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**Η στάση της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης
και του Οργανισμού Ηνωμένων Εθνών
απέναντι στην Αραβική Άνοιξη**

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**The stance of the European Union
and the United Nations
towards the Arab Spring**

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Η στάση της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και του Οργανισμού Ηνωμένων Εθνών απέναντι στην Αραβική Άνοιξη

Σημαντικοί Όροι: Αραβική Άνοιξη, Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση, Οργανισμός Ηνωμένων Εθνών, ΝΑΤΟ, ενέργειες, βοήθεια, ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα, στρατιωτική επέμβαση, εμπόριο

Περίληψη

Η περιοχή της Νότιας Μεσογείου υπήρξε πάντα ένας σημαντικός οδηγός στη χάραξη πολιτικής, τόσο σε ευρωπαϊκό όσο και σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο, καθώς στα μάτια της διεθνούς κοινότητας αποτελούσε ένα πρόσωπο που προφύλασσε την ανεπτυγμένη και ειρηνική Δύση από τις διαμάχες της Μέσης Ανατολής και την λιγότερο ανεπτυγμένη Αφρική. Ωστόσο, η Αραβική Άνοιξη που ξεκίνησε τον Δεκέμβριο του 2010 κατέλαβε εξαπίνης τη διεθνή κοινότητα, συμπεριλαμβανομένων διεθνών οργανισμών όπως η Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση (Ε.Ε.) και ο Οργανισμός Ηνωμένων Εθνών (Ο.Η.Ε.), οι οποίοι έπρεπε σε σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα να αναπτύξουν νέες πολιτικές και να ιδρύσουν νέα όργανα για να αντιμετωπίσουν της συνέπειές της και να συμβάλλουν στη σταθερότητα της περιοχής. Στην παρούσα διπλωματική εργασία παρουσιάζεται εν συντομία η εξέλιξη της Αραβικής Άνοιξης σε κάθε εμπλεκόμενη χώρα και στη συνέχεια εξετάζεται η αντίδραση των δύο προαναφερθέντων οργανισμών και οι ενέργειές τους σε σχέση με το φαινόμενο της Αραβικής Άνοιξης. Οι Οργανισμοί αξιολογούνται ανάλογα με τις ενέργειες στις οποίες προχώρησαν και τις αποφάσεις που πήραν αλλά και λαμβάνοντας υπόψη το πλαίσιο εντός του οποίου λειτούργησαν. Το συμπέρασμα είναι ότι αμφότεροι οι υπό εξέταση διεθνείς οργανισμοί δεν κατάφεραν να επιδείξουν τη θέληση που απαιτούνταν κατά τον πρώτο χρόνο της Αραβικής Άνοιξης ώστε να αποφευχθεί η επιδείνωση της κατάστασης στις εμπλεκόμενες χώρες, μία κατάσταση που συνεχίζει να εξελίσσεται με πολύ ανησυχητικό τρόπο έξι χρόνια μετά την έναρξη της επανάστασης.

The stance of the European Union and the United Nations towards the Arab Spring

Keywords: Arab Spring, European Union, United Nations, NATO, actions, aid, human rights, military intervention, trade

Abstract

The Southern Mediterranean neighborhood has always been an important driver in the formulation of policies, both in European and global level, since in the eyes of the international community it was a barrier providing protection to the developed and peaceful West from the Middle East conflicts and the least developed Africa. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring that started on December 2010 caught the international community off guard, including international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), which had –in a very short time frame- to elaborate new policies and establish new instruments in order to tackle its repercussions and contribute to the stability in the region. In the present thesis we briefly present the development of the Arab Spring in each country involved and then we examine the response of the two aforementioned organizations and their actions regarding the Arab Spring phenomenon. The Organizations are assessed based on their actions and the decisions made but also taking into consideration the framework in which they operated. The conclusion is that both international organizations under examination failed to demonstrate the will that was necessary during the first year of the Arab Spring in order to avert the deterioration of the situation in the countries involved, a situation that is still unfolding in a very disturbing way six years after the outbreak of the revolution.

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Introduction

The Arab Spring directed the international attention towards the sensitive area of the Southern Mediterranean. As history has demonstrated, national struggles occurring in the Arab region for democratic reforms, human rights and social equality are inextricably linked to and influenced by the response of the international community to such movements and the government efforts to suppress them. The history of the region also indicates that the governments of these countries maintain their power based on a combination of domestic repression and international support while the political will of their peoples, and especially of those that are opposed to them, is a secondary factor.

Aware of these facts, the people in the Arab Spring countries used all means available in order to make the events taking place in their region visible to the international community and urge the international organizations to act. It is in fact this international nature of the Arab Spring that makes it necessary to trace down and assess the actions and reactions of two main international organizations, namely the European Union and the United Nations, towards the Arab Spring, as their role is considered to be a decisive factor in the development of the revolution in each country and in the region as a whole.

This research, nevertheless, has certain limitations. First of all, its primary aim is not to compare the two organizations with each other but to assess their contribution and explain their action as seen from an independent side trying to decide if these actions were efficient or not. The comparison inevitably emanates from the fact that both of them are international organizations, undertook action to address the Arab Spring and acted as important players in the region. But we must always bear in mind that, in addition to their apparent differences regarding their size or their fields of action, the EU has both supranational and intergovernmental characteristics while the UN has only intergovernmental ones. This difference makes it incongruous to place the question “Which of them was most effective in dealing with the Arab Spring?” but it may shed light on the way the two organizations perceive and encourage democratization throughout the world. Through this research we will also discover the conflicting agendas of the different countries participating in these organizations and how these opposing or converging interests define or influence the final decisions of the organizations.

Greeks say that a good beginning is half the battle. Therefore, in the present thesis we examine the stance of the two aforementioned international organizations during the first year of the Arab Spring, namely from December 2010 to December 2011, on the grounds that it was the year when UN and EU showed the greatest will and momentum to take action, showcased their intentions for every country involved and that, if acted differently in the beginning by sending a different message and adopting a different approach, the situation we know today would have probably been totally different. Yet, the brief description of the events extends up to December 2015 in order to see the unfolding of the situation and be able to assess the international organizations based on actual facts and not on assumptions.

In order to assess and present the stance of the two organizations, we proceeded to a literature review using a combination of both primary and secondary sources, namely UN resolutions, EU communications, announcements, statements, speeches and also scholars' studies, articles by newspapers, magazines and reviews etc. Since the scope of this research is to deal with the stance of the two organizations, the bilateral relations between different member countries and the Arab world are mentioned only when they constitute a decisive factor in the international organizations' decisions –by promoting, blocking or vetoing them- or in order to help us build the framework in which each organization acted.

The conclusion is dual: on the one hand, since the EU and the UN are far from being unitary actors, it goes without saying that the interests of each key country are the ones that dictate its policy towards an issue and the combination of these interests actually dictates the policy of the two organizations under discussion. On the other hand, since consensus is a prerequisite on any matter of international law or policy, the international organizations try to find the lowest common denominator and bargain the pros and cons for each interested party. Depressing as this may be, this is how international politics work and the international organizations under examination constitute no exception. Therefore, the conclusions deriving by the assessment of an international organization depend on our degree of acceptance of the previous statement. Whether we are disappointed or satisfied by the actions of the EU or the UN depends primarily on our initial expectations from them.

CHAPTER 1: THE ARAB SPRING

1.1 The Arab Spring: definition, map and brief history

“The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011” (Manfreda, n.d.b). The term Arab Spring “was modelled on the *Prague Spring*, a movement in favour of democracy in Czechoslovakia in 1968” (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). The term is also considered by many scholars as a reference to the European revolutions of 1848, widely known as *Spring of Nations*, which spread throughout Europe demanding political, social and economic reforms (Weyland, 2012, p. 917).

The Arab Spring was initiated in Tunisia, in December 2010, following the self-immolation of a young, unemployed man after officials stopped him from selling vegetables. Nevertheless, this was only the sparkle to ignite the mass revolutions due to discontent over the autocratic regime, the corruption and the economic problems. The president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali was ousted after 23 years in power and fled to Saudi Arabia. Since then, Tunisia has held two free democratic general elections where Ennahda –a moderate Islamist party- won the first and an alliance between secular parties and members of the former regime won the second (Addala, 2015). Furthermore, the country drafted a new constitution, it is currently a parliamentary republic and, despite some continuing social and economic problems, it is considered by many as the role model for the Arab World. (Bennett-Jones, 2014)

The Arab uprising spread to other Arab countries with different outcomes in each one. In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak was overthrown after 29 years in power. The power was temporarily assumed by the Armed Forces until the elections of 2012, when Muslim Brotherhood, with Mohamed Morsi at the head, won the presidential election and named Gen Abdul Fattah al-Sisi chief of staff and defense minister. The latter was the one who deposed President Morsi in 2013 and imposed a military interim government, following the general discontent and the mass protests over the imposition of an Islamist leaning constitution by Morsi. The Muslim Brotherhood was designated as terrorist organization and hundreds of its supporters were sentenced to death while Al-Sisi became president in a 2014 presidential election. (Manfreda, n.d.a) The transition put in place by the army came to end by the 2015 staggered parliamentary election, which was dominated by pro-government candidates. The country is now divided among Islamist, military

and secular powers, there is high unrest in the entire country while many people claim that the situation in all areas is even worse than when Mubarak was in power. (Samaan, 2015)

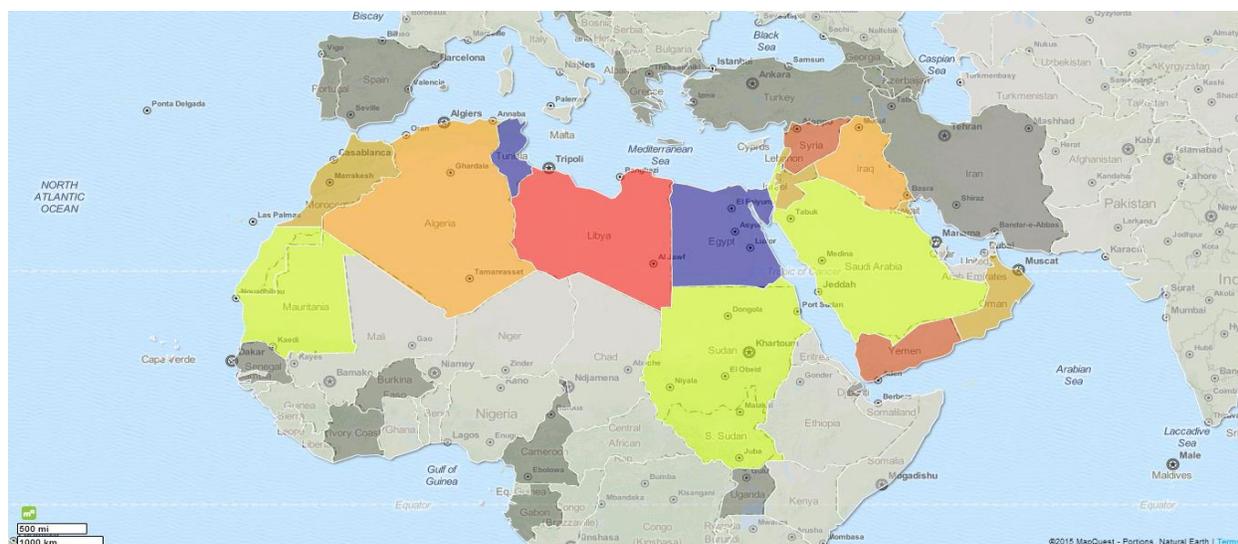
In Libya, the colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi was overthrown and killed in a UN-led military intervention, after 42 years in power and after employing huge forces of violence that dragged the country into a civil war. The National Transitional Council took charge and held the first free national elections. Ali Zeidan of the General National Congress was appointed Prime Minister and formed an interim government in order to draft a new constitution (BBC, 2015b). However, the weakness of the new government to control the numerous militias and armed groups led Libyans to elect a new legislative body, the House of Representatives, which operates simultaneously with the General National Congress, the former in Tobruk and the latter in Tripoli, each parliament with its own militias and supporters. Many of these groups have fragmented even more over time and there are also other local militias and tribal fighters who wish to take control over their territories. The two parliament complex is opposed by the Benghazi based groups like Ansar al-Sharia while ISIS is one additional enemy for all within the country. Another civil war is still ongoing and Amnesty International describes a situation where “people don’t know who their enemy is because of the myriad of armed groups” (Boghani, 2015).

The Arab Spring that began in Tunisia reached Syria in March 2011. The president Bashar al-Assad answered with trivial reforms, suspended constitutional rights and tried to crack down the revolts through excessive use of power. Syrian armed dissidents formed the Free Syrian Army and the country entered a bloody civil war resulting in unimaginable repercussions (Cornell University Library, n.d.). The calls by the West for the resignation of the president Bashar al-Assad have not been heard yet and the sanctions imposed, the proven use of chemical weapons and the UN implication have not been enough to put an end to the bloodshed (Kaphle, 2014). On the contrary, the country is still in a conflict as the regime is supported by Iran, Russia and China and the opposition is supported by US, EU, Turkey and the GCC countries, turning the civil war into a proxy war (Haseeb, 2012, pp. 191-192). At the same time, the ISIS, taking advantage of the gap of power, has taken control of one third of Syria’s territory, the al-Nusra Front is fighting with the opposition, Kurdish fighters are fighting ISIS, al-Assad refuses to step down, the opposition is fragmented and the humanitarian disaster continues (Cockburn, 2014, pp. 4-5, see

also BBC, 2013a). The international community has now started talking about al-Assad's possible participation in a transitional regime, Russia carries out air strikes against ISIS targets amid accusations that it actually targets anti-Assad rebels and the Paris bombing led European forces to join the US led bombing raids against ISIS. (BBC, 2015c) In the meantime, the civil war has caused more than four million refugees and approximately seven million internally displaced persons according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2015).

In Yemen, the president was ousted after 33 years in power and after securing immunity against prosecution for him, his family and his colleagues (Kasinof, 2012). He was replaced by Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi who was overthrown by the Houthi rebels in February 2015. Currently, the rebel forces are fighting with the forces close to the regime, and both of them are opposed by an al-Qaeda affiliate and an ISIS affiliate. In addition, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia has been air bombing Houthi targets following Hadi's request and there are fears that the escalating situation could pose a problem for the world's oil shipping routes (BBC, 2015d).

Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria may be some of the most important countries "participating" in the Arab Spring but they are not the only ones. The following map shows that the Arab Spring spread across most MENA countries, even in the rich oil monarchies of the Gulf.



Source: www.targetmap.com

As mentioned above, all countries faced the Arab Spring differently. In Bahrain, king al-Khalifa used security forces to crack down the demonstrations and called the GCC Army to step in and protect the royal family. Despite some government changes and economic concessions thanks to the cash injection by Saudi Arabia, there is a continuing civil disorder and the establishment of a national dialogue process has proven to be ineffective, as did the 2014 parliamentary elections that were dismissed by the Shia opposition as a farce (BBC, 2015a). In Iraq, the Prime Minister Maliki performed governmental changes, released prisoners but the violence by the opposition and the Iraqi Army Forces resulted in a turbulence that was utilized by the ISIS in order to capture large territory areas (Adnan, 2013). The Prime Minister was forced to resign and the insurgency escalated into a civil war when ISIS took over the cities of Fallujah and Mosul. The Iraqi armed forces along with the Kurdish peshmerga are currently fighting ISIS while many countries, including USA, Russia and Iran are conducting airstrikes against it. The sectarian unrest and the political tension still remain high and the hostilities have led many people to flee the country. (Gordon and Kallimachi, 2015)

In Algeria the state of emergency was lifted after 19 years and in the president Bouteflika proceeded to political reforms, as did the Sultan of Oman. In Jordan, king Abdullah II performed governmental changes and held elections, in Kuwait there were governmental changes too, in Morocco the king proceeded to governmental changes, constitutional reforms and political concessions. There were also minor demonstrations in Saudi Arabia and UAE, which were mostly suppressed or bought off through additional benefits. (BBC, 2013a)

CHAPTER 2: THE EU AND THE ARAB SPRING

2.1 The stance of the EU towards the Arab Spring

In October 2011, the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought to “five activists of the Arab Spring”. This constituted a meaningful symbol of the EU authorities’ support to the democratic movements occurring in the Arab world (European Parliament, 2011). Despite the symbolic gesture of the EU, its initial reaction is considered by many as cautious and confusing, given the late response of the EU and the ambivalence between the EU policies and the interests of the EU member states. Let us not forget that these interests were not only financial but the regimes “acted as a bulwark against the rise of radical Islam and a measure of regional stability”. (Behr, 2012, p. 76) Moreover, this slow reaction can be explained by the fact that the EU, and the West in general, was caught by surprise: after almost 50 years of authoritarian yet stable regimes, the EU had to face an Arab tsunami and see the myths it consider as established reality, collapse the one after another (Basbous, 2011, p. 383).

The first myth collapsed was that of the “Arab exception”, namely that the Arabs did not care about democracy, could not understand it and were not prepared for it. The second one is the myth of “our good dictator”, that is to say that an authoritarian regime with a positive stance towards the West is stable and in any case better than the alternative Islamist party. One must bear in mind that the EU was cooperating and associating with these Arab regimes, showing its clear preference of security over democratization. When the people in these countries broke the barrier of fear, they swept down the myth of the unshakable regime; the toppling of the regimes proved that the fear of the society and the belief that the regimes were unshakable was exactly what made them unshakable. Once the people revolted, the king proved to be naked. (Khader, 2013, pp. 33-34)

There were also other myths that collapsed: the Arab Spring proved that there is in fact an Arab identity and it is not fictional as the West wanted it to be. The uprisings spread across the Arab countries, where people in the same language and using the same slogans, asked for the same things. That also refuted the Western theory of “irrational and capricious Arabs”, as it proved that there is a strong and healthy Arab public opinion which was just not in the forefront due to the tyrannical regimes. (Khader, 2013, pp. 33-34)

2.2 The EU Response

The uprisings were so sudden that caught the EU off-guard. The initial reluctant and slow reaction changed when the EU realized the significance of the events and the need to change its policies in economic, political and security level. Its response was issued in two communications: the first one, “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”, was published in March 2011 and the second one, “New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”, in May 2011.

2.2.1 Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (PDSP)

This Communication of the Commission was put together in order to enable the EU strengthen its support towards the MENA countries in transition as it should not remain a passive spectator to the events taking place in its southern neighbourhood. This new partnership was based on the results of the Barcelona Process and the UfM, on differentiation, conditionality and mutual accountability and applied the “more for more” principle. The aim of this instrument was to support democracy and institution building, to build stronger partnership with the people, to promote inclusive economic growth and to enhance the 3Ms, namely Money, Markets and Mobility. (European Commission, 2011c)

The strategy commits the partners to support the reforms in public administration, to fight corruption and to launch new initiatives of cooperation in the sectors of energy, aviation, agriculture, education and training, information and communication technologies. They will also participate to actions in order to provide financial assistance, to promote trade and investment through differentiated agreements in the sectors of agriculture, industry and services and to establish frameworks for cooperation for managing migration issues. (European Commission, 2011c)

All these are approached through the proposal of “more for more”, namely a reward for the countries that implement more reforms faster. It is an incentive-based approach that focuses on differentiation. The 3Ms policy provides for increased financial support to the southern partners under democratic reforms (Money), mobility partnerships over legal migration, visa facilitation, asylum, fight against illegal migration, scholarships and exchanges (Mobility) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements that will be tailor made to the needs of each country

(Markets). The Communication places emphasis on job creation, regional cooperation through the UfM, promotion of loans by the European Investment bank, support and promotion of SMEs and provision of humanitarian aid to the affected countries (especially Libya). (European Commission, 2011c)

2.2.2 A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood

The second Communication is actually the review of the ENP. EU acknowledges that “this partnership with our neighbours is mutually beneficial”. Therefore, it emphasizes the mutual accountability, the commitment to universal values, the job creation and sustainable economic growth, the cooperation in the fields of education, women’s rights, social protection systems, conflict resolution, migration, mobility, trade and energy. The goal of the EU is to “provide greater support to partners engaged in building deep democracy” and deep democracy does not mean simply elections, but also freedom of thought, speech and religion, human rights, battling of corruption, independent judiciary system. The EU does not want to impose a single model of political reform but it will provide assistance to any partner committed to the universal values of the reviewed ENP. (European Commission, 2011b)

Politically speaking, the EU means to intensify the political and security cooperation, to “enhance its involvement in solving protracted conflicts”, to promote joint action in international fora and proposes the common use of EU instruments. In the economic sector, the goal is to strengthen the trade ties through Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, to promote direct investments, to tackle economic disparities, to support agricultural and rural development, to support the macro-economic policy. In the issue of human mobility, the EU will launch the Erasmus Mundus program, pursue visa facilitation and begin negotiations for establishing new mobility partnerships, establish stronger cooperation in the issues of border management and asylum and against illegal migration. In the financial field, EU will provide additional resources through reallocations and through other various sources, it will “secure additional loan possibilities by the EIB and the EBRD” and will re-orient the action plans of the EMP towards less priorities through more consistent policies. (European Commission, 2011b)

The review of the ENP will also strengthen the cooperation between the EU and its South Mediterranean partners through the establishment of two instruments, the Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy. The Civil Society Facility will support the civil society organizations, develop their ability to monitor reforms and to evaluate and implement EU programs. The European Endowment for Democracy will promote the creation of civil society organizations and it will provide assistance to trade unions and non-registered NGOs. (European Commission, 2011b)

Within the framework of reviewing the ENP, the EU also launched the Spring Programme (Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth) on 21 September 2011 in order to provide financial support to the countries under democratic transition and enable them to establish institutions and achieve sustainable economic growth. It aims to support human rights, freedom of press, of speech, of thought, and fight against corruption, among other things. The sustainable and inclusive growth shall be achieved through the support of SMEs, the establishment of a better regulatory framework for businesses and the reduction of social and economic inequalities. Another important initiative that will help the involved Southern Mediterranean countries face the new difficulties is ENPARD, the European Neighborhood Policy for Agriculture and Rural Development. This initiative does not aim at developing trade opportunities but at responding to the needs of the rural world with a focus on small-scale farms. The budget of the Spring programme for the years 2011 and 2012 was €350 million, to be disbursed by the ENPI. (European Union Delegation to the United Nations, 2011)

2.3 Assessment

Europe's interest in the success of the Arab Spring is enormous, due to its proximity to the region, its medium and long-term interests –political and security relations, trade, economy, development- and its power as an international player in the region. The revolting countries, and especially the youth involved, also demonstrated their preference for the European model which encompasses democracy, human rights, individual freedom and equal opportunities. Despite the fact that Europe should have seen this obvious bidirectional interest and engage in supporting the change, this was not actually the case. (Perthes, 2011, pp. 74-82)

On the contrary, EU member states remained tied to each one's own interests to the MENA region and failed to see the larger picture, which costed Europe in power and created confusion and lack of credibility. The EU adopted a wait-and-see stance and even when it decided to support the revolution, its members were divided. Italy, Malta, Cyprus and Greece who were accepting thousands of immigrants from Tunisia were marginalized by the rest of Europe and the EU denied holding a meeting of all EU Justice and Interior Ministers as these countries had requested, with the German Interior Minister stating that Italy was not overstrained. At the same time, the French Government was also embarrassed because on the one hand it supported the Tunisian Revolution but on the other, its Foreign Minister supported Ben Ali and was led to resign. (Isaac, 2012, pp. 7-8)

The situation was similar in Egypt, where Europe was delayed in taking sides and decided to support the ousting of President Mubarak only after the USA had asked for him to step down while the Italian Prime Minister was praising Mubarak as a wise man and a point of reference. The internal EU division became even more apparent in the case of Libya and shadowed the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Britain and France argued for an intervention while Germany, Italy, Malta and Eastern European members were against it, with Poland claiming the Libya situation to be an internal issue and Germany removing its crews from NATO support aircraft. The EU, an organization claiming to be a defender of human rights, remained silent in the case of Bahrain and once more, demonstrated its preference for security, oil and investments versus democracy. On the contrary, it was fierce in condemning the Assad regime in Syria and imposing sanctions on persons, entities and bodies. (Isaac, 2012, pp. 9-10) These internal divisions and disagreements deprived the EU of the opportunity to emerge as a leader in the region and constituted the herald of its subsequent indecision.

The European Union did not discover the MENA countries because of the Arab Spring; on the contrary, these countries have been quite important for the EU foreign policy since the 1970s. The Global Mediterranean Policy, the Euro-Arab Dialogue, the Renewed Mediterranean Policy, the Western Forum for the Mediterranean (5+5 Dialogue), the ENP, the EMP, the UfM, the OSCE were some of the policies, organizations and instruments put together by the EU in order to promote closer cooperation with the partner countries and address issues ranging from job

creation to conflict resolution. The ones that still exist and are operating tried to respond to the Arab Spring but their reaction was rather ineffective. (Khader, 2013, pp. 14-29)

The UfM, which is considered project oriented, is believed to be unsuccessful in the Arab Spring case, a fact that created additional problems to its funding by the EU budget (Behr, 2012, p. 77). As an organization it is focused on big projects while the issues of human security and democracy come second. It must be also noted that the UfM is seen with disbelief in the Arab world due to the participation of Israel in the Union and furthermore, the UfM has no more incentives to offer, since the Arab countries cannot become members of the EU and they are already members of the UfM; therefore, any conditionality is doomed to have limited effects. (Khader, 2013, pp. 29-30) This inability is also recognized by the EU, which in its first communication mentions that “the UfM did not deliver the result we expected”. (European Commission, 2011c)

The 5+5 dialogue showed little results in responding to the Arab Spring. The Heads of States discussed the issue thoroughly and decided during the conference of 2012 that Europe will “support the democratic transitions and political reforms” that followed the so-called Arab Spring. Nevertheless, the lack of tangible results cannot be criticized given that the 5+5 Forum is an informal forum, aiming at fostering relations and enhancing the cooperation among the members and that even its cooperation projects are implemented through the UfM. (Western Mediterranean Forum, n.d.)

The EMP seemed unable to respond, provided that it actually wanted to provide support and assistance. But the latter is largely questioned. The EMP, despite the establishment of the baskets of economic, socio-cultural and political cooperation, failed to fulfill the ambitions created and it became yet another securitization instrument that placed stability above the rule of law and democracy. Additionally, the cooperation with the long-term dictators of the Southern Mediterranean countries has irrevocably damaged its picture in those countries. (Khader, 2013, pp. 23-26)

Besides the existing policies, EU’s specific response to the Arab Spring is also widely criticized. Despite the fact that the EU reviewed its policies and introduced new measures due to the Arab Spring, the terms “Arab World” or “Arab Identity” are not mentioned explicitly in these two

communications issued in 2011. Furthermore, the EU was supposed to have changed its tools but the 3Ms policy were nothing new. Even so, this “new” policy could not be effectively implemented due to the European financial crisis (Money), the Common Agricultural Policy (Market) and the Islamophobia, illegal migration and securitization preference of the European states (Mobility). (Khader, 2013, pp. 36-39)

In the framework of the 3Ms policy, the EU has been widely criticized. Mainly due to its financial crisis, the figures allocated to the Arab Spring countries were extremely low and despite the fact that they represented an important burden for Europe, they did not constitute a real incentive for reforms in the Southern Mediterranean, the countries of which were experiencing miserable political and economic conditions. Egypt’s debt in 2011 was estimated at \$184 billion, namely in 2011 it should spend approximately \$18 billion on debt services. Tunisia had a debt of \$20.2 billion, namely 40% of its GDP and the IMF had listed them, along with Syria and Yemen, to the red zone. (Isaac, 2012, pp. 12-13) In this framework, the EU’s total aid for the entire Southern Neighbourhood was less than €7 billion for a duration of 3 years. Out of them, €100 million were approved for Egypt in order to improve the living conditions, implement trade and market reforms and improve sustainable energy supply, and €110 million for development assistance projects in Tunisia. (European Commission, 2011d) Additionally, the European Investment Bank would increase by €1 billion the lending over the same period and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development would extend its operations in the MENA region with annual lending of approximately €2.5 billion. (European Commission, 2011b)

Mobility-wise, it became clear that once again the EU would place security over mobility and in their effort to tangle the migration problem, the Europeans would try to buy it off. The mobility framework included expansion of university scholarships and collaboration with EU universities, visa facilitation and readmission agreements. The only really important thing in this framework, namely the visa facilitation which has always been a keen desire of all MENA countries, was not further detailed, which was an alarming sign. This alarming sign was verified because in 2013, the EU was still in discussions with Morocco and Tunisia with a view to start negotiations on this issue at an even later stage. (European Commission, 2013) Last but not least, the fact that the readmission agreements go hand to hand with the visa facilitation in a communication that is

supposed to have been created to help the Southern Mediterranean countries, indicates that the EU's main goal is to control migration and not facilitate mobility.

Regarding the last component of the 3Ms, markets, the two new initiatives had nothing new to offer. The improved market access and the progressive integration of the economies of Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt were only on paper and in 2013 the EU stated that these issues would be the subject of future negotiations. (European Commission, 2013) As seen in the past, even the policies that were supposed to create "shared prosperity" were actually a vehicle for the European companies to control migration: they would enter the MENA countries' markets, create jobs and thus reduce the migrant flows. The Mediterranean Partner Countries would agree to open their markets to the European companies, which would eventually become more competitive than the local ones and lead them to shut down. Nevertheless, this was not bidirectional; the MENA countries could not enter the European markets –only specific products could and under specific rules, quotas and tariffs- nor could there be a flow of labour. As done since the mid-1990s and even more since the September 11, the EU is preoccupied with security and constantly promotes measures of migration control and illegal migration combat rather than mobility, which is deceitfully used as a carrot. (Hollis, 2012, pp.81-84) With Europe redrawing one by one the incentives for the MENA countries to proceed to reforms, the EU found itself pushed out of the limelight.

Politically speaking, the principles of "more and more" and "mutual accountability" included in the two communications are also non-implementable; the positive conditionality based on deep reforms, sustainable democracy etc is not quantified, since the communications provide no definition on how much reform is considered deep and who will assess whether the democracy is sustainable and on what terms. Similarly, the mutual accountability principle is a euphemism, as the Southern partners have no means to exercise this accountability towards the EU and are in no position of setting the rules. (Khader, 2013, pp. 36-39) What is even more remarkable is that on the one hand the EU claims to support the democratic transitions and embraces the uprisings but on the other hand the only political reference is that it will "enhance its involvement in solving protracted conflicts", without further explaining the kind of the involvement, the distinction between conflict and war and the duration that is considered protracted. (European Commission, 2011c)

The EU also forgot to specify at what stage it would assess the reforms and whether the funds would be disbursed once these reforms were achieved or even when they were just planned. The fact that Egypt and Tunisia started receiving democratization and development assistance funds when almost no reform had been achieved and Egypt was being ruled by military elites, questions the existence of incentives for actual reforms. (Isaac, 2012, p. 11) But even if the interested countries would implement the reforms necessary, the EU's assessment was scheduled to happen too late, namely in 2014. (European Commission, 2011a) By then, the conditionality motive would have been lost.

Even if all the declarations of these policies were truly feasible, they lack legitimization since there is no input from the Arab society. The EU itself assessed the situation, it decided what are the measures and policies needed and it established these “new” policies without including its Arab partners in this process. It talks about liberal market economy but it has been proven that this leads to “modernized illiberal autocracies” when implemented in poor, undemocratic countries with trembling private sector. The European Endowment for Democracy and the Civil Society Facility, both created in an effort to engage the civil society and not cooperate only with governments, also bear many deficiencies. The EU past attempts to work with civil society organizations were all insufficient and hence the current ones are seen with skepticism by the Arab society; the financing was not enough, the disbursement was slow, the allocation criteria were obscure and the bureaucracy was discouraging. It seems paradox to be preoccupied with the creation and support of civil society organizations when the civil society has not been included in the discourse. (Khader, 2013, pp. 37-38)

The first EU strategic response, namely the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity is also contested. Its introduction includes high values and big projects but they are not really supported by specific provisions in the rest of the communication. It emphasizes the civil society but it makes no mention to the organizations that played an active role in the Arab Spring, namely the independent trade unions. Generally speaking about this policy, one could say that the measures and goals proposed are there to support and modify an existing mechanism and not to establish a new one. The fact that these mechanisms are seen by the Arab people as decisive factors for the economic, social and political disparities and exclusions, makes the implementation of the EU policies more puzzling. (Teti, 2012, pp. 272-278)

All the aforementioned demonstrate the lack of political will within the EU to revise its strategy, which has proven to be failed, and adopt new policies in cooperation with the other regional players, each of which has advantages that the EU does not, including funds, local ownership, cultural proximity and know-how. Europe failed to introduce the two things that could actually help the countries in transition: the creation of a vibrant, internationally competitive private sector that would generate sustainable employment and the establishment of trade agreements that would expand the countries' access to international markets, open the door to foreign investments and spur domestic reforms. This healthy business climate would work in a domino way and impose all those conditions of equality, democracy and development that are necessary for international markets and much desired by the MENA people. (Dadush and Dunne, 2011, pp. 134-136))

EU's regional role has been limited due to its bureaucratic logic and its persistence to place stability and geopolitical interests over democracy and progress. (Behr, 2012, 87-88). Since the EU could provide much funding, it should have been more precise in the allocation of the funds and the monitoring of the results achieved through these funds through multiyear assessment programs. If it wishes to be a normative power and a peace promoter, it should start acting like one. Yet, the goal is not to have Europe exporting its own system and rationale as it did to the Eastern European countries, which could be seen by the Arabs as an attempt to "Europeanize" them and hence grow their mistrust, but to help them democratize. The fundamental principles of the EU are freedom and democracy and the EU must finally show its commitment to those values before it is too late.

2.4 The framework

When assessing a policy, an instrument or an action, one should always bear in mind the general framework within which this policy, instrument or action takes place. In the case under discussion, the EU had to assess and address the Arab Spring issue while the EU itself was being hit by the financial crisis. In 2011, the European Banking System was near to collapse since, after Spain, Portugal and Ireland, Greece was in a debt crisis and the whole Euro area was trembling as the case of a Grexit was widely discussed (Lenzner, 2011). At the same time, due to

the previous enlargements, the size of Europe had significantly increased, both geographically and numerically. The new EU borders, which were shifted to the east, created new security problems and migration issues. Besides the security aspect of the enlargement, the EU also had to incorporate new populations and different cultures and provide them financial assistance. (Debating Europe, n.d.)

The long held poverty in the Sub-Saharan countries and the conflicts in the MENA countries skyrocketed the migration problems in a Europe that had started showing signs of fatigue and a sharp turn to anti-migrant and extreme right-wing parties. Despite its announcements, Europe seemed more preoccupied with keeping migrants out of the continent than with implementing mobility and visa facilitation processes. (Smith-Spark, 2012) The aforementioned, combined with the traditional distrust of the MENA countries towards the EU due to its stance in the Arab – Israeli conflict and its business relations with the autocrats of the region, enhance the distrust of the Arab people towards the EU policies that have proven to be ineffective and ambivalent (Teti, 2012, p. 280). After all, the EU is an institution composed by several countries and when each of those countries places its short-term personal interest above the common one, the hands of this institution are tied.

CHAPTER 3: THE UN AND THE ARAB SPRING

3.1 The stance of the United Nations towards the Arab Spring

“The United Nations system, also known unofficially as the “UN family”, is made up by the UN itself and many affiliated programmes, funds and specialized agencies, all with their own membership, leadership and budget” (United Nations, n.d.) Even though this enables the organization to respond to a variety of needs ranging from climate change to human rights and from tourism to the fight against hunger and HIV/AIDS, it makes it challenging to trace down its exact reactions, actions and decisions on any given subject.

Nevertheless, having in mind that the Secretary - General expresses the voice and the will of the United Nations, his reaction towards the Arab Spring reveals the stance of the entire organization. And the response by the United Nations was immediate and impressive; even since January 2011, namely the first month of the Arab Spring phenomenon, Ban Ki-Moon strongly supported the uprisings and asked from the governments of the countries involved to address the issues tormenting their people and to respond to their demands about social justice, democracy, accountability and reforms. And despite the fact that the West was caught by surprise by the Arab Spring, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had issued several reports between 2001 and 2005 where it predicted the uprisings we currently know as Arab Spring. Regrettably, these reports did lead not to the political actions that could have prevented the upheavals. (Grant, 2012)

3.2 The United Nations Response

The United Nations, through its several organs, institutions and affiliated programmes acted in the areas of human rights, security, development, financial aid and business but also initiated military actions and provided political assistance.

3.2.1 Human Rights

The Human Rights Council (HRC), the independent Human Rights Experts at the UN and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) responded immediately and

condemned the deaths of protestors and torture of prisoners in Tunisia, the country that initiated the Arab Spring, while the High Commissioner issued a press release to call the government to stop the excessive use of violence. (OHCHR, 2011d) After the fall of Ben Ali, the OHCHR dispatched a human rights assessment team in order to evaluate the situation and find out how the UN could help establish a democratic country. This mission –and a subsequent invitation by the interim Tunisian government- led to the opening of an OHCHR office in Tunisia. In the second half of 2011, the Tunisian government ratified many international treaties on human rights and made an open invitation to Special Rapporteurs on human rights issues to visit the country. (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 50-53)

The situation did not unfold in the same way in Egypt. While at the beginning and after President Mubarak was ousted it appeared that Egypt would become a new Tunisia and enhance its cooperation with the UN human rights agencies, this did not happen. On the contrary, the threats by the new Egyptian government resulted in the UN entities ignoring or diminishing the importance of the human rights violations, which in several cases were even worse than the ones perpetrated by the previous regime. This came in contradiction to the UN's stance towards the human rights violations by the previous regime and may have contributed to the deterioration of the situation in the country. (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 54-57) Even when the OHCHR assessment mission was finally realized, its results were marginalized and their importance was diminished by the UN (OHCHR, 2011a).

One of the Arab Spring countries where UN was fierce in protecting human rights and condemning their violation was Libya. The country spent most of 2011 amid armed conflicts and the HRC was the first, even since February 2011, to hold a session specifically for Libya and issue a resolution condemning the violation of human rights by the Gaddafi government. It also established a Commission of Inquiry that concluded there was evidence about crimes against humanity. (Human Rights Council, 2011) The Security Council referred the Libya situation to the International Criminal Court and imposed sanctions while the General Assembly suspended Libya from the HRC. Finally, on March 17 the Security Council passed a resolution that invoked the “responsibility to protect” and led to the subsequent humanitarian intervention in the country by NATO. (Security Council, 2011c)

Syria was also a case where the HRC and OHCHR put every effort into addressing the human rights violations against the protestors by the Assad regime. The HRC held three Special Sessions specifically for Syria and managed to adopt resolutions for dispatching a fact-finding mission, establishing a COI and a Special Rapporteur on Syria within the Special Procedures of the HRC. Nevertheless, despite the findings that proved the perpetration of crimes against humanity, the Security Council did not refer the situation to the ICC but simply set forth the need to stop impunity. (OHCHR, 2011c) What is remarkable is that following the “forced” withdrawal of Syria’s candidature for member of the HRC and its refusal to cooperate with the UN human rights missions, UNESCO elected Syria to two human rights committees, namely the Committee on International Non-Governmental Organizations and the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations. (UN Watch, 2012) And even though the High Commissioner continued to call all UN member states to act in order to protect the Syrian people, his request was not heard (OHCHR, 2011b).

In Yemen and Bahrain, the competent bodies of the UN failed to provide a dynamic answer to the human rights violation by the governments. In Bahrain, the HRC issued only statements of concern while the OHCHR and Special Procedures were stressing the importance of the issue throughout 2011 without achieving much, including the visit to the country in order to assess the situation which resulted in the establishment of a national commission of inquiry (BICI) by the King of Bahrein. In Yemen, even though the OHCHR sent a mission to report on the human rights abuses, the mission was not allowed to perform an unobstructed and independent investigation and therefore could not conclude on the issue. In order to mitigate the impressions, the Yemeni government announced that it would “launch transparent and independent investigations”. (CIHRS, 2012, p. 64-66)

3.2.2 Security Council and Military action

When talking about the military action that took place during the Arab Spring, we must first of all clarify that the United Nations does not have an army on its own. The UN military personnel, known as Blue Helmets, are contributed by the national armies of the member states and do not perform military interventions but peacekeeping missions. “This personnel can be called upon to

monitor a disputed border, monitor and observe peace processes in post-conflict areas, provide security across a conflict zone, protect civilians, assist in-country military personnel with training and support and assist ex-combatants in implementing the peace agreements they may have signed”. (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.)

The Security Council, which is responsible and has the power –according to the United Nations Charter- to authorize collective action in order to maintain international peace and security either by direct UN involvement or through regional organizations (e.g. NATO), did not handle all Arab Spring countries in the same way. The Security Council chose to deal only with the situation in Libya, Syria and Yemen and even out of them, it issued a mandate for intervention only for Libya. (Nau, 2015, p. 252)

More specifically, on February 26, 2011, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed the Resolution 1970 condemning the lethal use of force by Gaddafi’s government against protestors and referred the Libyan government to the International Criminal Court for gross violations of human rights. With the same Resolution, it enacted sanctions against certain Gaddafi’s government officials, imposed an arms embargo and froze the assets of Gaddafi’s family and close circle along with a travel ban. This was the first time in the history of the United Nations that the Security Council unanimously referred a country to the International Criminal Court. (Security Council, 2011c) A few days later, on March 1st, 2011, the General Assembly adopted the Resolution 65/265 with which it suspended Libya’s membership in the Human Rights Council. This Resolution was also adopted by consensus. (General Assembly, 2011a)

Following the calls by the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Libyan National Transitional Council, the Arab League, Great Britain, France, G8, Lebanon and part of people of Libya themselves, the United Nations Security Council approved on March 17, 2011 the Resolution 1973 through which it imposed a no-fly zone over Libya and authorized “Member States that have notified the Secretary-General, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, and acting in cooperation with the Secretary-General, to take all necessary measures, notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 1970 (2011), to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory[...]”. Furthermore, through this

Resolution the United Nations demanded the immediate establishment of a ceasefire, strengthened the arms embargo and the actions against mercenaries, imposed an asset freeze on the Libyan authorities and extended the travel ban. (Security Council, 2011d) The Resolution 1973 passed with no votes against it but certain states abstained from the vote, a fact that foreshadowed the reluctance of these states to react in the same way in the crimes committed in Syria. This Resolution invoked the “Responsibility to Protect” in order to justify the humanitarian intervention.

A day after the adoption of the Resolution, the Libyan government announced a ceasefire and declared the compliance with the resolution but none of these statements proved true and therefore, on March 19, began a military intervention by a coalition of UN member states led by the United States, under the name Operation Odyssey Dawn (BBC, 2011a). On March 31, NATO assumed command of all international operations in Libya under the name Operation Unified Protector and enforced the UN-mandated no-fly zone and the arms embargo while it also conducted naval and air strikes against government military forces that had attacked or would attack civilians. NATO succeeded in preventing the capture of Benghazi by pro-Gaddafi forces, degraded the regime’s ability to target civilians and 222 days after the operation had begun, namely on October 31, 2011, NATO officially ended the Operation Unified Protector (NATO, 2015)

Yemen and Syria did not preoccupy the Security Council in the way Libya did. Regarding Yemen, the Security Council issued press statements expressing the grave concerns of the members at the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation and “urging the parties to show maximum restraint and to engage in an inclusive political dialogue [...] The members of the Security Council welcomed the ongoing mediation efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council to help the parties find agreement on a way forward”. (United Nations Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 2011c) They were deeply concerned at the threat from Al-Qaida and the interruption of basic supplies and called on all parties to respect their obligations deriving from the international law. (United Nations Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 2011d) The members also called for a Yemeni-led political transition based on the initiative by the GCC and expressed their growing concern about the worsening humanitarian, economic and security situation in the country. (United Nations Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 2011e) In the last press release for 2011,

the members welcomed the formation of the Government of National Unity and the peaceful transition of power while they committed to the territorial integrity and unity of the country. (United Nations Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 2011f) The only Resolution of the Security Council for Yemen just repeated those included in the press statements and praised once more the GCC initiative, calling the Yemeni President to sign it. (Security Council, 2011f)

Regarding Syria, the Security Council confined itself to expressing concerns about humanitarian issues and violence, human rights abuses, freedom of the press, denial of access to international media and asking for independent and transparent investigation into the killings. (Security Council, 2011a) In his statement in August 2011, the President of the Security Council called all sides to restrain themselves and end violence and the Syrian government to implement its commitments while he stressed that the only solution includes a Syrian-led political process. (Security Council, 2011h) Following months of arguments for and against Assad's regime, the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution proposed by France, Germany, Portugal and United Kingdom due to the veto of Russia and China. (United Nations Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 2011b) In this never-adopted Resolution, the Security Council demanded, among others, the end of violence by the Authorities, the release of all political prisoners, the immediate end to human rights abuses and the guaranteed safe return of those who had fled the violence. Last but not least, the Security Council expressed its intention "to review Syria's implementation of this resolution within 30 days and to consider its options, including measures under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations", namely to impose non-military measures such as diplomatic and economic sanctions. (Security Council, 2011b)

3.2.3 Political aid

Following the request of the interim Tunisian government, the United Nations deployed to the country an electoral needs assessment mission composed by DPA and UNDP, and assisted the electoral procedure by supporting the electoral management body, promoting inclusive participation regarding women and civil society groups and assisting in the organization of the Constituent Assembly elections (General Assembly, 2011b, p. 18). The United Nations Development Programme provided advice and documents, technical and financial assistance,

supported the rule of law and focused on the most immediate demands of the transition process. Thanks to this assistance, more than four million people were able to vote in the first democratic election in the country (UNDP, 2013)

Even though no international group was allowed to monitor the election process, the Development Programme of the United Nations assisted the Egyptian authorities in the democratic transition by facilitating the access of the interested parties to practices deriving by the international standards through workshops, visits to other countries and fora. (Londono, 2011) It initiated the post-revolution national dialogue, conducted a national forum on democratic transition, mobilized \$11 million in order to support the elections and strengthened the credibility of the results. (UNDP in Egypt, 2015, p. 24) The UN, through the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs declared its readiness to support the Egyptians in the transition process wherever its help was sought. (UN News Center, 2011b)

In an intense mediation effort and with a view to constitute an example of successful preventive diplomacy, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General conducted seven missions to Yemen in 2011 in order to reach a peaceful solution to the situation. The Special Adviser, with the help of the DPA, facilitated the negotiations among the conflicting parties and in November brokered the peace deal which established a peaceful transfer of power. More specifically it provided for the transfer of key powers from President Saleh to the Vice President, the establishment of an interim government, elections and dialogue for further reforms and a new constitution. The Agreement also focused on the adequate participation of women in the transition and the political presence of the DPA in the country. (United Nations DPA, 2012, p.15)

In Libya, the Special Envoy appointed by the Secretary-General made direct contacts with the Libyan Authorities and the National Transition Council (NTC), negotiated a political solution and promoted a coordinated international support to the crisis. These efforts managed to keep an open channel of communication between the two parties during the conflict and prepare the Mediation and Planning Team for Libya. The UN team managed to engage with electoral experts, make a pre-assessment of the possible areas of needed assistance and then proceed to the relative post-conflict planning for building strong democratic institutions. (United Nations DPA, 2012, p.11) The most important step of the UN was the establishment of the United Nations

Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) which undertook the responsibility to help the National Transition Council in rebuilding the rule of law and other institutions (Security Council, 2011e).

Finally, despite the deadlock faced by the Security Council over the issue of Syria, the DPA and the Secretary-General strongly criticized the Syrian Authorities and called them to initiate a political dialogue, as they did in the case of Bahrain where the Secretary-General encouraged dialogue and reforms. (Bosco, 2011, p. 85)

3.2.4 Financial aid and Development Programmes

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, the United Nations held the Monetary and Financial Conference, known as the Bretton Woods Conference, in order to regulate the international monetary and financial order. At this conference, the member states of the United States “agreed to create a family of institutions to address critical issues of the international financial system”. (The Bretton Woods Committee, n.d.) These institutions included the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which became specialized agencies of the United Nations under Articles 57, 58 and 63 of the United Nations Charter. (United Nations, n.d.) Over the years, these initial two institutions evolved to the present group of agencies, with the aim to maintain global financial stability, provide technical assistance, training and loans to member states and to developing countries, promote direct financial investments in developing countries, promote transition to open and democratic market economies, negotiate the rules of trade etc. (The Bretton Woods Committee, n.d.)

In 2011, namely the first year of the Arab Spring, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank already had projects running in the MENA region for many years. Yet, the financial institutions did not predict the Arab uprisings, despite the fact that the polls were revealing a highly dissatisfied middle class, with a desire for transparency, accountability and equal opportunities. The main reason for that is that the economic indicators for the same period showed progress and the region was experiencing high growth rates. Nevertheless, the progress and the growth never reached the middle class but the international financial institutions, focused only on numbers and indexes, missed the signs. (World Bank, 2015)

The Arab Spring made the financial institutions rethink their policy and understand that their programmes must have local ownership, enjoy broad support and be tailored for each country's circumstances. So, besides providing financial aid, the IMF also provided advice on how to create sustainable employment, protect the most vulnerable and maintain economic stability. Egypt received technical assistance on tax reform, Libya on public financial management and Tunisia on strengthening the financial sector. Furthermore, the IMF continued to emphasize that it would provide financial assistance to any country that would like to support its economic programme while all countries could ask for its support in technical, management and governance related issues. (Ahmed, 2012)

In 2011, the IMF initiated talks with the interim governments of Egypt and Tunisia and the King of Morocco for establishing new loan agreements. Libya was not approached by the IMF because it possesses abundant natural resources and did not need financial aid while Syria, which never had any agreement with the IMF, was in 2011 amid increasing conflicts. Nevertheless, the government of Libya asked and received technical assistance for improving governance at the sovereign wealth fund and strengthening public financial management. (IMF Survey Magazine, 2012)

The IMF and the World Bank pledged to lend \$4.9 billion to Egypt until 2013 and \$1.78 billion to Tunisia. Nevertheless, the main problem and the reason for fierce criticism for this proposal was that these states had interim governments with a mandate until the elections and had no authority and legitimacy for locking their countries into long-term economic strategies. (McGrath, 2011) This is mainly the reason that, confined by public pressure, the Egyptian government refused the loan twice while the Tunisian government in 2011 only negotiated at a technical level. (Bretton Woods Project, 2013)

In 2011, the World Bank developed a framework for supporting the MENA countries in transition based on four pillars: governance, economic and social inclusion, job creation, economic growth acceleration. The situation in some of the biggest countries in the region led to delays in programs that were launched in the previous years and were still running in 2011. The lending by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA) that was \$1.7 billion in 2009 and increased to \$3.7 billion in 2010, fell to \$2.1 billion in 2011. (World Bank, 2012, pp. 22-23)

In this framework, Egypt and Tunisia agreed to new support that would bring them \$6 billion until 2013. The allocation of the \$2.1 billion programme in 2011 for the entire region of MENA countries was as follows: 20% for rural development, 18% for financial and private sector development, 14% for environment and natural resource management, 12% for urban development, 10% for public sector governance, 9% for human development, 8% for social protection and risk management, 5% for trade and integration, 4% for social development, gender and inclusion. (World Bank, 2012, pp. 22-23) Nevertheless, despite the declarations of these financial institutions that they had reviewed their policies in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the Arab Spring, their conditionality remained the same: fiscal austerity, subsidy reduction, aggressive privatization, trade liberalization, export growth. (Mossallem, 2015, p. 3)

3.3 Assessment

The Arab Spring demonstrated once more the political limitations and the double standards that exist within the UN. The reaction of the UN in the case of Libya was unprecedented in terms of speed, decisiveness and unity among its members. It was also the first time that the Security Council used the “responsibility to protect” principle in such an explicit way in order to legitimize the humanitarian intervention. (CIHRS, 2012, p. 59) Nevertheless, the momentum was lost after the case of Libya and the UN demonstrated its deficiency in the cases of Yemen and Bahrain where it merely issued statements of concern but gave no formal or collective response. Issues are also raised by the fact that even though the Security Council did not formally intervene in the course of the Tunisian uprising, it started dealing with the crisis in Libya even since the first week of 2011. And even when the UN made strong efforts into addressing the vast human rights violations in Syria, it was not able to take action and hold Syria accountable due to opposition by members of the Security Council (UN News Center, 2011a).

The political institutions within the United Nations failed to provide the protection needed by the democratic and human rights movements and several of the states composing these institutions blocked the enforcement of consequences for the brutal response of the Arab Spring countries’ leaders. The inability by members of the UN to overcome the short-sighted political interests of

powerful governments and political groupings resulted in either no response, or highly insufficient actions in relation to particular country situations, most notably concerning Bahrain at the HRC and Syria at the Security Council. This inability to act strengthened impunity and encouraged the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity (Adams, 2015, p. 4) Lest we forget that even in the case of Libya, where the UN seemed to act effectively, immediately and with consensus, a few days after the adoption of the Resolution 1973 the Council was once more divided over the implementation of the Resolution by NATO, with Russia, China, Brazil, India and South Africa accusing the Western countries that they promoted a military response over the diplomatic efforts of the African Union for a peaceful solution through dialogue (Bosco, 2011, p. 82).

Strong criticism was also addressed to the UN about the evocation of the “responsibility to protect” principle, with many claiming that it constituted the Trojan horse for western states to pursue their interests, namely territory control, geostrategic benefits, control of natural resources and political control. According to this criticism, the leaders used this high moral notion in order to win public support and cover their power abuse under humanitarian purposes. On the other hand, even if this criticism is wrong or undue, it is a fact that the Security Council used the R2P principle only where it could and not where it also should, as in the case of Syria. What is more, the handling of the situation by NATO raised concerns about multiple civilian casualties by NATO’s airstrikes and accusations that it helped rebel forces defeat Gaddafi’s army, thereby effecting regime change, something that goes beyond its mandate and the R2P doctrine. (Human Rights Watch, 2012a, pp. 23-53)

Despite the inefficiency of the Security Council to adopt a resolution condemning the Syrian government, the General Assembly, with the help of the Secretary-General and the HRC, played an important role in maintaining the international pressure against the brutalities of the Assad regime and managed to adopt a resolution where it condemned the response to the uprisings. (United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2011a) The Department of Political Affairs also managed to support the diplomacy of the Secretary-General and provided all the help needed by the UN missions and the support requested by the countries involved regarding the establishment of democratic institutions, the organization of elections etc. But once again, the UN itself undermined its own actions and its credibility in the region by actions such as the

proposal of immunity law for the Yemeni President and his family, a proposal that finally passed despite the protests. (Human Rights Watch, 2012b)

The aforementioned demonstrate that the largest obstacle to sustain the legitimacy of any initiative taken in order to tackle the disastrous consequences of the Arab Spring is the double standards of many UN member states and that despite the rhetoric accompanying the actions of the Security Council, the individual interests of each country member come first even when humanitarian issues are concerned. It is obvious that the support by strong international actors such as the US, the EU, the GCC, the Arab League etc. is not enough in itself in ensuring UN action as only the members of the Security Council can do that. The UN is probably at a phase where it should reconsider its priorities and its veto policy, otherwise its risks of being left outside the developments in the MENA countries.

3.4 The framework

As said before, an assessment should always take into account the framework in which the country, institution or organization involved acted. In this case, the UN could take little or no action without the approval –open or indirect- of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), led by Saudi Arabia, and of the Arab League; namely the GCC and the Arab League had an unsaid veto power over the UN decisions. Having said that, the double standards demonstrated by UN can be explained by the fact that the two aforementioned organizations favored solutions that were to their own benefit and pursued their regional ambitions. Thus, the UN undertook decisive actions concerning the violation of human rights in Libya and Syria, “the former a traditional regional rival and the latter a close ally of Iran”, but silence and lack of protection was the response in human rights violations in Bahrain and Yemen, namely the back yard of the Saudi Arabia which even send troops to crush the uprising in Bahrain, following the dictator’s request (Bronner and Slackman, 2011). At the same time, the member countries of the League of Arab States demonstrated within the UN the solidarity that was necessary among them in order to ensure impunity and send a message to their peoples that no democratic movement would be tolerated (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 45-47)

Moreover, in the area of human rights, even the countries participating in the Arab Spring demonstrated an ambiguous position: The Tunisian UN delegations adopted a “wait and see” approach regarding the human rights violations in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Egypt and Yemen and remained mostly passive while Egypt obstructed all UN initiatives for dealing with human rights violations in Syria. Even when the Arab regional solidarity for international impunity started to fade out, the strong states that dictate the international policy continued to support and provide impunity to the dictators they considered their allies. (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 49-57)

But the most important opposition against holding the Syrian government accountable for extreme human rights violations came from the members of the Security Council itself, since the Russian Federation and China vetoed all respective draft resolutions and many other countries abstained. (UN News Center, 2011a) On top of that, these two countries have also opposed all three Special Sessions on Syria at the HRC. The USA was also reluctant to refer the situation to the ICC, possibly due to fears that this could be used in the future to make similar requests for war crimes committed by the USA or Israel. (CIHRS, 2012, p. 62)

The Arab League member states of the GCC were also behind the decision to hold Gaddafi’s government accountable and the subsequent led by NATO military operation and without their support it is very likely that the key UN members could not have achieved this consensus. Another factor that helped gain international support was the many defections of Libyan diplomats and UN representatives who pushed for such an intervention. Nevertheless, this was not the case in Syria, where the Security Council was unable to pass any resolution due to the opposition by China and Russia, let alone initiate a military intervention. Since these two countries were opposed to any punitive action against the Assad regime, the UN Security Council could neither refer the situation to the ICC nor impose sanctions. (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 62-64) As NATO’s Secretary-General said “Some people have asked why NATO acted in Libya but not elsewhere, in particular in Syria. My answer is clear. We took action in Libya because we have a strong mandate from the Security Council and solid support from countries in the region. That is a unique combination which we have not seen elsewhere”. (Rasmussen, 2011) The power of the GCC over the UN was also apparent in the case of Bahrain and Yemen. But these two cases also demonstrated the double standards of the UN members themselves, as the GCC was in this case supported primarily by the USA and secondarily by the EU. (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 64)

Therefore, the real question is not why NATO did not act elsewhere but why the UN chose to issue a mandate only for Libya and not for another Arab Spring country, where there were also extreme human rights violations. The answer is not that simple and it involves geopolitical interests, politics, financial aspirations, differences among the countries regarding army forces, power and heterogeneity (the balance of consequences), all that blended with history and business. As already said, Russia and China blocked any resolution that could authorize intervention in Syria, each one for its own interests. Russia claimed it would defend Syria's sovereignty from a western intervention invoking responsibility to protect but there were more geopolitical and power related issues, including –among others- the Russian military base in Latakia, the naval base in Tartous which is the only Russian naval base in the Middle East and Putin could not afford the political cost of losing it, Putin's attempt to demonstrate that he is an important actor in the geopolitical game and that the US is not alone, the fear that the fall of Syria would lead terrorists to destabilize the North Caucasus, the help to a regime that supported Russia during the Cold War and the fear of another Afghanistan in the region. Last but not least, Syria's oil fields and the power they convey is not something that Russia would want to fall to the hands of the USA, the rebels or Al-Qaida. All these demonstrate that Syria was a crucial means for maintaining balance in the international order unlike Libya, where Russia had little strategic interest. (Adams, 2014, pp. 14-15)

Even though Russia was the decisive factor that blocked any Security Council resolution, it was supported by China, who kept implementing its traditional policy of non-interference in domestic conflicts. (Adams, 2014, p. 14) Furthermore, it was showing its solidarity to Moscow and wished to maintain its good relations with the Assad regime to which, along with Russia, it had provided military equipment in the past. China's core concern, nevertheless, was the stability of the region since Iraq is among its main oil suppliers and the China National Petroleum Corporation would be forced to abandon its oilfields in Syria (Virtue, 2015). Stability was necessary in order for Beijing to promote its initiative for a Silk Road through wide ranging infrastructure network. Finally, following the criticism about NATO's interpretation of the UN Resolution for Libya, China did not want to re-live an experience where the UN is used by western powers to extend their grasp. Finally, China continues to be an authoritarian regime and was afraid of a domino effect and after the support it provided to Russia, it may ask for a return, probably in the case of North Korea. (Grammaticas, 2012)

The role of the USA in the UN is also questionable in the case of the Arab Spring. Even when Switzerland tried to promote a HRC Special Session for the entire Arab region, the US undermined that regional session and promoted a Special Session for Syria alone. This action led to accusations about the US trying to protect the countries “allied” with the Arabian Peninsula and, most importantly, it weakened the ability of the US and EU to promote UN action in Syria. US credibility was further damaged by the fact that it was directly involved in the drafting of the resolution by Yemen for the HRC, despite the recommendations by the OHCHR. (CIHRS, 2012, pp. 64-66)

Other than the regional or individual interests of each country of the UN, there were also real existing reasons for which the UN was reluctant in assuming more action after weighing the cons and the pros. Unlike Libya, which was staggering at the time of NATO’s intervention, was diplomatically isolated and depended on mercenaries –and nevertheless it took NATO six months to oust Gaddafi and could not deter the collateral damage-, Assad’s army was quite strong. Furthermore, Syria had the support of two Security Council members and it was far from being homogenous, ethnic and sectarian wise, which means that any intervention could easily set in flames the whole region. Syria’s geography was also not favourable for an air strike, since the densely populated zones would mean civilian casualties. And let’s not forget that Assad had the strong support of part of the population, which meant that even if he was ousted, his supporters might continue to fight. Therefore, the fear of the conflict becoming regional and international with immeasurable consequences and the unpredicted final outcome were stronger than the motive to intervene. (Balanche, 2013)

As far as the financial and economic aspects of the UN aid –through the Bretton Woods Institutions- are concerned, it must be noted that the IMF and the World Bank are not new in the MENA region¹ and part of the Arab people blame these lending institutions, along with their key western members, for the hideous economic conditions and the decades of political repression that led them to the revolts; therefore it is no surprise that the people were opposed to new loans by them. The main accusation is that through their conditional aid, they impose policies and legislation that take no consideration of the people but aim only at privatizing the state assets of

¹ Between 1987-2001, Tunisia signed nine loan agreements with the IMF, Morocco asked for its first loan by the IMF back in 1984 while Egypt launched its Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Programme in 1991 after signing a loan with the IMF. (Mossallem, 2015, pp. 6-11)

the countries and eliminate social spending for servicing the debts. (McGrath, 2011) On top of that, their excessive haste in lending the new administrations, despite the fact that they were interim governments, and their past “business as usual” with the dictators deprived them of any credibility they had left amid the MENA populations. And even though the lending institutions had changed their narrative, introducing the notions of equality, redistribution and economic transformation and altering their tone, they proved themselves wrong by promoting and following the same catastrophic policies while everything else proved to be just big words. (Mossallem, 2015, p. 14)

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Successful and Unsuccessful Example of the Arab Spring

In the case of the Arab Spring, it would be easy to find a successful and an unsuccessful example and point out the deficiencies and successes of the EU and the UN, such as Tunisia and Syria, as if this was a success or a failure of the EU or the UN respectively. But besides being easy it would also be oversimplified because it would suggest that the final outcome of the revolution is directly and uniquely dependent on the international organizations. Following the aforementioned, even if the EU and UN had acted in the exact same way in Tunisia and Syria, the outcome would still be different due to the different conditions existing in each country.

A decisive factor for the outcome of the uprisings is the simultaneous concurrence of four conditions; people breaking the barrier of fear, non-violent protests, social cohesion and the attitude of the army towards the revolts. In Tunisia, the set of these four factors existed and it worked in favour of the protestors. The self-immolation of a street vendor denouncing the police brutality was the spark that made Tunisians break the barrier of fear and demand the change of the regime. The protests were non-violent and there were only some minor importance exceptions. Furthermore, the social cohesion factor was also there, as Tunisia is a homogeneous country; 99% of the population is Sunni Muslim, the middle class represents 50% of the population and the consistence of the people participating in the revolution was representative, including young people, educated and trade unions. Finally, the Tunisian army, which numbered approximately 40,000 people, remained neutral towards the revolution. (Haseeb, 2012, pp. 186 - 189)

The case in Syria evolved completely differently as it only had one out of the four factors, namely breaking the barrier of fear inspired by the example of Tunisia and Egypt. The uprising, which started with non-violent demonstrations, soon became violent, mostly due to the use of excessive violence by the authorities. Moreover, there was no homogeneity or social cohesion in the population; Sunni Muslims are 74%, Shia Muslims are 13%, Christians constitute 10% of the Syrian population and Druzes are 3%. Even inside each of these religious groups there are different sectarian movements clashing with each other (Alawites, Sufis etc). There are also many ethnic lines among the Syrian Kurds, the Yazidis, the Palestinians living in the country and

the other ethnic minorities. (Haseeb, 2012, pp. 190-192) This partly explains why the people demonstrating were not the majority and why certain areas, such as Damascus and Aleppo, remained at the side of Assad. Finally, the Syrian Army remained loyal to the regime, using excessive force and violence, thus resulting to the civil war. (Sengupta, 2012)

Other than Haseeb's aforementioned theory of the four catalysts, one should take into consideration the different international reactions and foreign involvement in the uprisings, as it was not only the UN and the EU that got involved. The Tunisian revolution was seen rather positively by almost all international actors, including the Arab League and the only foreign involvement was the proposal made by foreign players for financial assistance following the regime change and the commitment to support free elections (BBC, 2011b see also Al Jazeera, 2011). On the contrary, Syria became the field of many international opposing interests. Russia, China, Iran and Hezbollah were the main supporters of Assad while the US, which accused the Syrian government for using chemical weapons and has been assisting the opposition with equipment and weapons, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, the EU and other countries have condemned Assad's actions and asked him to step down. (BBC, 2014) The Arab League suspended Syria after its failure to conform to the conditions of the peace plan proposed by the former and its members imposed political and economic sanctions. Political and economic sanctions were also imposed to Syria by the US and the EU. (Harris, 2012)

The Arab Spring, while considered mostly successful in Tunisia, led to an Arab Winter in Syria, an unprecedented humanitarian disaster, with hundreds of thousands of people dead, millions displaced, internally and externally, elimination of entire cities and destruction of infrastructure. The different results can be explained by many factors, such as the violent or non-violent nature of the protests, the stance of the army towards the revolts, the existence of a civil society or the lack of social cohesion, the well-being of the people in each country, the involvement of international actors, the existence of a strong middle class and its stance towards the revolts, the polarized or neutral political scenery. The willingness of the elites to foster change or, on the contrary, to repress the revolts was a decisive factor for the achievement of the transition, as was also the method in which the state was organized. Consequently, no matter how important the actions or non-actions of the EU and the UN were, we cannot attribute them the success or failure of a country in transition.

4.2 General Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the reasons that the democratic movements of the Arab region have completely or partially failed is that the countries, the institutions and the political bodies have proven unable or unwilling to adopt principles that could support these movements. Despite the hopes of the people revolting for a better future asking for the support of the international community, the impunity blanket for Arab dictators seemed to be the norm one more time, a fact that may be indicated by the weakening of the UN initiatives during the second half of 2011, in contrast to the first half that saw unprecedented action by the UN bodies. The EU also seemed to lose its momentum and the initial reactions and its two communications, regardless of their effectiveness, were not followed by similar actions and decisions.

It is true that both the UN and the EU fell short of the expectations and their reaction to the Arab Spring during its first year is largely considered inadequate, inefficient and interest-based. But when we consider whether an international institution is successful or not, we must first of all define our expectations and the level of inclusion of the international politics into our assessment. Sad but true, the international organizations do not operate in an ideal world committed to the protection of human rights but in a world of conflicts, wars, interests and inequalities, all of them problems often created by the members of these organizations themselves. Therefore, when assessing their stance, we must be aware of their limitations, their powers and their internal procedures.

For reasons mentioned in the Introduction of the present, we cannot compare the two organizations between them and decide which one was better or which one was worse. But tracing down the similarities in their stance and actions towards the Arab Spring in 2011 leads to one conclusion: the indecision, divisions and the creation of opposing groups within the EU and the UN led the two organizations being pushed out of the limelight and lose the window that would allow them to regain their credibility in the region.

It would be naïve to say that the EU and the UN must adopt a stance that puts human rights and human life above everything, that the personal interest of each member should not come first and all the high moral values that we would like the world to be ruled by. But since this is not feasible in realpolitik, both of them need to redraw their red lines and review their goals so that

even if a member or a group of members wish to promote their own interest above the collective one or the global good, they do not have the chance. The promotion of each country's interest in the issue of the Arab Spring and the chaos that this choice created demonstrated that both of them need to change the rules of their "internal governance". The UN needs to revise the veto policy on certain issues and under certain conditions of majority and the EU needs to reestablish its CFSP into what it is supposed to be. All members of the international community must understand that taking action in a collective and decisive manner, speaking with one voice and protecting the long-term interests is beneficial for everyone. And the people need to understand that no matter how inefficient or ambiguous the EU and the UN may be, they continue to constitute a bastion against the chaos that their absence would provoke.

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