Human Security – Present challenges in the Mediterranean
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Three democratic elections, one armed intervention, a half-finished revolution in Egypt, and an escalating conflict in Syria: the pattern of change across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2011 is diverse and still unfolding. In human security terms, the Arab uprisings have been both negative and positive – catastrophic, in terms of lives lost and the brutal repressions they have unleashed, but also auspicious in their promise of a better future.

While more than 200 million people who live along the southern shore of the Mediterranean share this common hope, moving from declarations of intent to reality on the ground will require differentiated and novel approaches to deliver all three dimensions of human security: physical safety, sustainable development and the right to dignity.

How the EU responds to the Arab democratic wave is as important as its will to engage in the region, and initial reactions suggest it recognises the need for a new approach in the region. [1] Human security challenges can be viewed in two ways: firstly as an end goal of ensuring that people are able to live better lives through addressing their present vulnerabilities and future requirements, with the assumption that human security is a condition for the achievement of secure societies and states;[2] and secondly human security as a methodology and a distinctive approach to external assistance. An example of this is the intervention in Libya: NATO's air campaign with a headline goal of protecting civilians, was not a human security operation because it is impossible to make people safe by bombing them from the air. Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League, commented in March that he wanted the protection of civilians, 'not the bombardment of more civilians.'[3] Not only did NATO's enforcement of a 'no fly' zone cause an estimated 50,000 casualties, many of them among the people it set out to protect, it left neighbourhoods – houses and infrastructure – destroyed.[4] Equally, the Responsibility to Protect principle in Syria is juridically attractive but difficult to operationalise precisely because intervention risks negative and unintended consequences, including the militarisation of the conflict, sectarian divisions and regional chaos. Alternatives such as buffer zones, monitoring missions and smart sanctions do not provide a

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[1] European Commission, 'A new response to a changing neighbourhood: a review of European Neighbourhood Policy', Joint Communication by the High Representative of The Union For Foreign Affairs And Security Policy and the European Commission, Brussels, 24 May 2011. See: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2011/250511_en.htm.

[2] Arab Human Development Report 2009, p 18. See: http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/contents/2009/ch1-e.pdf.

[3] http://www.opendemocracy.net/mary-kaldor/libya-war-or-humanitarian-intervention

[4] http://www.aljazeera.com/.../2011419114217768868.html.

quick fix in protecting civilians, but they may be a better way of intervening in the long run. One 'smart' suggestion proposed at the EUISS panel in November was for the EU and European mobile telephone companies to cooperate in extending their network coverage in the southern Mediterranean to help opposition voices mobilise peaceful protests and connect with the outside world.

Another test of a human security approach is whether the EU can devise an alternative discourse to the conditionality principle which has shaped EU-Arab relations in the region in the past, but which puts Europe rather than local populations in the driving seat of reforms. Its successor, 'more for more', suggests accountability on both sides, but the risk is that neither principle offers the space for a dialogue of equals, or a bottom-up approach.

Means are as important as ends in bringing about transformations which do more than reshuffle the furniture of state, by regime change or institutional reforms. Human security is different to statebuilding, although statebuilding may be part of improving individual lives. Human security has to be tailored to the personal and community level, and it has to be context-specific. There needs to be a focus on what kind of humans we are helping, not just what kind of abstract harms they face. Here the answers will be different not only from Tunisia to Syria, but also within each of the states, where there are significant differences between urban and rural communities, between different religious, secular and tribal groups and between the experiences and prospects of women and men. An approach to human security that takes individuals seriously rather than treating them as 'random samples of particular collectives'[5] is important because the alternative not only dehumanises the transition process, it can also lead to perverse outcomes, such as an emphasis on issues such as 'ethnicity' and 'diversity ' – rather than on universalism, solidarity and social cohesion.

The Arab uprisings consist of both classic and novel revolutionary elements. They are classic in that they embody a desire for political and social freedoms, for economic opportunity and justice, and a new relationship between people and their governments. They are novel in the mobilisation of a young, educated, urban population, using new technology tools to articulate and press for their ambitions, and distinctive in that political identity and dignity are the driving forces propelling change as successive countries build new post-authoritarian societies. The dignity of individuals is often overlooked in macro-economic programmes and large-scale governance reforms, and is a quality which is difficult to capture with traditional analyses and situation assessments. It requires an emphasis on individual rather than state sovereignty and on the wishes of communities, not just those of governments or the manipulation of systems. One example of how dignity needs to be embedded in reforms would be the way in which the oil revenues of states in the region are managed. An abundance of resource wealth potentially provides an answer to socio-economic needs, but in a rentier economy, individuals and local groups are devalued at the expense of an empowered central elite. Libya's oil industry provides an estimated 40,000 jobs, but two thirds more are needed each year to absorb the country's population growth and to break an overdependency on the resource sector, so even in purely economic terms oil revenues are not necessarily a solution.[6] Job creation is a sensitive area in terms of personal dignity as local customs may make it difficult for some populations to take on menial labour which has recently been done by migrant workers.

Yet this is a region where the rate of youth inactivity can be as high as 62 percent, and with economic forecasts of sluggish, even negative growth, average unemployment rates are set to

[5] Albin Kurti, 'JISB Interview: Kosova in Dependence: From Stability of Crisis to the Crisis of Stability', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 89-97.
[6] World Population Prospects, 2010 revision. See: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/p2k0data.asp.

rise even further, while real incomes fall. Sharp increases in commodity prices which helped trigger the early uprisings in Tunisia are affecting basic foodstuffs (vegetables, grain and chicken for example) which have become between a half and a third more expensive in the past decade.[7] Humanitarian assistance can offer a short-term solution, and unblocking sovereign assets will allow new governments to function and aid their citizens, but development with dignity will require agreements on new terms of trade; collaboration on building a private sector capable of breaking reliance on state or overseas assistance, and the replacement of patronage with a comprehensive and systematic social safety net for those in most need. Outside assistance to Egypt has seen the country lurch between statism, crony capitalism and free market liberalisation. It now needs to find new economic and business models which tap into the dynamism of a young middle class, encouraging them towards a new social identity which replaces protests with profits. This would be new territory for EU assistance which typically tackles human security challenges via the public sector and the provision of public goods. In the Arab states, a new space is needed for entrepreneurship, industry and viable agriculture to avoid the dependency trap of previous post-authoritarian/post-conflict transitions.

The most pressing challenge is to ensure Freedom From Fear for populations who remain at extreme risk in Libya, Egypt and particularly Syria. UN estimates of 5,000 dead in the Syrian conflict during 2011, and around 15,000 detained with yet more people displaced from their homes and their livelihoods point to the most urgent aspect of this crisis. An end to violence is a pre-condition for people to be able to lead better lives. It is also a test of the credibility and effectiveness of external assistance in a region where the reputation of the international community has been undermined by decades of support for authoritarian regimes, a security discourse hijacked by the War on Terror and ineffectual aid for both governance and economic development.

Countries which have moved beyond the immediacy of violence still harbour the risks associated with a highly militarised environment awash with arms and armed groups. The urgent need to demobilise militias, decommission arms, develop alternative employment prospects for militia groups and undermine the cultural power of arms which is a legacy of the revolutions, could be met by a security sector reform (SSR) programme along human security lines. SSR is usually framed in state-centric terms, and seeks to modernise government forces, improve payment systems, stamp out corruption and support the sovereign dimensions of security such as defending territory, protecting borders and upholding the state's monopoly of violence. Yet in the MENA region after the 2011 uprisings, it is appropriate to ask what should be the role and function of the security services . Egypt spends billions of dollars – its own and those of American taxpayers – on maintaining the world's 10th largest army. Morocco spends nearly twice as much in terms of percentage GDP on defence as the UK. As part of the remaking of the Arab state, military, civilian and police capabilities could be tailored to human security needs, and be more inclusive of all groups in society, including women, rather than generating capabilities focused on the high-end deployment of force, and configured for traditional war fighting. This is not just a budgetary issue or about creating forces which match likely contingencies. It would also be part of a new social and human security contract. State security forces which have been used against people by their rulers need to be seen to be on the side of the citizen in the future. A human security reform programme would be a way of establishing trust between police, army and intelligence operations, and capabilities geared to protecting citizens against natural

[7] European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument , *Tunisia Strategy Paper 2007-13*, available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_csp_nip_tunisia_summary_en.pdf.

disasters and civil emergencies, and defending borders from transnational criminals, would be a source of legitimacy for these forces.

The aftermath of the democratic wave has brought an overwhelming desire for normalisation and a return to everyday life, expressed for example by Egyptians who did not join in the protests in Tahrir Square. How to reframe and produce stability in an era of popular politics, rather than through suppressing dissent, is one of the challenges of the region. Outside actors will have their own interests in seeing a docile Mediterranean neighbourhood, and this is likely to produce tensions particularly around the issue of Islamist movements and their growing political and social power.

Human security means creating legitimate political authority, effective rule of law, social justice and reconciliation in the new Arab states. All these contribute to raising the threshold of human vulnerability at the same time as defining a framework of opportunity and governance. Building political authority which commands the confidence and support of a majority of citizens remains problematic in Libya and Egypt, and has not even begun in Syria. Outside involvement in these processes risks trampling on fragile ground, and the EU will have to accept a largely advisory role, which will look very different to its democracy promotion programmes of the past.

The highly differentiated – in spatial, social and political terms – and fragmented tableau in the MENA region confronts the European Union with a further problem. With a comprehensive toolkit which includes humanitarian aid, development assistance, governance reforms, policing, border and military engagement, and economic and trade concessions, the EU has no shortage of available policy envelopes to support the Arab democratic wave. What it has not learned to do successfully is to combine these to produce sustainable solutions, to do so in a bottom-up fashion which sees local ownership as a real grass-roots dynamic, not merely an alliance between European and local elites. Policies such as the European Neighbourhood Programme no longer appear quite fit for purpose because of their top-down and generic nature. Can the EU instead develop much more granular, finely-tuned and organic forms of assistance which chime with the spirit of the Arab revolutions? Can it integrate regional programming with specific local needs and driven from the bottom up?

Promoting human security in ways which promote a constructive sense of cultural identity and social cohesion will require the EU to be transparent and more modest towards its southern neighbours, and to tackle the transition in a disaggregated way. For example, networked programming would allow programmes to be country specific, would give local field teams more autonomy, hand more control to local people, and encourage multilevel contacts, between civil society groups, between local communities, and between people and governments, and end the Brussels monopoly over managing reform and assistance programmes. Another important element in the nurturing of dignity and identity is to move quickly and capitalise on the sense of hope and expectation before it turns sour. This will require imaginative funding solutions to avoid delays in mobilising resources and making constructive change visible on streets and in neighbourhoods which have suffered so much turbulence in 2011.