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**The European Union, Tunisia and  
Egypt: Norms versus Interests -  
Thoughts and Recommendations**

**Maxime Larivé**



Vol. 8, No. 2

February 2011

Published with the support of the EU Commission.

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### ***Miami - Florida European Union Center***

University of Miami  
1000 Memorial Drive  
101 Ferré Building  
Coral Gables, FL 33124-2231  
Phone: 305-284-3266  
Fax: (305) 284 4406  
Web: [www.miami.edu/eucenter](http://www.miami.edu/eucenter)

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# The European Union, Tunisia and Egypt: Norms versus Interests Thoughts and Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

Maxime Larivé\*

Since the beginning of the social movements during the winter of 2010/11 that turned revolutionary in Tunisia and Egypt, the European Union has demonstrated both hesitation and cacophony in its reactions and in its declarations. With the end of the 'Jasmine Revolution' in Tunisia and its spill-over into Egypt, the EU has illustrated its institutional paralysis when confronting another external crisis.

These revolutionary movements have been exemplifying the division and divergence between a EU foreign policy shaped by a normative and ethical approach and the *realpolitik* of its Member States, especially France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Such divergence in foreign policies has impeded the development of convergence and unification of a common EU foreign policy and limited the relevance of the EU as an international actor. The Egyptian and Tunisian crises raise several questions: does it symbolize a failure from the EU to advance its values and norms? Or is it simply a rational political choice made by EU Member States to advance their interests before the Union's interest? As argued by Jenkins, "in reality there is no such thing as an ethical foreign policy. There is something philosophical called ethics and something pragmatic called foreign policy."<sup>2</sup> The civil unrests in North Africa are a representation of the dilemma that the EU has been facing when it comes to foreign policy questions: Member States' interests versus sound EU policy choices.

Towards the North Africa, the EU has failed on two levels. First, in denouncing human rights violations and other abuses orchestrated by autocratic regimes like in Tunisia, Egypt, but also Morocco, Libya and others. EU values and norms – human rights, democracy, rule of law and so forth – have not been at the heart of the previous relations between European capitals, Brussels and Tunis/Cairo. Stability and security were prioritized over democracy and political reform. The European Commission has never been outspoken towards these two countries. The reason is that former colonial powers, like France and the United Kingdom, tend to occupy the space making intervention by the Union or solely the Commission more complicated. Second, the EU failed to measure the extent of interaction between the economy and politics. For example, Tunisia was described until recently as an 'economic miracle.' High degree of corruption, limited social redistribution, and high unemployment rates were oftentimes not addressed and not denounced by European capitals.

Tunisia and Egypt are two very different situations due to economic and geopolitical reasons. Egypt is a central actor in the Israeli-Palestinian discussions.<sup>3</sup> It also controls the Suez Canal, one of the main world maritime transit hubs. In recent days, the price of oil has skyrocketed over \$100 a barrel. Egypt is also a major ally of the US and Western European states in the war against Al-Qaeda and Islamic terrorism. Last, the West is worried that a brusque change of power could lead to a radicalization of Egyptian politics. The Muslims Brotherhoods

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Dr. Ronald Hall for his contributions and comments. I also want to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Joaquín Roy, Dr. Astrid Boeing, and Amb. Ambler Moss during an event organized by the EU Center of Excellence of Miami on the issue of the Tunisian and Egyptian crises taking place in January 2011.

\* Maxime Larivé is a PhD Candidate in International Relations at the University of Miami (FL). He holds a Bachelor degree in History and Geography from the University of Nice (France) and a Master degree in International Relations from Suffolk University (Boston, MA). He also works as a Research Assistant at the European Union Center at the University of Miami.

<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, Simon. 2011. "The west's itch to meddle is no help. Leave Egypt alone." *The Guardian*. February 1.

<sup>3</sup> The EU and its main Member States, France and the UK, received secret documents from Israel asking the maintenance of Mubarak's regime.

have been described as the main power in opposition in Egypt and a potential leading power in a post-Mubarak Egypt.

This paper will look at the way the EU has handled – or mishandled – the two revolutions by looking at its main actors: the European Union, the High Representative, and three EU Member States – France, United Kingdom, and Germany.

## The European Union

Since the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in December 2010, the European Union, on paper, should have been more coherent, active, and relevant as an international actor. Unfortunately, the events of Tunisia and Egypt proved the opposite and pointed out the limits and weaknesses of the EU in time of crisis.<sup>4</sup> This lack of common strategy raises the question of the nature of the EU as an international actor. The EU has been theorized and described as ‘normative,’ ‘civilian,’ or/and ‘ethical’ power.<sup>5</sup> This notion of ‘civilian actor’ identifies the EC/EU as an actor with limited access to military means using persuasion rather than coercion, a ‘soft power.’<sup>6</sup> The EU acts in a normative way due to three factors: first, historical context; second, characteristics as a hybrid polity, a post-modern state;<sup>7</sup> and, third, its political-legal constitution.<sup>8</sup> The EU does not export its influence through the use of force, as a state would do, but through its power of projection. This has been the case since the end of the Cold War as illustrated by the several waves of enlargement of former Soviet states. One of the most concrete description of the EU as an international actor has been through the concept of ‘narrative power.’<sup>9</sup> The EU has had trouble in bridging the gap between its rhetoric and actions.

With the creation and implementation of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), a debate emerged within the EU on how to tackle the military question and EU external actions as each Member state has a different perception on the role of the EU should play as a political and strategic actor on the international stage. Biscop summarized this debate by asking several questions: “What should be the scope of the EU’s foreign and security policy ambitions? What degree of autonomy should the EU have?”<sup>10</sup> Such questions are central as they highlight the existing strategic void within the Union during the 1990s. The absence of a strategy was a problem in order to bridge the gaps between member states’ expectations, to design a common vision of the EU as an international actor, and to unify external policies. Biscop goes further by arguing that “there was no common strategy vision behind the existing – but incomplete – consensus on the need to develop more effective military capabilities.”<sup>11</sup> In order to answer such concerns, the EU needed to adopt a common strategy laying down the ground for common approach to security and threat assessments.

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<sup>4</sup> It would be interesting to have access to documents produced by the Joint Situation Center (SitCen) prior the social unrest in Tunisia and Egypt.

<sup>5</sup> Duchêne, Francois. 1972. *Europe’s Role in World Peace*. In R. Mayne (Ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*. London: Fontana; Manners, Ian. 2002. “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40. No. 2; Manners, Ian. 2006. “Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads.” *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13. No. 2; Sjørnsen, H. 2006. “The EU as a ‘Normative’ Power: How can This Be?” *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13. No. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Nye, Joseph. 2005. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> Cooper, Robert. 2000. *The Post-Modern State and the World Order*. Demos.

<sup>8</sup> Manners, Ian. 2006. “Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads.” *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13. No. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Laïdi, Zaïki. 2008. *Norms over Force. The Enigma of European Power*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

<sup>10</sup> Biscop, Sven. 2005. *The European Security Strategy. A Global Agenda for Positive Power*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate: 8.

<sup>11</sup> Biscop, Sven. 2005. *The European Security Strategy. A Global Agenda for Positive Power*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate: 9.

The road towards the drafting and adoption of the *European Security Strategy* (ESS) has exposed divisions between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe. The US attack on Iraq in March 2003 led to major divisions within the Union. On one side, the UK, Spain, Italy, and Poland, followed the US into Iraq, while on the other side, Belgium, France, and Germany denounced such military action. The strategic division led to a major transatlantic crisis. With a single European strategy, divisions can be avoided, while strengthening the role of the EU through higher degree of coherence on the international stage. This was the idea behind the drafting of a European strategy. The European Council in December 2003 adopted the *European Security Strategy* giving for the first time of its history a security strategy.<sup>12</sup>

The ESS defined the threats<sup>13</sup> faced by the EU and exposed its common strategy: ‘effective multilateralism’ and cooperation. The document also stresses the necessary tools and policies in order to back up EU declarations. As expressed by Everts, “Europeans like to think of themselves as being good at ‘soft power.’ But because of a lack of focus, coherence and self-discipline, the EU has underperformed for years in foreign policy.”<sup>14</sup> The strategy is the first formal document addressing the interests and objectives of the Union as a coherent international security agent by laying down the roots of a common approach to security through multilateralism and threat assessments. But it ultimately comes down to EU leaders “to demonstrate that the strategy is not just well-meaning verbiage but real in its consequences.”<sup>15</sup> The ESS states the global ambition of the EU that goes beyond trade and aid, and seeks to bring a military-political dimension to it. As written in the ESS, “Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world.”<sup>16</sup> Biscop argues that “the ESS must thus first of all be seen as the mission statement of the EU as an international actor.”<sup>17</sup> For many, the document fell short as it did not mention the rules of engagement or even the implementation of a strategy. This concern was supposed to be addressed in the 2008 document.<sup>18</sup> The Report on the implementation of the ESS stressed the need for the EU to combine all the following instruments, political, development, diplomatic, humanitarian, crisis response, economic and trade cooperation, and civilian-military crisis management, in order to be more active as an international actor.

However, the implementation of such a strategy created a number of existential questions for the Union such as adjusting a common strategy in accordance with the different foreign policy goals of each Member States, the legitimate use of force in the name of the Union, the co-existence of national military doctrines, and the diverse perceptions of threats. Even with the adoption of the ESS, a European strategic culture needs to emerge in order merge Member States’ interests with EU priorities. As advanced by Giegerich, “all threats combined lead to a set of characteristics that make any efficient response extremely complex thereby increasing the pressure on EU member states to cooperation within the EU framework.”<sup>19</sup> The ESS tried to

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<sup>12</sup> European Council, 2003 Council of the European Union. (2003). *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*. No. 15859/03.

<sup>13</sup> The EU identified five key threats to its security and survival: strategic terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflicts; state failure; and organized crime.

<sup>14</sup> Everts, Steven. 2003. “Two Cheers for the EU’s new security strategy: Soft power and hard power.” *The International Herald Tribune*. December 9.

<sup>15</sup> Everts, Steven. 2003. “Two Cheers for the EU’s new security strategy: Soft power and hard power.” *The International Herald Tribune*. December 9.

<sup>16</sup> Council of the European Union. (2003). *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*. No. 15859/03.

<sup>17</sup> Biscop, Sven. 2007. “The ABC of European Union Strategy: Ambition, Benchmark, Culture.” *Egmont - Royal Institute for International Relations*. Vol. 16. October: 5.

<sup>18</sup> Council of the European Union. (2008). *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World*. No. S407/08.

<sup>19</sup> Giegerich. 2006. *European Security and Strategic Culture. National Responses to the EU’s Security and Defence Policy*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft: 51

address such concerns when it stresses that “we [Europeans] need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention.”<sup>20</sup>

EU voices on Tunisian and Egyptian crisis:

Part of EU strategy has been to strengthen EU relations with Egypt, which was formally established in 2004 through the signing of an Association Agreement. “The relations are based on mutual commitment: Egypt commits to relatively specific economic and political reform, and the EU commits to financial assistance and support.”<sup>21</sup> In the dialogue established between the EU and Egypt, the perception has been that the EU did not give sufficient priority to its strategy in order to assist in the economic and political reforms in Egypt. Such Agreement between the EU and Egypt is a clear representation of two factors: one, the gap between rhetoric and actions; second, the choice made in order to maximize the security of the Union by maintaining and assisting autocratic regimes.

In the case of the revolutionary movements in Tunisia and Egypt, the EU should identify the revolution as power transition and to some extent a possible scenario of state failure. But, the EU voice has been quiet and minimalist. These last weeks, the Council has given attention to the unfolding revolution in Tunisia and Egypt.<sup>22</sup> Prior to the Council meeting on January 31, 2011, the main pending question was ‘Is the EU responding adequately?’ Such question remains unanswered and was not addressed in any MS and EU statements.

In the conclusions of the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers of January 31, 2011, the EU called on the Egyptian authorities to hold talks with opposition groups, and take steps towards democracy and try to find a way to ending unrest in the country. The EU expressed its commitment to assist Egyptian authorities through a partnership in order to implement social, economic, and political reforms. Concerning Tunisia, the EU stressed that it will assist Tunisia in its transition in the post-Ben Ali period.

Since the fall of Ben Ali’s regime, the international community has been focusing on the case of Egypt. The last several days, the EU has been more vocal on its call for democracy and peaceful protestation in Egypt. After 30 years of power, on February 11, 2011, President Mubarak stepped down leaving the power to his Vice-President Omar Suleiman and the military. The departure of Mubarak leaves the EU without a clear strategy in dealing with Egypt and interacting with emerging groups and the military.

Strategically and ideologically, Europe’s international voice and actions have tried to follow a normative and ethical path. Such a soft power approach in EU foreign policy could become a threat to the relevance of European interests in the region and eventually as a global actor.

High Representative:

In this institutional inertia, one person has the political responsibility to lead the Union by developing a common approach: the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Lady Ashton.

The Treaty of Amsterdam, ratified in 1997, marks the creation of the position of High Representation (HR) for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The article J.8.3 of the Amsterdam Treaty mentions the position of High Representative and states that the Presidency will be assisted by the HR. The job description that remained in force during Mr. Solana’s

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<sup>20</sup> Council of the European Union. 2003. *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*. No. 15859/03: 11.

<sup>21</sup> Abdel-Latif, Omayma. 2010. “Egypt-EU relations: Where is Democracy?” *Observatory of Euro-Mediterranean Policies*. Focus No. 7. June.

<sup>22</sup> Council of the European Union. 2011. “Press Release.” 3065th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting (provisional version) - Brussels, 31 January. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/119045.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/119045.pdf)

mandate was extremely broad, calling on the HR to assist the Council in the “formulation, preparation, and implementation of policy decisions” on foreign and security policy matters.<sup>23</sup> The position of HR was designed to bring a certain degree of coherence in the area of foreign and security policy, while maintaining the centrality of Member States’ decision-making in CFSP matters. The reasons behind the creation of HR position were to increase the cooperation between the various actors in CFSP, bring coherence in the rotating processes of 6 months presidencies, and making the EU a more visible international actor. Some argued that the position of the HR was to answer the question attributed to Mr. Kissinger, ‘what is the phone number of Europe?’ Since the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon, the power and role of HR is unique institutionally since the same individual is both the Vice President of the European Commission and chair the Council of EU Foreign Ministers.

From these crises, the person that received the most criticisms has been HR Ashton. As the chief of EU foreign policy, Lady Ashton and the EEAS have come under attack for demonstrating a lack of vision to steer a common EU agenda. Indeed, following several previous political mishaps, such as in Haiti, and lack of leadership, the European press has called her the ‘invisible woman.’<sup>24</sup> Since the beginning of the social unrest in Tunisia and then in Egypt, she has relatively absent in addressing the problem and building bridges between the Union and the two countries.

During her few public appearances and statements, she has said that the EU should stand ready to assist Egypt. She also underlined the EU values – democracy, rule of law, human rights – and called Egyptian authorities to respect them. In her last statement on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011, she called on “the Egyptian authorities to embark now on a meaningful and real transition towards genuine democratic reform, paving the way for free and fair elections.”<sup>25</sup> On February 5<sup>th</sup>, during the annual Munich Security Conference (MSC), HR Ashton met with her counterparts, the Quartets composed of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, U.S. Special Envoy for the Middle East Peace George Mitchell, plus the quartet representative Tony Blair. The quartet discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since the MSC, HR Ashton has delivered several additional statements calling for peaceful outcome and political debate in Egypt.<sup>26</sup> For the first time, the institutional triumvirate, President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, and the EU HR Catherine Ashton delivered a joint statement following Mubarak’s departure. They welcomed the decision taken by Mubarak to step down as it will open “the way to faster and deeper reforms, and an orderly transition to democracy.”<sup>27</sup> They also assure the assistance of the EU for the reconstruction of Egypt and the transition process, while calling for the respect of human rights.

However, the lack of visibility and limited declarations of the HR on the events in Tunisia and Egypt can be rationally explained. Ms. Ashton cannot publish or make any declaration without the consensus of all 27 Member States, making her response to international events slower.<sup>28</sup> Some have also argued that she has been more careful than her predecessor, Javier Solana, in respecting the voice of smaller EU Member States. Javier Solana has been

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<sup>23</sup> European Communities. 1997. “Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing the European Communities and certain Related Acts.” Article J.16

<sup>24</sup> Ricard, Philippe, and Jean-Pierre Stroobants. 2011. “Catherine Ashton, la femme invisible.” *Le Monde*. January 28.

<sup>25</sup> Council on Foreign Affairs. 2011. “Statement by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation in Egypt.” A 040/11. Brussels. February 3.

<sup>26</sup> For example, HR Ashton delivered two statements on February 10<sup>th</sup>. See: European Union. 2011. “Statement by the EU Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation in Egypt.” A050/11. Brussels. February 10. European Union. 2011. “Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Egypt following the speech of President Mubarak.” A051/11. Brussels. February 10.

<sup>27</sup> European Council. 2011. “Joint statement by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, and EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent development in Egypt.” February 11.

<sup>28</sup> Charlemagne. 2011. “A Test for Europe and Ashton.” *The Economist*. February 1.

accused of only considering the voice of the bigger and internationally more powerful Member States before making a decision.<sup>29</sup>

The EU and its Member States are not the only one to have been hesitant in dealing with Egypt. Even though Washington has been extremely cautious in its comments and declarations towards Egypt, it has shown poor foreign policy choices these last several days. For example, prior Mubarak's speech of February 10<sup>th</sup>, President Obama signaled his hopes that Mubarak will step down as advised by senior intelligence officials. Instead Mubarak declared that he will remain in power until the next elections and will transfer his power to the Vice President and the military. Additionally, he answered directly to Washington by stressing that he will not resign under international pressure. This was a considerable blow for Washington's image as a superpower. The following day, US Vice President, Joe Biden, declared after Mubarak's resignation that the change of power was a pivotal moment for Egypt.<sup>30</sup> The Egyptian case has illustrated Washington's lack of anticipation and mishandled diplomatic strategy raising concerns over the decline of US power.

### EU Member States

Notwithstanding the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, decision-making in the field of security and foreign policy remains essentially intergovernmental. EU Member States regard their individual foreign and security policies as a core manifestation of their sovereignty, provoking reluctance from Member States to pool their authority under a supranational institution on decision-making framework. Such institutional design diminishes the power of the EU in foreign and security policies, while limiting the role of the HR.

The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have been a real test of the willingness of EU Member States in trying to work within the framework of European institutions. Tunisia and Egypt, both former colonies of France and Britain, tend to fall under the zone of influence of their former colonial powers. Thus, both countries have maintained strong political, economic, and personal ties with EU Member States. These close relationships at national, and even individual levels have undermined the role of EU values and norms.

Tunisia has been potentially the most damaging to the credibility of the EU as a normative actor. On the world stage, France and most of the Western world have been closely associated with President Ben Ali's regime, which has been seen as a bastion against the rise of radical Islamic groups in the Maghreb. With the beginning of the social unrest in Tunisia, the debate was limited to the French arena and was perceived in France as a matter of *raison d'état*. Due to a mishandling of the situation by the French Foreign Minister, Ms. Alliot-Marie, offering policing assistance to Tunisian authorities by providing French crisis management *savoir faire*, the matter could have become a political scandal in France. The following day, the French government broke all bridges with Ben Ali's regime.

Following the experience of Tunisian unrest, France, the United Kingdom and Germany were more cautious in their approach towards the developing situation in Egypt. The triumvirate – President Sarkozy, Chancellor Merkel, and Prime Minister Cameron – published a joint statement on January 29 expressing their concern about the events in Egypt.<sup>31</sup> They recognized the constructive role that President Mubarak played in the region of the Middle East and called for all the Egyptian parties to observe calm and peaceful protestation. They stressed the need for social, economic, and political reforms, while calling for fair and free elections. Such a statement

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<sup>29</sup> Such statement is based on a several allegations from EU and US officials during interviews in Washington DC in December 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Dombey, Daniel. 2011. "Washington hails 'pivotal' moment." *The Financial Times*. February 11.

<sup>31</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy, Angela Merkel and David Cameron. 2011. "Joint statement." January 29. [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files\\_156/egypt\\_288/france-and-egypt\\_3462/political-relations\\_3463/france-uk-germany-statement-on-egypt-29.01.11\\_14940.html](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/egypt_288/france-and-egypt_3462/political-relations_3463/france-uk-germany-statement-on-egypt-29.01.11_14940.html)

was an important step, but in the context of the external perception of the EU it should surely have been delivered by the HR.

During the Munich Security Conference (MSC), Frank Walter Steinmeier, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany parliamentary group in the Bundestag declared that “the European Union has been very quiet for a very long time.”<sup>32</sup> He also stressed that Germany and its European partners should focus on the development of democratic structures in Egypt.

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the German Chancellor, the French President and the British Prime Minister made individual declaration on the change of regime in Egypt by conveying similar messages.<sup>33</sup> Prime Minister Cameron was one of the first western leaders to comment on Mubarak’s decision. He argued that the new government will have an important role in establishing the foundations for a free and democratic society. Chancellor Merkel was more personnel as she “share[d] the joy of the people of Egypt.” However, she stressed her concerns on the future of Egypt’s peace treaties with Israel. And President Sarkozy welcomed the decision of President Mubarak to step down and emphasized on the need for a cautious development of democratic institutions through free and transparent elections.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions have been a test for Europe and its foreign policy arrangements: the High representative, the EEAS, and the role of the Member States. They appear to have exposed the limits of EU power and credibility as an international actor. In the most of my experience, there are a number of recommendations and conclusions that could be drawn:

- So far, the EU has remained a ‘narrative power’ and seems unable to be effective and constructive in assisting and contributing to the transition process in Tunisia. There is a gap between EU rhetoric/narrative and its actions. This has also been the case in Egypt as the EU failed to push its rhetoric into political pressures.

- HR Ashton was unable to unite EU Member States behind a strategic vision. Many voices within the EU have expressed their discontentment with Ashton in handling the crisis and acting as chief of EU foreign policy. These crises could have provided an early opportunity to make use of the EEAS. In the post-crisis period, it is recommended that a review process is launched in order to reflect on how to build a stronger diplomatic corps, and to correct and adjust the errors made throughout the Tunisian and Egyptian crises.

- EU normative foreign policy needs to be applied to all EU partners, allies, and non-allies. Tunisia and Egypt are two examples of a case-by-case basis foreign policy for the implementation and application of such normative foreign policy. The EU needs a clearer set of principles for dealing consistently with third countries.

- In order to be more pro-active, the EU should seek to act as a bridge between civil society and political leaders in Tunisia and Egypt. Meeting with new and emerging political figures could contribute to strengthening European influence in Maghreb. But EU officials also need to establish a dialogue with the grassroots level.

- These revolutions could be a golden opportunity in order to re-launch the Union for Mediterranean. Such an institution could become a pillar to solidify the Euro-Mediterranean community based on more egalitarian relations and standards.

- The two revolutions underline the lack of real coordination and cooperation within the Euro-Atlantic community. It seems that the US and the Europeans are trying to compete for the control over the region. The US seeks to use the change of power as a way to increase its influence, while EU Member States are trying to maintain their influence over North Africa. The

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<sup>32</sup> Hemicker, Lorenz. 2011. “The EU has kept silent for too long.” *Munich Security Conference News*. February 5.

<sup>33</sup> Blitz, James and Abugail Fielding-Smith. 2011. “Anxiety tempers relief for western leaders.” *The Financial Times*. February 12.

competition within the Transatlantic community could become disruptive for the future of the region.

- Are the revolutionary movements of Tunisia and Egypt an illustration of the decline of US hegemony? The US and its European partners did not see the rise of democratic movements and anticipate their call for democracy and their power to overthrow their respective autocratic regimes. Since 9/11, the US focus in North Africa and the Middle East has been brought on Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan materialized through intensive military and diplomatic endeavors. Unfortunately, the US saw only possible transition to democracy in the region through the projection of American hard power. Such strategic choice made by President Bush and followed by President Obama could become costly for the credibility and influence of the US in the region. The US needs to deploy its 'smart power.'

- In a case where revolutionary movements spread across the region – Jordan, Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and possibility other states – the EU should develop now a common strategy and a common approach to this type of crisis in order to avoid 'reactive' and divided foreign policies.