



Dr. Michael A. Lange is head of the Political Dialogue and Analysis team at the Department for European and International Cooperation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Berlin. For almost 20 years he has been running various foundation offices in the Middle East, including Tunis (1985 to 1988) and Cairo (2001 to 2007).

## AFTER THE ARAB SPRING: POLITICAL ISLAM ON THE RISE?

*Michael A. Lange*

Following the election of the Ennahda Party in Tunisia in October 2011<sup>1</sup> and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in Morocco in November 2011,<sup>2</sup> the decisive victory by the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in the parliamentary elections in Egypt at the turn of the year 2011/2012<sup>3</sup> seemed to confirm an Islamic trend: the Arab Spring has since led to a conspicuous "Islamic awakening".

Forthcoming elections in Algeria and Libya, as well as planned elections in Yemen and the Palestinian Autonomous Area are already looming. There is much evidence to suggest that this Islamic trend will continue.<sup>4</sup> Without free elections by secret ballot, it is not possible to install those requisite democratically legitimate constitutional bodies that are called upon to exert a determining influence on the future political order of their countries. All elections, whether they are for short-term constituent assemblies or for representative bodies elected for full legislative periods, will have a decisive influence not only on the soon to be relevant party political spectrum, but also on the

1 | Klaus D. Lötzer, "Wahlsieg der Islamistischen Ennahda", *KAS Länderbericht*, 1 Nov 2011, <http://kas.de/tunesien/de/publications/29284> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

2 | Helmut Reifeld, "Marokko nach der Wahl", *KAS Länderbericht*, 1 Dec 2011, <http://kas.de/marokko/de/publications/29576> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

3 | Cf. Michael A. Lange, "Quo Vadis Ägypten", *Die Politische Meinung*, No. 508, 3/2012.

4 | <http://alquds.co.uk/index.asp?fname=today/12qpt964.htm&arc=data/2012/01/01-12/12qpt964.htm> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

political balance of power in the various Arab states that are currently undergoing comprehensive political transformation.

Egypt, the Arab country with the largest population and therefore traditionally the most influential, will have a particularly important role to play in this regional transition process.

**If political transition is successful in Egypt, then it is possible that the process of democratic change in the Arab world as a whole will continue.**

If political transition is successful in Egypt, then it is possible that the process of democratic change in the Arab world will continue and conceivably prevail. If transition is seen to fail there early on, then it will also be more difficult for other countries in the region to bring their own transition processes to a successful conclusion. Egypt, which has a comparatively heterogeneous population, will be a decisive test case, not only for the future relationship between Islam-inspired and secular political movements, but also for relations between ultra-orthodox and liberal forms of Islam. Additionally, the expected re-positioning of the Egyptian military within a new constitutional system will be a significant challenge in itself, and it will no doubt have an influence on similar security sector reform processes in neighbouring Arab countries.

What are the likely ramifications for politics, the economy and society of policies that will influence the government's future work, if the policies are more clearly oriented towards the implementation of Islamic Sharia law? What rights and how much tolerance will religious and secular minorities receive in a new political order of this kind, without inciting a cultural war? How will the new Islamic parties create the kind of economic new beginning that is needed without coming into conflict with the restrictive tenets of Islam, and what stance should European countries, especially Germany, take towards these election victors with their Islamic leanings? Will future political dialogue with governments determined by Islamic powers in North African countries that are undergoing transition continue to be characterized by the kind of scepticism EU countries displayed in reaction to the 2006 election victory of Hamas (basically another offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, who were victorious in Egypt), or will the practicalities of *Realpolitik* call for a re-evaluation? All these questions need to be considered when viewing the political upheavals that

will be related to significant electoral victories for political Islam in North Africa.

### TRANSITION CONCEPTS – ROAD MAPS FOR CHANGE

The demands of the “rebellious youth” in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as other autocratic states such as Libya and Syria, for more human rights and social justice, as part of a comprehensive restructuring of the existing political order, won the almost wholehearted support of political observers in Europe from the onset. However, in recent months these demands have taken the various countries down some very different paths.<sup>5</sup> Since the power structures that were firmly established only a few months ago have not yet demonstrated the necessary willingness to introduce the kind of reforms that are needed to lead their countries out of the political cul-de-sac of unresolved succession issues and unsatisfactory political and economic reform processes, a different kind of change to the political order has been set in motion, which will undoubtedly be even more challenging, in as much as the potential political ramifications of such a change are far more difficult to assess.<sup>6</sup> It is important not only to structure these changes in a coherent manner, but to do so in as peaceful a way as possible, so that the changes lead to an outcome that is acceptable to all concerned. This has been and continues to be no easy task.

The individual countries in North Africa have since chosen entirely different paths on the way to a new political order. The

transition processes in the various countries

**Following the removal or expulsion of their former autocratic leaders, each country had to deal with the issue of what to do with the “remains of the ruling political class”.**

differ not only in terms of protagonists, but also in terms of the intensity of the accompanying resistance and protests.<sup>7</sup> Following the removal or expulsion of their former autocratic

leaders, each of the countries initially had to deal with the issue of what to do with the “remains of the ruling political class”, who had close ties to former autocratic regimes.

5 | Cf. Edmund Ratka, “Bilanz und Perspektiven des Arabischen Frühlings”, *Politische Studien*, No. 440, 58-69; Michael Bauer and Thomas Schiller, “The Arab Spring”, *CAPerspectives*, No. 1, 1/2012, 1-3.

6 | Cf. Kristina Kausch, “Constitutional Reform in Young Arab Democracies”, *Fride Policy Brief*, No. 101, 10/2011.

7 | Cf. Christian-Peter Hanelt and Elisabeth Dietl, “Europe und die Arabellion 2012”, *spotlight europe*, No. 2011/05, 12/2011.

Tunisia opted to go the route of having an interim president and an interim government, followed by the election of a constituent assembly, which following a year of consultations would then present by referendum a new constitution to the people. New presidential and parliamentary elections will then take place on the basis of this new constitution. Morocco, on the other hand, decided on moderate reforms to its constitution, initiated by the monarch, which were accepted by the people in a successful referendum and formed the basis for elections that were brought forward to 25 November 2011.<sup>8</sup>

For its part, Egypt opted for a complicated, much less logical solution, which has already been revised several times and even abandoned in parts. After the removal of President Hosni Mubarak, executive power was not vested in an interim president but in a Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The Council declared the constitution of 1971 to be null and void, approved several new constitutional articles that were necessary for the forthcoming elections, modified further articles and then presented them to the people for approval by referendum.<sup>9</sup> Once these new constitutional provisions had been accepted by the Egyptian people and a new Egyptian electoral system had been adopted, new elections to the lower and upper houses (Shura) of the solely Egyptian parliament would take place. After that the Egyptian parliament, which would be elected for a full legislative period, would nominate a 100-member Constitutional Council in a joint sitting of both houses and charge them with the task of creating a new constitution. This draft constitution would then be presented in the foreseeable future to the Egyptian people for approval in a further referendum and form the democratically legitimate basis for the election of a new Egyptian president. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was to hand over

**In Egypt, after the removal of President Hosni Mubarak, executive power was not vested in an interim president but in a Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.**

8 | Cf. Sonja Hegasy, "Marokko vor der Parlamentswahl: Kinder, Gläubige und Opportunisten", *Qantara.de*, 14 Nov 2011, <http://de.qantara.de/Kinder-Glaebige-und-Opportunisten/17784c83/index.html> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

9 | Cf. Carnegie Endowment (ed.), Supreme Council of the Armed Forces Constitutional Announcement, <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2011/04/01/supreme-council-of-the-armed-forces-constitutional-announcement> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

executive power solely to this newly-elected president and so bring an end to the existing "collective presidency".

This very complicated and, in the view of some political observers, rather inconsistent "road map"<sup>10</sup> gave rise in the course of the transformation process to numerous ambiguities, delays and objections voiced by various political players, many of whom frequently sought to remind the

**Elections for a new parliament were held without knowing, for example, where it would stand in relation to other constitutional bodies.**

Supreme Council of its initial pronouncement that it intended to hold in Egypt executive power for no more than six months. By opting for the immediate election of a new Egyptian parliament with full legislative powers, rather than a constituent assembly as in Tunisia, the difficult situation arose, in which a new constitutional body was to be elected in the absence of a new, definitive constitution, and so without a clear understanding of just what its future rights and responsibilities would be. Thus, elections for a new parliament were held without knowing, for example, where it would stand in relation to other constitutional bodies such as the government and the president.

One of the problems presented by the election of both houses of the Egyptian parliament was the traditional right to "nominate" 10 members of the lower house and one third of the upper house, which under the old constitution had been solely the prerogative of the president. However, this right to nominate, at least as far as a portion of the members of the upper house were concerned, had been (temporarily) denied to the Supreme Council by a decision of the country's Constitutional Court. This significantly restricted the ability of the new parliamentary chambers to function properly and hampered the nominations and work of the Constitutional Council.

In light of ongoing calls for the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to step down, much discussion centered on bringing forward the election of a new Egyptian president. However, this also raised the question as to precisely what rights would likely be vested in this office once a new

10 | Cf. Marina Ottaway, "Egypt's Transition: Finding a Way Out of the Vicious Circle", *Carnegie Endowment*, 6 Feb 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/02/06/egypt-s-transition-finding-way-out-of-vicious-circle/9g4f> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

constitution was adopted. This question must naturally be of interest to potential presidential candidates to enable them to make a responsible decision as to whether to stand for election or not. These types of inconsistencies could lead to seats in parliament being disputed or even remaining unfilled, despite the prospect of the restructuring of the entire Egyptian parliament being concluded in the not-too-distant future. The future role of this parliament has yet to be fully settled, as the roles and responsibilities of parliament and its members are still subject to the decisions of the Constitutional Council. So far, the entire constitutional process in Egypt has suffered from the fact that it is not actually possible to create a new, truly legitimate, constitutional body without a new constitution; but equally, a new constitution cannot be created without a truly legitimate constitutional body.

**The future role of the Egyptian parliament has yet to be fully settled, as the roles and responsibilities of parliament and its members are still subject to the decisions of the Constitutional Council.**

## **THE YEAR WHEN DEMOCRACY BROKE OUT IN NORTH AFRICA**

In the capital cities of the North African countries that are now in transition, it was mostly young demonstrators who stood up to the autocrats and their security services and sought to pursue hopes for more freedom and democracy in the face of brutal police violence. However, many of them now feel their efforts and the personal risks they took have been in vain. What is worse is that many paid for their bravery with their lives. It is now down to those who survived the uprisings to honour these "martyrs of the revolution" by continuing to fight for the goals associated with the *Arabellion* (as the German media have dubbed the Arab uprisings), in spite of the disappointing election results in the countries affected.

The results of all these democratic elections have made it abundantly clear that it is not going to be the enthusiastic young reformers who will put their stamp on the new political order in their countries. Instead, it is predominantly the Islamic political parties that will be in a position to achieve their political objectives with the help of newly-acquired mandates. If the election results from Morocco and Tunisia were initially viewed in Europe with a certain amount of intrigue, followed by a growing sense of amazement, then

the latest parliamentary election results from Egypt have caused not only considerable uncertainty and astonishment, but also dismay in the face of the surprisingly unequivocal successes achieved in favor of political Islam.

For many seasoned political observers in the region these election results, no matter how surprising they may have been to many Europeans, served to justify the circumspection with which many of them regarded the speed of political change in the region from its inception.<sup>11</sup> It was obvious that, once the long-oppressed citizens of these Arab states had been freed from the despotism and dictatorial ways of the autocrats, the majority would use their new-found right to vote to elect those who, in the past, had been the only ones to pay heed to everyday concerns – the representatives of political Islam.<sup>12</sup>

**In Tunisia just as in Egypt, it has proved very difficult to find politicians who have not been tarnished by the previous discredited regime.**

Indeed, large numbers of North Africans have shared similar voting patterns. In Tunisia just as in Egypt, it has proved very difficult to find politicians who have not been tarnished by the previous discredited regime. Many of the key players had made their peace with the system during the long decades of rule by the corrupt political elite and had devoted their skills to the service of the country.

This explains, to an extent, the “chaotic” nature of the protest movements in Tunisia and Egypt and the inability of the opposition in both countries to come up with serious alternative candidates to those in power. From the very beginning, the opposition groups were always united more by what they were against than what they were for. And it is this that made the search for untarnished political leaders so difficult, particularly those who were known not merely for being opponents of the regime, but who had clearly suffered under the regime themselves, having been imprisoned or exiled. As neither country had had opposition politicians of any stature for years, the search for

11 | Cf. Michael A. Lange, “Upheaval in the Middle East – What Comes Next After the Events in Tunisia and Egypt?”, *KAS International Reports*, 3/2011, 7-31, <http://kas.de/wf/en/33.22141> (accessed 23 Mar 2012).

12 | Cf. Michael A. Lange, “Ägyptens Muslimbrüder auf dem Weg zur Macht?”, *Die Politische Meinung*, No. 497, 12-16.

potential leaders soon switched to opposition representatives living in exile, such as the leader of the Tunisian Ennahda movement, Rachid Ghannouchi.<sup>13</sup>

While much effort was being dedicated to finding potential new political leaders, much less attention was paid to the diverse blueprints for society being proposed by various representatives of groups of a more Islamic persuasion.<sup>14</sup> Once the despots had finally been driven from power and the cheering had died down, the successful “revolutionaries” suddenly found themselves without credible alternative leaders and without a program that all the revolutionary groups were agreed upon. The time had come for political Islam to take center stage in North Africa.

**Once the despots had been driven from power, the successful “revolutionaries” suddenly found themselves without credible alternative leaders and without a program that all the revolutionary groups were agreed upon.**

#### **ELECTORAL SUCCESS FOR POLITICAL ISLAM IN NORTH AFRICA**

In the end, candidates from Islamic political groups, especially but not exclusively the representatives of so-called orthodox Islam (Muslim Brotherhood), owed their election victory to the many people living in poorer rural areas; this denoted a victory on a scale that many did not believe possible. A glance at the election results to date in the North African transition countries shows that, while political Islam has come out in front in every one of these countries, it has done less well in cases where an alternative legitimate religious figure was in the running, in the shape of a monarch for example, than in more republican-minded, predominantly secular countries such as Tunisia and Egypt. Here, differences in the level of education of the voters account for varying degrees of success enjoyed by the Islamic movements. Education levels are much higher in Tunisia than in Egypt, with the result that Salafist tendencies are much less pronounced in Tunisia than in Egypt.

13 | Cf. Christian-Peter Hanelt and Michael Bauer, “Arabien zwischen Revolution und Repression”, *spotlight europe*, 2011/03, 6/2011.

14 | Cf. Nathan A. Brown, “When Victory Becomes An Option – Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Confronts Success”, *Carnegie Paper*, 1/2012.



Table 1  
**Election results in Arab transition countries**

| <b>Egypt</b>                               | Seats             | Per cent | <b>Tunisia</b> | Seats | Per cent | <b>Morocco</b> | Seats | Per cent |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------------|-------|----------|----------------|-------|----------|
| <b>Political Islam</b>                     |                   |          |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Total                                      | 368               | 73.9     | Total          | 109   | 50.5     | Total          | 155   | 39.2     |
| Democratic Alliance                        | 235               | 47.2     | Ennahda        | 90    | 41.5     | PJD            | 107   | 27.1     |
| Islamist Bloc                              | 123               | 25       |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Al-Wasat Party                             | 10                | 2.0      | Arida          | 19    | 8.8      | PAM            | 47    | 11.9     |
| <b>Liberal-conservative parties</b>        |                   |          |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Total                                      | 47                | 9.44     | Total          | 51    | 23.5     | Total          | 167   | 42.3     |
| Reform & Development                       | 9                 | 1.80     | CPR            | 30    | 13.8     | Istiqlal (PI)  | 60    | 15.2     |
| New Wafd Party                             | 38                | 7.63     | Ettak.         | 21    | 9.7      | MP             | 32    | 8.1      |
|  |                   |          |                |       |          | UC             | 23    | 5.8      |
|  |                   |          |                |       |          | RNI            | 52    | 13.1     |
| <b>Centre-left parties/revolutionaries</b> |                   |          |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Total                                      | 44                | 8.84     | Total          | 55    | 25.3     | Total          | 57    | 14.4     |
| Egyptian Bloc                              | 35                | 7.03     | PDP            | 17    | 7.8      |                |       |          |
| Revolution Continues Alliance              | 9                 | 1.81     | PDM+           | 10    | 4.6      | USFP           | 39    | 9.8      |
|  |                   |          | Others         | 18    | 8.3      | PPS            | 18    | 4.6      |
| <b>Other/old guard</b>                     |                   |          |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Total                                      | 39                | 7.83     | Total          | 12    | 5.55     | Total          | 17    | 4.3      |
| NDP successor                              | 17                | 3.41     |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Independents                               | 19                | 3.81     |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| Others                                     | 3                 | 0.60     |                |       |          |                |       |          |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 498 <sup>15</sup> | 100      |                | 217   | 100      |                | 395   | 100      |

15 | 10 more representatives are nominated by the military, therefore the Egyptian parliament comprises 508 representatives in total.

Source: Election results Egypt, Souad Mamdouh Shaaban, Tantawi and Ali Muhammad Ali, "Final results of the parliamentary elections", *Ahram Online*, 22 Jan 2012, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/The-First/News/126247.aspx> (accessed 14 Mar 2012); Election results Tunisia, Instance supérieure indépendante pour les élections (ISIE) (ed.), Report on the election of the constituent assembly 2011, <http://isie.tn/image.php?id=760> (accessed 14 Mar 2012); Election results Morocco, „Résultats Définitifs du Scrutin du 25 Novembre“ (Final results of the parliamentary elections on 25 November), *Le Matin*, 27 Nov 2011, [http://lematin.ma/journal/\\_Resultats-Definitifs-du-Scrutin-du-25-Novembre-Portant-sur-les-395-Sieges/159402.html](http://lematin.ma/journal/_Resultats-Definitifs-du-Scrutin-du-25-Novembre-Portant-sur-les-395-Sieges/159402.html) (accessed 14 Mar 2012).

It would appear that Islamic groups enjoy the same level of widespread support in other countries as they do in Egypt, especially in Libya, where it seems likely that in the forthcoming elections for a constituent assembly there will also be a significant victory for political Islam, as was the case in Egypt. In Morocco, as in Tunisia, the Salafists were not allowed to stand in the elections, although their influence is not to be underestimated. The Movement for Justice and Spirituality (Al Adl), as with the Salafists in Egypt, operate at a distance from the Jihadists in public, but tend to be critical of what they see as the PJD's over-eagerness to compromise.<sup>16</sup>

**In Morocco, as in Tunisia, the Salafists were not allowed to stand in the elections, although their influence is not to be underestimated.**

The traditional, more economically-liberal opposition parties also did significantly better in Tunisia and Morocco than in Egypt, where the opposition found themselves being accused, and probably rightly so, of having collaborated extensively with the old regime. This gives cause for hope that not all economic expertise will have been lost in the new parliament. Left-wing socialist parties lost significantly less electoral support in Morocco than they did in Tunisia, and especially in comparison to Egypt.<sup>17</sup>

The surprisingly good results achieved by the Muslim Brotherhood's party (FJP) will hardly have come as a surprise to seasoned observers of Egypt's politics, given that Muslim Brotherhood candidates, standing as independents, had

16 | Cf. Reifeld, "Marokko nach der Wahl", n. 2.

17 | Cf. Sonja Hegasy, "Teile und herrsche", *Qantara.de*, 6 Dec 2011, <http://de.qantara.de/Teile-und-herrsche/18118c18785i1p1351/index.html> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

already created a major stir in the 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt by defeating what seemed like unbeatable rival candidates from the state party NDP in more than 80 constituencies, before proudly taking their places in parliament.<sup>18</sup>

The Democratic Alliance, an electoral alliance led by the FJP and considered by most political observers to be a moderate Islamist group, won 235 of a total of 508 seats and would almost have had an overall majority, if it hadn't been prevented by the Salafist, Al-Nour Party-led Islamist Bloc, who were accused of being radical Islamists, but won an incredible 123 seats. If one takes into account the ten seats won by the Al-Wasat party, which had earlier split from the Muslim Brotherhood and is seen as more of a reformist Islamist party, then political Islam's position is augmented to control of more than two-thirds of the seats in the new Egyptian parliament.

In Tunisia, political Islam, as represented by Ennahda in particular, did not enjoy quite such a spectacular success. However, with more than 40 per cent of the seats, it will have a significant influence, not only on the government's business, but on the upcoming consultations on the new constitution as well. In Morocco, the Islamists of the PDJ nevertheless achieved a moderate success, which – with the support of religious groups loyal to the regime – has at least put them in a position to lead the new Moroccan government.

**In Morocco, the Islamists of the PDJ achieved a decent result which has put them in a position to lead the new Moroccan government.**

The fact that the ultra-orthodox Salafists were able to win such an impressive number of seats in Egypt is almost certainly due to the fact that many common, less-educated Egyptians felt the political objectives of the Muslim Brotherhood did not speak to them as much as the simpler messages of their village imams, who preach a literal, "pure" form of Islam and want to make this the basis for socio-political action. Their electoral success has meant that the Salafists have become a serious political force practically

18 | Cf. Michael A. Lange, "Politischer Islam auf dem Vormarsch. Das Beispiel der Muslimbrüder", *KAS-Auslandsinformationen*, 11/2007, 75-105.

overnight.<sup>19</sup> This was probably as big a shock to many secular Egyptians as it was to *Arabellion* sympathisers in Europe.

However, the ideological spectrum of ideas represented by the main protagonists in this spectacular electoral victory suggests that political Islam in Egypt is far from being a unified movement.<sup>20</sup> The political Islam movement in North Africa as a whole appears to be divided into moderate, reform-oriented Islamists (advocates of Wasatiyya), the traditional, conservative to orthodox Muslim Brotherhood, fundamentalist, predominantly ultra-orthodox Salafists, and finally reformed, former Jihadists with a terrorist background. Many of the latter had in the past unsuccessfully attempted to use violence to change society, having been inspired by mujahideen returning from Afghanistan, or by migrant workers from the Gulf States. Even if the party political make-up of political Islam differs from country to country and strikes a different chord with different voters, it nevertheless reflects a relevant core political spectrum, which we will likely be engaging in the coming years at the level of political cooperation, not only in Egypt, but also in many neighbouring states.<sup>21</sup>

#### **FROM AUTOCRACY TO THEOCRACY – MORE “ERDOGAN” THAN “TALIBAN”**

What do these election results mean for the much talked-about transformation and democratisation of North Africa? At this point it is worth pointing out that parliaments in countries like Tunisia and Egypt, which until now have had predominantly presidential constitutions, are not as politically important as they are for instance in Germany. Until today, the role of parliament in Tunisia and Egypt has

**Parliaments in countries like Tunisia and Egypt, which until now have had predominantly presidential constitutions, are not as politically important as they are for instance in Germany.**

19 | Cf. Andreas Jacobs and Heidi Reichinnek, “Die Rückkehr der Salafisten in Ägypten”, *KAS Länderbericht*, 14 May 2011, <http://kas.de/aegypten/de/publications/22726/> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

20 | Cf. Jonathan Brown, “Salafis and Sufis in Egypt”, *Carnegie Paper*, 12/2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/20/salafis-and-sufis-in-egypt/8kfk> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

21 | Cf. Ivesa Lübben, “Der Islam ist die Lösung? – Moderate islamistische Parteien in der MENA-Region und Fragen ihrer politischen Integration”, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (unpublished manuscript).

basically been to formulate and adopt legislation and to control a government appointed by the president alone. It does not have the power to remove either the government or the president from office.

Only in Morocco has constitutional reform so far given parliament sufficiently robust powers in this respect, and it now has the right to remove the government from power. As long as the provisions relating to the rights of parliament in the constitution remain fundamentally unchanged, an election result of the kind seen in Egypt will have little effect on the power structure in the country, even if such a result will, of course, change the political discourse there.

The representatives of political Islam are now not only gaining legitimacy in the aforementioned North African countries, they are also demanding a leading political role. In Egypt these demands are currently aimed at the forth-

**Representatives of the political Islam not only want adequate representation on key committees, they are also preparing to join the debates on what their countries' political systems will look like in the future.**

coming nominations for the constituent assembly, while in Tunisia the focus is on being involved in the process of constitutional reform that has already begun. Representatives of political Islam not only want adequate representation on key committees, they are also preparing to join the debates on what their countries' political systems will look like in the future. These debates could turn into a cultural battle between secular, religious, orthodox and fundamentalist interests. What is certain is that it will be important for all the various political groups to form alliances early on in the process, in order for their own specific proposals on a new constitutional framework to be heard amongst the clamor of differing ideological viewpoints.

Representatives of political Islam have been using a clever tactical approach that was already in evidence during last year's demonstrations. This may pave the way for "coalitions of national unity", or at least "conscious" coalitions with centrist, secular groups. This is particularly true of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, who even back then had convinced many foreign political observers that Egypt's long-term political future would not be decided on the battlefields of the insurrection, but by the newly-elected constitutional bodies. The Muslim Brotherhood should focus

on forming something akin to an alliance of “progressive, moderate parties” against the ultra-orthodox Salafists and former Jihadists. This would give them more leeway for making unpopular, but nevertheless irrefutably essential decisions, especially when it comes to economic and financial policies. An exclusively Islamic coalition with the Salafists would not only make the battle of cultures much more volatile, it would also make it highly unlikely that a sustainable socio-economic concept for Egypt’s future could be found that all the interested parties would support. Similar principles apply to Tunisia, where although there are admittedly no official Salafist political parties, and the country is being run by a Government of National Unity, it is still just as vital that a fundamental economic recovery takes place there as in all the other transition countries in North Africa.<sup>22</sup>

For the Islamic election victors, the state of the country, and especially the current woe-ful economic situation, would suggest that the best way forward may be to follow the course taken by the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his AKP, rather than that taken by the Taliban for instance. Adopting (ultra-) orthodox Islamic policies in the future would result in a significant drop in both income from tourism and much-needed direct investment from abroad, which would have the effect of at least slowing down vital economic recovery.

**Adopting (ultra-) orthodox Islamic policies in the future would probably result in a significant drop in both income from tourism and much-needed direct investment from abroad.**

## THE LOSERS IN THE REVOLUTION

What does all this mean for all those who were clearly the losers in the revolution – the young rebels; the secular, republican parties; women seeking emancipation, and for religious and ethnic minorities who live constantly under subtle threat? What is clear is that the young activists, who, with few exceptions, have not been able to organise themselves into any kind of coherent (party) political body in order to take part in parliamentary processes, are a long way from seeing their own expectations met. The riots of recent weeks, some of which violent, are a clear sign of just how frustrated young people are becoming with a political

22 | Cf. Rainer Herrmann, “Vor der Wahl – Ägyptens Wirtschaft liegt am Boden”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 Nov 2011.

process that has so far offered them no opportunity to become involved in the creation of a new democratic order. It remains to be seen whether these young people will be offered an opportunity to be a part of the forthcoming constitutional processes, so that violence will not be the only long-term outlet for their frustrations.<sup>23</sup>

Politically-active women in Tunisia and Egypt also suffered a considerable setback in these elections.<sup>24</sup> Under the former despots they had actually enjoyed a significant amount of representation in constitutional bodies, relatively speaking; but this time very few of them were able to achieve prominent positions on party lists. In Egypt, many election campaign posters did show women's faces only "beautified" by flower symbols. All this does nothing to help the position of women in North Africa's transition countries, and simply does not reflect the brave support given by so many young women to the main protagonists of the youth rebellion who were calling for reforms.<sup>25</sup> What is significant is that in the new Egyptian executive body formed by the military there are only three women amongst 30 cabinet ministers, while none of the 27 governors are women. It is also highly unlikely that there will be a female candidate for the position of president.

In the future, one of the major challenges for all the executive bodies that are dominated by Islamic interests will be the relationship between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority. In light of repeated riots against Christians and attacks on Coptic churches, a future Egyptian government dominated by Islamic parties must find a way to de-escalate the situation. Even if this doesn't lead to both sides living together as absolute equals, they should at least be able to coexist peacefully. The Copts, for their part, are likely to fight against any further Islamisation

**The Copts are likely to fight against any further Islamisation of Egyptian society and the discrimination that often goes with it.**

23 | Cf. Martin Gehlen, "Postrevolutionärer Jammer in Ägypten", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 Feb 2012.

24 | Cf. Martina Sabra, "Das weibliche Gesicht der Revolution", *Qantara.de*, 13 Feb 2012, <http://de.qantara.de/Das-weibliche-Gesicht-der-Revolution/18462c498/index.html> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

25 | Interview with Margot Badran, "Diese Revolution fordert das Patriarchat heraus", *Qantara.de*, 10 Jan 2011, <http://de.qantara.de/Diese-Revolution-fordert-das-Patriarchat-heraus/18235c496/index.html> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

of Egyptian society and the discrimination that often goes with it, and will demand the right to religious freedom. They are also likely to object to any insidious Islamisation of the legislature. However, many political observers believe that maintaining the religious status quo is one political objective that will be difficult to achieve under the current circumstances. The Salafists have publicly adopted an uncompromising attitude towards the Copts and want to deny them both civil rights and religious equality. The fact that the Copts do not have any significant support in the military or in parliament makes it even less likely that their civil rights will be safeguarded.

### **THE FUTURE OF NORTH AFRICA – DEMOCRACIES WITHOUT DEMOCRATS?**

How is the transition process in North Africa likely to progress? In Tunisia, on the basis of the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the election victors have agreed to divide up control of the three main con-

stitutional bodies – the presidency, parliament and the government – amongst the three largest parties. Moncef Marzouki was named as Interim President, Moustafa Ben Jaafar as President of the Constituent Assembly and Hamadi Jbeli as head of the new Tunisian interim government. The major difference between these men and those who held office before them is that they have far more legitimacy than their non-democratically legitimate predecessors. In approximately one year's time, there will be a referendum on the adoption of the new Tunisian constitution. Only then, following new elections, will the main constitutional bodies be occupied in a truly democratic manner for a full legislative period.

**In Tunisia, the election victors have agreed to divide up control of the three main constitutional bodies – the presidency, parliament and the government – amongst the three largest parties.**

In Morocco, the transition process has come to an end for the time being. Following the parliamentary elections and in line with the new constitution, the monarch asked Abdelilah Benkirane, the majority leader in the newly-elected Moroccan parliament, to form a new government. After a long period of negotiation, he was able to form a government that was deemed acceptable by all sides.



**A presidential election before the adoption of a new constitution could mean that a newly-elected Egyptian president would have to deal with the alteration of his rights.**

Regretfully, however, things look quite different in Egypt. There is a growing sense of dissatisfaction amongst large sections of the Egyptian population with the way the transition process is progressing; many people are calling for this process to be shortened or even for the immediate election of a new president. Many would like to see the highly-unpopular Supreme Council of the Armed Forces sent back to barracks. However, a presidential election before the adoption of a new constitution could mean that a newly-elected president would have to face an alteration of his rights as head of state. What remains unclear is whether the 100-member Constitutional Council will opt for a strong presidential system (executive president) or for a parliamentary system with a head of state without political influence, and a prime minister chosen by and accountable to parliament, or even for a hybrid model similar to the French system, with a directly-elected president and a prime minister chosen by parliament.

The dominant parliamentary faction of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party currently appears to favour a hybrid in the short-term, but a parliamentary system in the long-term. This would mean a dramatic reduction in the influence of the Egyptian president, whoever that may eventually be.

If there is, in fact, an early presidential election – as there is talk of having the elections as early as 15 April 2012 – it is still not clear on what basis such an election would be held. Some believe the election of a (civilian) interim president for a possible fixed term of one year would be the best solution. This would then make it possible to elect a new president for a full term of office once the new constitution is in place.

In Egypt's neighbouring state, Libya, the transition process is moving comparatively slow.<sup>26</sup> A lack of (party) political structures combined with the absence of modern constitutional bodies makes it difficult to structure the transition

26 | Cf. Christoph Sydow, "Gaddafi-Nachfolge: Libyens neuen Herrschern entgleitet die Kontrolle", *Spiegel Online*, 26 Jan 2012, <http://spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,811376,00.html> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

process, which is intended to lead to elections for a constituent assembly this summer. However, the country's security remains under threat from marauding militia, jeopardizing the overall transition process.<sup>27</sup>

## THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY

In most North African countries, it was the military that formerly guaranteed the stability and security of the political order. It was the military, and to an even greater degree the secret service and the security forces, that controlled the political machinations of the various civilian political figures while helping keep autocratic leaders in power, who, almost without exception, had come from a military background.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, many of the young rebels placed little trust in the repeated assertions of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces that it would immediately hand over political power to a newly-elected (civilian) president. At this moment in time, there is little point in speculating as to whether this will actually happen. What is clear, however, is that the Egyptians will soon see an interesting race for the highest and no doubt still most influential political office. If the elections are run under the current presidential constitutional system, they will be politically very significant, as the powers that can be exercised by the president under this kind of political system are substantial.

**The Egyptians are soon going to see an interesting race for the highest, and no doubt still the most influential, political office.**

There is currently no obvious favourite amongst the presidential candidates who have declared their intention to run.<sup>29</sup> This is partly because the Muslim Brotherhood has so far declined to nominate a candidate from its own ranks and has also not yet indicated who it might possibly endorse officially, and who is therefore most likely to win the election. At the same time, there is also no standout

27 | Cf. Christoph Sydow, "Neuordnung nach Gaddafis Sturz: Libysche Milizen kämpfen um die Macht", *Spiegel Online*, 5 Jan 2012, <http://spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,807356,00.html> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

28 | Cf. Philippe Droz-Vincent, "A Return of Armies to the Forefront of Arab Politics?", *IAI Working Papers*, No. 1121, 7/2011.

29 | Cf. Amira Howeid, "Working for a would be president", *Al Ahram Weekly Online*, 23-29 Feb 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1086/eg21.htm> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

candidate with a military background. There are good reasons to believe that both sides actually need each other's support to steer the country unscathed through the difficult months ahead.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood cannot be seen to condone the often harsh treatment of Egyptian protesters by the military and forces of law and order without losing support amongst the people. It will likely remain unclear for some time as to just what sort of compromises will be reached.

However, the future role of the military and the security forces will not be influenced by the future president alone, nor by whether or not he comes from the ranks of the military. The most important thing will be how the new executive president deals with those representatives of the police and the security forces who had clearly carried out culpable acts during the time of the pro-democracy uprisings and in prior years.

A reform of the security forces is a vital part of any credible reform process in the North African transition countries.<sup>31</sup> However, it could be a particularly difficult balancing act to carry out such reforms without simultaneously losing temporary control of the necessary instruments for maintaining public order and ensuring that the state retains its monopoly on the use of force.

The many, often violent, incidents being witnessed in countries like Egypt and Libya at the moment illustrate just how important it is for the state to maintain its monopoly on the use of force, especially when marauding criminal or politically inspired groups are not only turning against security forces, but against the civilian population as well. The latest incidents in both Port Said and Misrata clearly demonstrate that even a "new democracy" needs a state monopoly on the use of force in order to maintain internal

**Even a "new democracy" needs a state monopoly on the use of force in order to maintain internal security.**

30 | Cf. Stephan Roll, "Das Militär und die Muslimbrüder – Kommt es zu einer Machtteilung in Ägypten?", *SWP-Aktuell* 6, 2/2012.

31 | Cf. Mohamed Kadry Said et al., "Egypt's Transition and the Challenge of Security Sector Reform", *Carnegie Endowment*, 18 May 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/05/18/egypt-s-transition-and-challenge-of-security-sector-reform/c1c> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

security. This will be absolutely vital if “human security” is to be improved once again, both individually and collectively.

## POLITICAL ISLAM AND THE ECONOMY

Only after internal security has been re-established will it be possible to halt the economic decline experienced by the transition countries in recent months, leaving them in an extremely precarious socio-economic situation.<sup>32</sup> Political chaos and a growing number of strikes and spontaneous walkouts have brought the economy and finances of most of the transition countries to the brink of collapse.<sup>33</sup> With their new-found executive political powers, the predominantly Islamic parties will have to find a quick fix for these economic challenges, or run the risk of presiding over countries in terminal decline. Ideologically, they should take a largely positive view of establishing a liberal market economy, based on existing social conditions, combined with strong support for small and medium-sized businesses, even if most of their supporters are not to be found amongst this particular social class.<sup>34</sup> It remains to be seen whether significant economic recovery can be achieved in the short- to medium-term without international support, either in the shape of direct investment or financial assistance. Much will depend upon whether the new administrations will successfully improve stability and security, and restore lost confidence in the economic future of their countries – not only amongst their own people, but also amongst key partner countries. What will be important here is how quickly the election victors in each country can reach agreements on moderate coalition

**It remains to be seen whether significant economic recovery can be achieved in the short- to medium-term without international support.**

32 | Cf. Uri Dadusch et al., “Egypt in Transition: The Current Economic Situation and the Role of International Assistance”, *Carnegie Endowment*, 22 Jul 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/07/22/egypt-in-transition-current-economic-situation-and-role-of-international-assistance/47mp> (accessed 2 Mar 2012); Lahcen Achy, “Tunisia’s Economic Challenge”, *Carnegie Papers*, 12/2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/22/tunisia-s-economic-challenges/8kfh> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

33 | Cf. Ibrahim Saif, “The Challenges of Egypt’s Economic Transition”, *Carnegie Papers*, 11/2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/11/09/challenges-of-egypt-s-economic-transition/8kir> (accessed 3 Feb 2012).

34 | Cf. Juliane Brach, “Ägypten in der Reformkrise: Politischer Umbruch ohne wirtschaftliches Konzept”, *GIGA-Focus*, No. 10, 2011.

governments and – it is to be hoped – on constructive government policies.

So far there seems to be a determination to remain self-reliant, with regard to international offers of assistance. Initial offers of financial aid from the International Monetary Fund were rejected by Egypt, for example, in favour of offers of aid from the Arab world. However, this attitude towards accepting international assistance with the process of democratisation suggests they may be lacking a certain sense of realism.<sup>35</sup>

### POLITICAL ISLAM AND FOREIGN POLICY

In light of the developments in Tunisia and Egypt, and also in Morocco and Libya, it seems possible that in the course of the next few months these countries will find themselves facing similar challenges. At the end of the day, their political and socio-economic conditions are not so different, apart from the oil wealth of Libya, which is, however, accompanied by an even more reticent civil society.

The flight of the Tunisian and Yemeni presidents has at least spared these two countries the constant domestic and often violent clashes between supporters of the “old” and “new” order, but the countries who took them in have brought some new problems upon themselves. It will be interesting to see how the Saudi regime will behave in the face of international arrest warrants and extradition

attempts on the part of Tunisia, and how this will affect relations between members of the Arab League. These relations are already under close scrutiny at the moment as the members decide how to proceed, faced with

**The changes in Libya also present problems for neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia as long as no peaceful transition process seems to be on the horizon.**

the situation in Syria. The changes in Libya also present problems for neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia as long as no peaceful transition process seems to be on the horizon. If the Libyan transition falls into chaos, this could cause significant problems, both for the border areas as well as for the transition process of the region as a whole. Libya's

35 | Cf. Ibrahim Saif, “Strengthening Egypt's Economy”, *International Economic Bulletin*, 13 Dec 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/13/strengthening-egypt-s-economy/8kko> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

neighbours are already having problems coping with the influx of refugees and migrants, and there have been violent altercations between these groups and local inhabitants.

Developments in Algeria also remain difficult to predict. The Islamists willing to countenance reform seem to be keen to avoid conflict and the (party-) political opposition is divided. But this could change very quickly if the upcoming elections produce results that encourage the political reformists to once again thrown down the gauntlet to the regime.<sup>36</sup>

A look at the impact of the events in North Africa for the region as a whole would be incomplete without considering the situation of Israel and its potential reaction to what has happened. It is clear to political observers of the region that, with the recent destabilisation of North Africa and Syria, former Israeli concerns about a war on two fronts have resurfaced. Israel has always been aware of the fact that further "democratisation" of its neighbouring countries would result in relations with Israel becoming the subject of political disputes, especially if an uncompromising political Islam was not prepared to make any efforts to help with advancing the Middle East peace process. It is to be expected that even coalition governments which include moderate and secular parties are unlikely to continue advancing the same foreign policies towards Israel as before. There is more likely to be an open challenge to certain aspects of bilateral peace treaties, combined with a desire to amend these in a way that is legally permissible but that is likely to make the cold peace that much icier. In light of threats by the US to withdraw military aid, it would be particularly unpleasant if a new Egyptian government were to use this as an excuse to claim breach of contract and to renegotiate the Camp David accords. Any necessary changes to these treaties could then be put to a referendum, with all the potential consequences for Egypt's relations with Israel and the West.

**It is to be expected that even coalition governments which include moderate and secular parties are unlikely to continue advancing the same foreign policies towards Israel as before.**

36 | Cf. "Algeria's Islamist parties agree to form an alliance for upcoming elections, party leader says", *The Washington Post*, 26 Feb 2012.

The Israeli government is well-aware of all this, which is why it has so far been very restrained when commenting on political changes in North Africa. Instead, it has been attempting to focus itself and its allies on the threat from Iran. Few political observers are expecting religiously inspired changes in North African societies to lead to an easing of relations with Israel, particularly in light of the interesting fact that Israel itself is currently experiencing an increasing cultural divide between its secular and religious groups.

## OUTLOOK

Even if we assume that executive political action on the part of the Islamic parties in North Africa will smooth some of the ideological rough edges and at least make some of their political ideology and theocratic beliefs open to negotiation, it still remains to be seen at the moment to what extent the election victors will infuse their new-found political power with ideological beliefs. It seems likely that the "Freedom and Justice Party" (FJP) of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt will have to expect that the Salafists will be constantly pushing them both theologically and ideologically and that they will be referring them to their idea of what constitutes "true" Islam. For this reason alone, a coalition of secular groups seems to promise better results than an Islamic popular-front government, because the FJP needs this kind of broad coalition in order to blame its secular coalition partners for any ideological deviations from the "true" faith.

**This internal Islamic dispute has already reared its head at certain Tunisian universities, where some Salafist students have tried to enforce gender separation during lectures.**

But in this situation, there is also the possibility that both ideological and religious conflict will actually be exacerbated in a democratic Egypt of the future. There is also a chance that Tunisia and Libya will find the battle intensifying between the orthodox and ultra-orthodox elements of political Islam.<sup>37</sup> This internal Islamic dispute about the direction of the country has already reared its head at certain Tunisian universities, where some Salafist students have attempted to enforce gender separation during lec-

37 | Cf. Wolfram Lacher, "Libyens Neuanfang: Herausforderungen des Übergangsprozesses", *SWP-Aktuell*, 1/2012, [http://swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/aktuell/2012A01\\_lac\\_ks.pdf](http://swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/aktuell/2012A01_lac_ks.pdf) (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

tures.<sup>38</sup> These students also demanded the right for women to be totally covered when attending university, an idea that has been met with little resistance from university administrations. This is a worrying turn of events, and it is certainly not in line with the hopes for the dawn of democracy that were felt by so many people in both North Africa and the West when the uprisings began.

Political dialogue with these countries' representatives of political Islam is going to be very different from how it was in the past.<sup>39</sup> The military and the "new political class", and above all the Salafists, have their reservations about Western social and political concepts and their protagonists, as was given concrete expression in recent protests against foreign NGOs and political foundations. All this points to a new desire for self-assertion.<sup>40</sup> This is bolstered by old nationalistic beliefs and accompanied by a corresponding populist groundswell, not only amongst the general population but also amongst intellectuals, who consider foreign assistance as interference and take a highly critical, not to say antagonistic stand.<sup>41</sup> The Salafist attitude towards Western advocates of greater democracy and human rights is taken from the Sure Al Maida (5:51): "O people who believe! Do not make the Jews and Christians your friends. They are friends of one another; and whoever among you befriends them, is one of them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the unjust."<sup>42</sup> This kind of attitude is certainly not conducive to political dialogue between Europe and North Africa nor to successful cooperation with respect to freedom and democracy.

38 | Cf. Klaus D. Loetzer, "Tunisia and the First Islamist-led Government in North Africa", *KAS International Reports*, 3/2012, 6-20, <http://kas.de/wf/en/33.30490> (accessed 23 Mar 2012).

39 | Cf. Susi Dennison and Anthony Dworkin, "Europe and the Arab Revolutions: A New Vision For Democracy And Human Rights", ECFR Policy Brief No. 41, 11/2011.

40 | Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (press release), "'Verhalten hat nichts mit Rechtsstaatlichkeit zu tun' – Pöttering strongly criticises the Egyptian authorities", 8 Feb 2012, <http://kas.de/wf/de/33.30142> (accessed 20 Feb 2012).

41 | Cf. Abdel-Moneim Said, "US aid and us", *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 16-22 Feb 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1085/op7.htm> (accessed 2 Mar 2012).

42 | Cf. Dietrich Horstmann (ed.), "El Ma'ida Sure zum Verhältnis zu anderen Religionen", Material for religious education at vocational school, <http://dihorst.de/downloads/el-maida-sure.pdf> (accessed 7 Mar 2012).



This sum of imponderables will not only continue to encumber the transition process in Egypt, but also preoccupy the entire region for a long time to come. It will certainly be some time before the people of these countries are able to return to their familiar, not particularly political, everyday lives. Awaiting subsidence of the current tumultuous political situation will require much patience from the citizens of these countries. There are many good reasons for Europe in particular to hope that they will find this patience. If they do not, it seems unlikely that the current transition process will be brought to a successful conclusion, with all the attendant unpleasant consequences for political dialogue and economic cooperation with the countries of North Africa.