despite our efforts, was not able to take or was not able to agree on.

Before I give the floor to Ed and Christophe, I would like to bring in two or three questions or short comments from the floor, which will probably be addressed to individual speakers.

Pierre LEVY, Former Director Policy Planning at French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

I would like to pick up on three remarks. Volker said at the beginning that no country is immune; the Secretary General talked about the need for peace and a new order in the region; and His Royal Highness mentioned Iran. I would like to integrate Iran into the debate. I know of course that Iran is not an Arab country, but it seems to me that it is relevant in two ways. First of all, we know that there is an aspiration for democracy and we remember what happened in 2009. We also know that the regime is divided and that things could become unstable there. Secondly, we also know that Iran can be a threat to the region and across the region and it has a huge nuisance power, with connections with Syria and others, not to mention, of course, its nuclear ambitions.

I would like to know how you see the role of Iran in this global picture. Will it stay apart and will it have a positive or negative role? I am sorry for asking such a wide question but I think that it is very hard to talk about what is going on in the region without talking about Iran.

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of Mary Robinson Foundation

Given the lack of gender balance on the platform, I feel compelled to raise the issue of women in the Arab world and I do so knowing that there have been many reassurances. However, I was in Tunisia, in fact with Martti Ahtisaari, at a meeting of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation – and Amr was also there – and met four bloggers, one of whom was a woman. She raised a concern that I would like to put to Amr and the distinguished former Ambassador to Ireland, Prince Turki, that if the Muslim Brotherhood and even perhaps parties that were more fundamentalist than the Muslim Brotherhood gain in a number of countries and Sharia law, as you mentioned, is put into the basic constitution of the new Egypt, there could be a slippery slope and a danger of the position of women going backwards. I think that this is something that a number of women are worried about because they took a very active part and were very much at the forefront of demonstrations in squares and streets and they now feel concerned that this may not come through in the end. I would welcome both your views on that.

Anil RAZDAN, Former Power Secretary of India

Hearing about the Arab Spring or the Arab Awakening, to me it sometimes seems as if it is an Arab adolescence, like an angry young man wanting to overthrow regimes because he is dissatisfied with what is going on. However, there is not necessarily a replacement in sight or at least an organised plan for something that rises from below in a democratic framework. This probably leads to a danger of there being a political vacuum in the process because I can see that there might be a lot of military men and clerics waiting to get a civil democratic uniform stitched up to occupy those vacant spots. Unless we put an organisation in place and regard the Arab world as one unified area, with something, at least an ethos, in common, can we think of something like an Arab Parliament or an Arab Union, like the European Union, which through its own processes and ethos and through these democratic values can move towards people's aspirations?

To make a second quick point, given the strategic importance of the place and my interest in energy affairs, what does the panel think will be the effect on energy security of what has happened, is happening and is likely to happen in the Arab world?

Robert BADINTER, Former French Minister of Justice, former President of the Constitutional Council

There is, I have to say, a single term that is appropriate for what is good in the Arab world. It is not necessarily the poetic term "Spring" or the term "Awakening", which would effectively imply a long sleep. Things must be put simply and the point has been briefly touched upon by Mr de Margerie and mentioned, unsurprisingly, by my friend Moussa: when the people rise up en masse against an established regime and that regime collapses, it is called a revolution. That is how it is and it is a natural law. We have seen and are seeing revolutions in the Arab world. I would not look for any particular historical reference, but I would remind you that revolutions do end, and although not often, they do end in a different way from what one thought at the beginning.

And as the great connoisseur Danton said: "Saturn devours its own children". We have seen two elections. We have had an election in Tunisia and an election in Egypt. We have seen in these two cases, and obviously I do not limit it to these two cases, a movement towards a stronger political presence of Islamists who declare themselves to be moderates. The big question that we ask ourselves, precisely because we are dealing with revolution and there is a revolutionary process, is: are we heading towards a Turkish model, a moderate but modern Islamism, or are we seeing in these movements a completely opposite result, that is to say Islamists who will not in the least be moderates? This is an extremely important question for all of us.

Philippe CHALMIN, Professor at the University of Paris-Dauphine

My name is Philippe Chalmin, from the University of Paris-Dauphine. My question will be linked a bit to Mr Badinter's remarks. 164 years ago, the European equivalent of Tahrir Square was just in front of the Hofburg. It was the Spring of Nations. King Louis Philippe lost his throne and here Metternich lost his throne and we had the first German Parliament and so on. Six months later, everything was over. Do you think it will be different this time?

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP)

Christophe, I guess you will have to say something about energy security.

**Christophe DE MARGERIE, Chairman & CEO of Total**

I was interested in one of the comments. It is true that we are facing a revolution and I absolutely agree with what Minister Badinter said. We are faced with a revolution and we do not always know what the end will be. I suggested in my paper that sometimes we do not even end with those who started. Those who started are sometimes out of the system. To come back to your point, the question was about whether there is a system in place to replace the former one. Or do we have to make it larger, at the level of Parliament, like the European Parliament? I do not think that the example of the European Parliament today is the best. However, again, I do not think that is the real question.

To come back to what has been said, there are already organisations that are working on this, to a greater or lesser extent. We have been talking about the Arab League. We are talking about the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It works; GCC countries work very well with regard to security in access to energy. I do not think I would like to speak on this too much today. We are all interested in the Arab Spring, because we have fears regarding security in energy.

For me, the best thing to do is to be interested in what is happening in Syria and what is happening in Libya, because we are concerned about access to oil and gas. This is even though it has to be taken into account. Can you manoeuvre it in the same way? I am saying this in front of Prince Turki. He knows what I mean. Can you do this in the same way in Saudi Arabia or in Tunisia? The answer is no. Why? It is because the problems are not exactly the same.

Then in any case, we take the security of supply into account. It cannot be the first reason, but that is not to say that it exists. We cannot say that we are not involved in all these interesting issues. At a pragmatic level, this is a concern for the world; this cannot only be considered at the Arab level. It is a question for everybody today. Like it or not, we are in the world and it is called the world. It is nothing to do with being a capitalist, a communist or an Arab.

We are part of a global system. This global system needs to be controlled in a way which needs to take security of supply into account. It is not for us or for them, but for everybody. I have to say this from time to time and it is difficult, because it gives a feeling that we say this because it is my business. It is not because it is my business; it is because it is my responsibility. It is our responsibility to tell people, "Yes, you can do this, but that would be the impact?"

I love the fact that somebody brought the subject of Iran into this discussion, because Iran is not an Arab country, but it is in the Middle East. The only real debate will be the Persian Gulf versus the Arab Gulf. I do not think that it will be of much interest, but there is something that is of interest. What is the role of Iran? What part Iran is playing with Syria? Why is Iran going to take and lift crude when the others cannot? It is not because they like the crude; it is because they want to help a country which is facing what they consider as their own enemies. I could give you a lot of examples like this.

I will in fact make a statement, which will not be an answer; it is one statement. It is good to say something now. What happened with Syria, for instance? What happened with Syria? Syria was asked by certain countries in the Western part of the world to help find a solution for the Hezbollah and for Iran. We know this, because it was in the press. They failed. I am asking a question to everybody. They started to become unacceptable to anybody anymore, at this time. It is not an answer, but with the question, I think I am part of the answer.

Amr MOUSSA, Former Secretary General of the League of Arab States

Any discussion of our region should not ignore the important element of Iranian policy. I happen to believe that the change which is taking place in the Arab world is also taking place in the Middle East, in the region as a whole. It will affect Iran, as it will affect the rest. It is already certain that geopolitical developments are taking place around Syria and this affects Iran. Therefore, Iran will be at the centre of the Middle Eastern change.



Is the Middle East, or countries like Tunisia and Egypt, going the Turkish way or the Iranian way? I believe that for countries like Egypt or Tunisia, it would be very difficult to copy the Iranian model. It is not so. The societies, the thinking, the religious principles and the political inclination do not lead to that. The Turkish model is much nearer to them. The soft approach by Turkey and the rough approach by Iran to the situation in the Middle East have created a kind of compensation for the role Egypt used to play.

However, the return of Egypt to the active Middle East arena is very important. The Arab world will not accept the leadership of either country, either Turkey or Iran. The Arab leadership is for an Arab country to assume. We welcome the Turkish role very much; we are comfortable with them. Their model is in our minds, but our model will be different. We disagree with Iran on many issues, but many of us see that the solution, or the way to solve those differences, is to sit and have a serious dialogue with the Iranians. This involves raising all the issues and points of difference on how to solve the Middle East, Arab and Palestinian question. We must also discuss the nuclear issue and relations with the Gulf countries etc. There are so many things the Arabs will have to talk seriously about with Iran.

Regarding women, thank you very much to the former President Mary Robinson and I leave it to Prince Turki to answer it. Do not worry about that. Our societies do respect women. We understand the ultra-conservative trends, but those are just trends and not dominant attitudes. I am among those who believe that we are going to move into the future, bearing in mind that we have other, different opinions. However, this will be the work of democracy and we will discuss it with each other and counter that. Here, the Arab League role will be very important. The collective management of the issue will be very essential.

Regarding energy security, it is part of the thinking regarding our need for a new order. With regard to economic issues, energy policy is part of the economic scene and part of the economic situation in the region. I do not think energy security is really threatened. This is provided that no country in the Middle East tries to play havoc with the situation and starts launching wars and introducing a dangerous policy. This thing will have to be stopped, otherwise energy security will not just be threatened; it will go down the drain.

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP)

Thank you very much and good luck with your campaign. We are going to turn to Ed Djerejian. It was not a question from the audience. However, since you were Ambassador to Damascus, maybe you want to talk briefly about where you think it is going and what the international community could do?

Edward DJEREJIAN, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

I think in Syria, the critical issue is a total crisis of deficient leadership. Bashar al-Assad is not like his father. As autocratic as Hafez al-Assad was, whatever he decided, you could take it to the bank. We learned that in many, many negotiations. However, Bashar al-Assad, from the very beginning of his administration, came in with the aura of reform; he has talked the talk; he has never walked the walk. That is the situation as we speak today.

I would characterise his latest interview with Barbara Walters as delusional. He talked about the only thing he fears. She asked him a question: Do you worry about the fate of Moammar Gaddafi being your fate? He answered, 'The only thing a President has to fear is the loss of the support of his people.' Now, I think that is one of the most delusional statements that a leader could make, in a country in which the blood is being spilled in the streets by his security forces.

From my few contacts with him, we are dealing with a leader who is not decisive. I wonder if he is fully in charge himself and I think that there is going to be an agonising and tragic denouement in Syria. The whole international community has given Syria a chance. The Arab League, the United States, the Europeans, the Russians and the



Chinese have all given him a long pass to initiate the needed reforms. Everyone in the international community sees it as a totally destabilising element if Syria goes into a chaotic situation, even with sectarian violence. This is in a very important part of the Arab world, if you will. He has not taken advantage; he has not displayed the leadership. Volker, I have to say in the briefest terms that Syria is going to devolve in a very destabilising manner.

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP)

I have to say I share your fear. To add to your fear, from the few meetings I have had with him and more meetings I had with the people around him, my analysis is that he is in charge. He probably was not in charge for the first year, two years or three years after succession. However, since 2005, he has had his team around him; he has been in charge. That is my fear, which would compound yours.

Edward DJEREJIAN, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

I think he is listening much more to people around him than his father would. His father would make a decision and lead.

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP)

Theoretically, listening to people is not too bad for someone who is in charge. I guess he listens to the wrong people around him, if he listens to people. Prince Turki, there are other questions left to you and Amr Moussa graciously left the question of women for you to answer. There is probably one last question on the Syria issue. Saudi Arabia was instrumental in getting that deal to get Ali Abdullah Saleh out of power, which still has to be fully implemented. Do you think there is still a chance for a similar deal with the Syrian President, in exchange for leaving his country alone?

HRH Prince Turki AL-FAISAL, Chairman of King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies

I don't think so, because Ali Abdullah Saleh delayed and played for time. The situation in Yemen is different from Syria. In the end, he signed for the deal. Getting Bashar al-Assad to sign up for a deal has been the difficulty. As Ambassador Djerejian mentioned, the Arab League and the world community is offering and has offered Bashar al-Assad an opportunity to take a way out, if you like. He has refused and it is a pity, because it means more bloodshed.

I guess Amr Moussa left me with this question about women because I also wear a skirt. Maybe that gives me an insight into the plight of our women in the Arab world. What I can say is that the application of Sharia is going to be something for the people of the countries where that question arises to deal with. Now in Tunisia and Egypt, we see so-called Islamist parties have come to the fore as winners in free and fair elections. The people of those countries will be the better judges on where that issue goes.

In my country, we are still struggling with regard to how to define the application of Sharia as we believe it, because we do apply Sharia. How do we measure that and guarantee through that the rights of all the people, women, men and children? It is in that context that it is still a work in progress. This is not just in a country that applies Sharia, like Saudi Arabia, but in other countries that may choose to go that way.



There was a question about Iran. My view of Iran is that it is a paper tiger with steel claws. Those claws are the various groups that Iran supports, not just in the Arab world, but in various other places like Pakistan, Afghanistan and perhaps, even now, some of the other 'stan' countries in Central Asia. As such, they are dysfunctional at home; you just have to look at how they are treating their own people. They can use these steel claws to further their interests in the area.

Regarding being adolescent revolutionaries, frankly, I think that is an insulting term to them. For example, the entire people of Egypt rose and removed the previous regime. It is the same in Tunisia, in Libya and now in Syria and of course in Yemen. Other places may follow suit. Regarding the establishment an Arab Parliament, there is an Arab Parliament. The fact that the other gentleman did not hear about it is a reflection of where that issue has gone in the Arab world. Maybe now, with what is happening in various countries, something can be decided on that. However, I cannot say that I foresee it in the near future.

Regarding energy security, I see no particular problem today. Terrorists have been trying to influence the issue of energy supply for years, whether in the Kingdom or outside the Kingdom and they have failed. I think the measures that have been undertaken by the countries that produce energy and sell it on the market have been very efficient and very effective in securing energy.

Regarding Mr Badinter's question about whether it is going to be a Turkish model or an extreme model, I do not know. Frankly, Amr Moussa put his finger on it when he said that, particularly in Egypt, this is the start of the Second Republic. Everything that went before it is no longer applicable. I think this is true. We are witnessing the end of the post-colonial era in the Arab world. I can say the same for Tunisia. Definitely, Bourguiba Ben Ali's party and its engagement with the Tunisian people have ended. There is a new phase that is post-colonial, completely separate from what followed the colonial powers.

Again, in Syria, I think we are facing the same situation. There is Libya as well. If you remember, Moammar Gaddafi rose against King Senussi, because he accused him of being a lackey of imperialists, colonial rulers etc. We are at the beginning of this post-colonial era, particularly in those countries that had colonial rule and influence on them.

Regarding the 1848 revolution, I am not too much of a student of European history. However, one thing I have learned about revolutions in my lifetime is that they generally end up without the leadership of those who began them. They tend to have a momentum and a dynamic of their own. In most cases, they consume the people who lead them. In France, we saw the famous revolution turning into the Terror and then subsequently, a dictatorship and an imperial power. If you go to the Soviet Union, with the Revolution there, it consumed many of its initial leadership, Trotsky, Zinoviev and others like that. My expectation is that those who led the revolutions in the Arab world will not inherit the coming systems. We have already seen an indication of that in elections in Tunisia and Egypt. It is a very historic and well-established practise.

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*

I have the impression that we covered a lot of areas that concern us. Some may be deepened. Do you have an urge to say something, Christophe de Margerie?

Christophe DE MARGERIE, Chairman & CEO of Total

After what Prince Turki said. I just want to say that things are not as simple as we try to make out. We say that there are good and bad people. I know Abdullah Saleh. He is not a friend of mine, but I respect him. I know what he has been doing for his country, merging the two parts. The border problem with Saudi Arabia has been resolved. The problem of the border with Oman has been resolved.



With his support, we have invested in the biggest energy project in this part of the world. Nobody could believe that we could build a USD4-5 billion project in Yemen. He gave us his support; he helped us to get away from all of those coming with money and trying to make us be corrupt. He helped us to create training schools to bring a lot of young people, young engineers and non-engineers from Yemen, to work with this huge project. This is a Yemeni project. 90% of the workers were Yemenis and others were from the Philippines and elsewhere.

I just want to say that I am not supporting everything he did. I know that Saudi Arabia is playing a big role in solving the issue of his departure. However, instead of saying who is right or wrong, let us think before it becomes a problem. We know these countries. We know what can and cannot be done. However, before it becomes a real thing and we start to say they are bad or that they are good, we forget what they have been doing. We definitely forgot that we were supporting them, and then suddenly we are saying that they cannot do it any longer, etc.

I just want to say, be careful. There is no easy solution. We need a lot of knowledge and a lot of understanding of what the local politics is and what the links are between these countries. They are very old cultures, with a long-standing relationship amongst them. Again, it is not to give a geopolitical lesson. It is just to say that we should not be too quick to say that now is the right time to move or not. It is probably not acceptable, but we can certainly make things better if we move sooner.

Volker PERTHES, Chairman and Director of *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP)

It seems that it is not so much the Europeans or the US or even Saudi Arabia that is telling Bashar al-Assad or Ali Abdullah Saleh that it is time to go. It seems that it is their people that are telling them that it is time to go. Unfortunately, they do not have the mechanisms which we have in our states, where, when it is time to go, there is a boat and they have to go, because the institutions would enforce it. I think we have covered a lot of territory here. It is interesting territory. I have heard some diverse views and that is good for discussion. I guess we are going to deepen some of that in the course of the discussions in coming sessions with various aspects. Thank you so much to all the speakers.