What Scenarios for the Euro-Mediterranean in 2030?

Dr. Rym Ayadi
Senior Research Fellow, CEPS and MEDPRO Coordinator

The southern Mediterranean region is at a historical turning point following the unprecedented uprisings that ended many decades of repressive authoritarian regimes. Before 2010, and the start of the Arab uprisings, the 'business as usual' scenario prevailed in a blend of un-sustainability and partial Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Un-sustainability, coupled with phoney stability, was thought to be the long-term future for southern Mediterranean countries, as no credible prospects for radical democratic political changes were envisaged. On the contrary, the deterioration of political freedoms and the rule of law appeared to be the norm. The European Union's policies towards the region were equally unsatisfactory as they failed to drive the region towards a sustainable future. Following the Arab revolts, radical domestic changes are now being prepared and external actors' policies towards the region are being rethought. While ruling out business as usual, other scenarios may emerge in a 2030 perspective, depending on the interaction of relevant signals that could lead to one or another plausible future.

Starting with the worst possible scenario; this would simply translate as the "Euro-Mediterranean Area under threat" with heavy losses; where the Mediterranean Sea would divide conflicting civilisations. Sporadic conflicts would become long drawn out and spread from one country to another, leading to political uncertainty and mounting economic and social difficulty. The non-resolution of the Middle East and the Western Sahara conflicts would exacerbate tensions in the Mashreq and in the Maghreb. The war in Libya, if it becomes a protracted civil war, would continue to exert pressure on its neighbours. The uncertainties and tensions would offer new opportunities for terrorist organisations and radical movements to take power, and the absence of cooperating authorities would undermine the EU's and other geopolitical actors to achieve necessary cooperation on immigration, security and energy. As a result, in 2030, the Mediterranean would border a conflict zone that, if left uncontained, would spread to the northern frontiers, leading to the repetition of a sad history: war and collapse.

This scenario must not be underestimated. Averting it is crucial if we are to avoid the worst for the Euro-Mediterranean generations to come. Two futures of sustainability, with different paths of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, could become reality if there is sufficient political and economic will, and if the Arab revolts are taken as an opportunity.

In the perspective of a "Euro-Mediterranean Common Union", recognising their common past and believing in their common future, the European and the southern Mediterranean countries would form an integrated region with a common market. This integration scheme could follow the European Economic Area model, to which Norway and Switzerland belong. This would result in the adoption of the EU "acquis" and lead to more convergence. Under such a hypothetical scenario, the current tensions and conflicts in the Euro-Mediterranean region could be resolved. As not all countries are at the same level of political and economic development, the differentiated approach of the EU under the renewed neighbourhood policy might give rise to a number of countries fulfilling the requirements to become member of the EU economic bloc sooner than others. The Union for the Mediterranean could play a key role in fostering regional cooperation; thus deepening the economic integration between all countries of the region. However, the importance of the UfM would diminish over time when all southern Mediterranean countries become members of the EEA. The successful achievement of a larger and more powerful Euro-Mediterranean community would influence the global world scenario up to the year 2030, with the emergence of a new tri-polar world: the US, China and Euro-Med, where the whole Euro-Mediterranean Union really matters on the global stage.

Another perspective worth looking at is the "Euro-Mediterranean Alliance", which keeps the two regions separate: the EU on the northern side (which may or may not be enlarged to include the Balkan States and Turkey) and the southern Mediterranean countries to the south (which may or may not include other African and Middle Eastern countries). Under such a scenario, there is no perspective (or need) for membership of the European Economic Area. As a result, the European Neighbourhood Policy would become obsolete if it were not rethought to integrate this vision.

After the Arab revolts, the southern Mediterranean could become more organised and integrated, capitalise on a stronger role for the Arab League and other institutions such the Arab Maghreb Union. Other players might play a greater role in the region, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The EU and the southern Mediterranean could then establish a Euro-Mediterranean Alliance Treaty, which would cover a number of common key interest areas such as peace and security, co-development, shared citizens' rights, youth, education, research, innovation and intercultural dialogue. A renewed framework for the UfM would help to achieve the common objectives stated in the Treaty. Such a vision is coherent with a global multi-polar world scenario for the year 2030, without a unique dominant leader. Both the European Union and the southern region would assume their separate roles on the global stage, maintaining preferential relationships of co-development on some key areas of common interest.

Today, and after the near completion of research in MEDPRO Work Package 2 on Geopolitics and Governance, successfully led by Nathalie Tocci and her outstanding team from the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), it seems that the signals picked up during this phase of research corroborate the scenario of a polarised Mediterranean. Almost six months on since the Arab revolts, countries are still beset by uncertainty, with opposing forces interacting without clear targets or direction; shifting between the pressure of continued unsustainability and hopes of achieving sustainability, while coping with new realities and dynamics. The EU response remains timid, short-term and with no coherent vision. Hence, moving to a successful and sustainable future, be it under the Euro-Med Union or the Euro-Med Alliance scenario does not seem very plausible today, unless serious action towards one or the other path is taken without delay.

State (un)Sustainability in the Southern Mediterranean and Scenarios to 2030

Dr. Nathalie Tocci,
Senior Fellow,
Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

The year 2011 will go down in history as a critical turning point in the political evolution of the Mediterranean region. The popular uprisings that have swept across the Arab world and have led to the toppling of the Ben Ali and the Mubarak regimes in Tunisia and Egypt have fundamentally altered the social, economic and political outlook of the region and its relations with the European Union (EU). Against this backdrop, MED-PRO Work Package 2 on Geopolitics and Governance (WP2) began before the outbreak of the 'Arab spring' and proceeded as the popular uprisings unfolded. The first working paper by Silvia Colombo was published in November 2010, that is, some weeks before December 17th, when popular protests began in Tunisia. The paper emphasised the mounting unsustainability of the socio-economic and political structures of the southern Mediterranean countries, focusing on factors such as widespread corruption, human rights violations, youth unemployment and regional disparities. These were precisely the causes that led Arab citizens to rise against their regimes soon thereafter. In retrospect, the paper proved farsighted, positing a first tentative scenario of unsustainability, which could have reached the tipping point of instability, in the period ahead. Then came the revolts, which took place when the researchers in this WP were immersed in their fieldwork and the ensuing drafting of the empirical case studies of this project.

The empirical work on Israel-Palestine (by Paolo Napolitano), Syria-Lebanon and Morocco (by Silvia Colombo), and Tunisia and Egypt (by Maria Cristina Paciello) was carried out between December 2010 and May 2011, i.e., immediately prior to, during and after the revolts. The final paper in WP2 by Nathalie Tocci offers a comparative assessment of the empirical results of this work package and a critical analysis of the European Union's response to the events in the region. Whereas in the autumn of 2010 – when Colombo's conceptual paper was written – the dominant scenario was one of a more or less unsustainable status quo; in the summer of 2011 – when Tocci's concluding paper was written – the unfolding picture was rather one of polarisation. While Tunisia is tentatively moving towards a sustainable future, Morocco and Egypt tend more towards a revised 'bon usage du néo-authoritarisme'. The situation in Israel-Palestine and Syria-Lebanon is rather characterised by old and new forms of (unsustainable) violence and conflict. The outlook in 2011 is far more varied than one year ago. Partly independently but largely as a consequence of these developments, the EU has engaged in a rethink of its policies towards the southern Mediterranean, notably through a revision of its ENP. It remains to be seen whether the Union will successfully face up to the challenge, or whether, alas, its actions will fall behind the curve of the historic turning point of the region.

Egypt: Changes and Challenges to Political Transition

Maria Cristina Paciello
Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

On 11 February 2011, after 18 days of mass protests, Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down, revealing the unsustainability of the political and economic system that had kept him in power for over 30 years. While the January 25th revolution led to a major success – the fall of Hosni Mubarak – Egypt's political future is still unclear and vulnerable to a number of risks. In the long run, moving towards a new equilibrium of state sustainability will be conditional on whether and to what extent Egypt will be able to marginalise the old power system. In the early phase of transition, a number of factors have made this system particularly resilient. The Military Council has managed the interim phase through a top-down and opaque approach, as it wants a rapid but circumscribed political transition. Any commitment by the Military Council to reform the security apparatus, the media or the judicial system has been merely cosmetic. Moreover, holding parliamentary elections under the current constitution could result in a political system that is not so dissimilar from the one in place under Mubarak's rule. In addition, because most political forces and civil society groups, particularly emerging ones, lack unity and need time and resources to mobilise support for the upcoming elections, there is the risk that the new parliament is likely to include only a narrow spectrum of political forces, namely the Muslim Brothers and regime loyalists, who may hide under new guises. Yet, if Egypt's political transition turns out to be a controlled and unfinished one that preserves the old power system, the country may fail to address its main long-term socio-economic challenges, as public authorities will see no reason to tackle crony capitalism and pervasive corruption. In the absence of effective policies that ease the current economic crisis and respond to Egypt's structural socio-economic problems, social discontent is unlikely to be contained. However, although the chances of a transition towards state sustainability appear limited, the trajectory of Egypt's political transition will primarily depend on whether or not the broad spectrum of the new and most dynamic political and social forces are able to influence the future course of events.

Tunisia: Changes and Challenges to Political Transition

Maria Cristina Paciello
Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Picture by: rais58

On 14 January 2011, Ben Ali fled the country after several weeks of anti-government protests. Prospects for a successful political transition in Tunisia are more promising than in Egypt, however. The interim government in Tunisia has managed the process of transition through a more inclusive decision-making process and has sent encouraging signals aimed at bringing about political change. Among the major steps forward is the decision to hold elections for a constituent assembly, which would rewrite the constitution, fulfilling one of the major demands of civil society forces. The electoral law for the constituent assembly introduces parity between men and women for the electoral lists, which should ensure greater involvement of women in the process of political transition. These achievements mostly reflect the fact that, unlike in Egypt, Tunisia's civil society, ranging from political parties to women's associations, has shown greater vitality and capacity to bargain vis-à-vis the interim government.

Alongside these positive factors, Tunisia is nonetheless faced with a number of challenges that may undermine or slow down its transition to democracy and, as a result, the long-term sustainability of the Tunisian state. In the long term, the fate of Tunisia's democratic transition will depend on whether and to what extent the country is able to marginalise its old power structure. This means that major reforms in key strategic sectors such as security, justice and the media are required to dismantle the old power system, which still permeates the state apparatus. Moreover, the reform of the constitution will largely determine the direction and shape of this political transition, while the election of the constituent assembly will be crucial in deciding who rewrites the constitution. A possible risk is that the constituent assembly will not include a large spectrum of political and social forces because former opposition parties and al-Nahda (the formerly banned islamist party) could be better placed to enter the constituent assembly. If the elected constituent assembly fails to be as representative as expected and to propose a deep and widely approved constitutional reform, the new constitution and the institutions that will emerge from it will enjoy little or no legitimacy. Finally, the major challenge to Tunisia's political transition lies in addressing its current and structural socio-economic problems. If youth unemployment and regional disparities remain unaddressed, labour and social protests are likely to increase. In this context, the dynamic contribution of Tunisian civil society will continue to be critical in facilitating the country's transition to democracy.

Syria and Lebanon: Diverging Paths of State Unsustainability

Silvia Colombo
Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Picture by: shamsnn

Debating the challenges to the stability and deeper sustainability of Syria and Lebanon helps illuminate the strong ties between these two countries and the impact of external influences on their overall development. The countries' trajectories, while marked by stark differences regarding the nature of the challenges confronting them at present, converge on a path of long-term unsustainability. The state in Lebanon is in the midst of yet another phase of transition that was triggered by the collapse of Hariri's government in January 2011 and, more recently, by the indictments released by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon against four members of Hezbollah. While the outcome of this political transition remains unclear, the current situation can be described as one of deteriorating status quo, stemming from the state's poor performance in the delivery of fundamental public services, the tenuousness of institutional legitimacy in the face of the emergence and growth of para-state structures and latent (and occasionally active) violence.

In the case of Syria, challenges to the sustainability of the state have evolved dramatically since the beginning of 2011 and they have come closer to the tipping point of instability. In light of the mounting unrest and violence taking place in the country, the future prospects for its long-term economic as well as political development are very dim and the risk of widespread conflict, most dangerously with sectarian overtones, cannot be discounted yet. As much as in other countries of the region, rising costs of living, rampant corruption, unemployment, failing state services, four years of drought and a legacy of abuse by security services have triggered an unprecedented wave of popular protests against the regime of Bashar al-Asad. As far as the short-term perspective is concerned, these protests testify to the extent to which the regime's legitimacy among the people, mainly built upon an assertive and nationalistic foreign policy, was artificially inflated. Whether the country will remain enmeshed in political violence or whether it will embark on a path towards sustainable development will depend as much on internal dynamics as on the role of regional (e.g., Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia) and international (the US, EU, Russia and China) actors.

Morocco at the Crossroads: Seizing the Window of Opportunity for Sustainable Development

Silvia Colombo
Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Picture by: MarocStoun

The question of state sustainability is highly relevant in the case of Morocco. Despite the image, skilfully fostered by the West's almost unconditional support for the monarchy, of a modernising and liberalising country, Morocco is undergoing a delicate phase in its development. The recent upheavals in the Maghreb and the Middle East, alongside the growing problems of poor education, widespread poverty and high unemployment are likely to bring to the surface the unsustainable elements of Morocco's status quo. The central issues lie in the improvement of the quality of representative institutions and in reforms aimed at promoting the rule of law, curbing corruption and overhauling the judiciary.

While institutional quality is a pre-requisite for successful and sustainable socio-economic performance, this cannot be achieved unless major reforms in the political system are carried out. There exists a window of opportunity to address the acute centralisation of Moroccan politics and decision-making, the lack of accountability of the monarchic institutions, as well as the fragility of representative bodies, such as parties and trade unions, which should be responsible for channelling a plurality of interests into decision-making. Strictly defined political reform is thus the keystone for sustainable development in Morocco. Seizing this window of opportunity, by capitalising on existing positive elements, i.e., a vibrant society and the largely benevolent attitude of Western actors could spare Morocco a period of instability, while also assuring continuity in the framework of the transition that started in 1999 when the new king came to power.

The king himself has responded to the increasing domestic challenges and mobilisation by espousing a pre-emptive model of reform and by pledging to engage with the protesters' demands. These pledges have been substantiated in the radically revised constitution that was overwhelmingly approved by the Moroccan population in the referendum of 1 July 2011. Despite its many deficits, namely the fact that it was granted through a non-consultative, top-down process of constitutional reform and that it does not limit the king's powers substantially, the new constitution provides a margin of political manoeuvre that did not exist previously. The key question is whether Moroccan political actors will use it and to what effect. The next test for them will be the upcoming parliamentary elections, scheduled for 25 November 2011, one year ahead the original timetable, in which Moroccan political parties will have to demonstrate their ability, and willingness, to play a role by the new rules of the game.

Israel and Palestine and State (un)Sustainability

Paolo Napolitano,
PhD candidate in Political Science and International Relations, University of Turin

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a major cause of the lack of intra-Mediterranean integration. The stalemate in direct talks, the Palestinian call for 'un-recognition' in September and the consequent ups and downs in media and political discourse have brought back the mantle of impasse and inaction. In Israel-Palestine, the concept of sustainability entails a development path set in motion following the establishment of two viable states (according to the Quartet), while unsustainability refers to the perpetuation of the status quo and the progressive deterioration of all political, economic and social indicators. However, sustainability and unsustainability have different features in this context: in Israel it concerns the very nature of Israeli democracy and the relation with the Arab minority. In Palestine, it refers to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state able to confront the main challenges for the future. Obviously, any progress towards sustainability is premised upon the end of the Israeli occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state. According to the analysis of the main political, economic and social drivers for (un)sustainability in both countries, if no sensible political change occurs on the ground, the scenario of weak stability seems to sum up the current situation. Weak stability is an intermediate point on the continuum between unsustainability and sustainability and entails the achievement of a sterile political stability, able to sustain the status quo, but unable to confront the main challenges for the future of the country(ies). Weak stability is strongly supported by the Israeli leadership, which shows no particular interest in ending the conflict (beyond public discourse) and continues to pursue its policies of dispossession and separation on the ground. At the same time, Israel is experiencing growing tensions internally, which it is able to manage at the moment, but which threaten to deteriorate dramatically towards unsustainability, particularly with respect to relations with the Arab minority and the nature of democracy in terms of civil, economic and social rights. The same scenario – weak stability – is leading Palestinians toward greater unsustainability, despite some achievements in the economic sector. Spurred by popular unrest, with years of political impasse and the division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian leadership will now ask the UN for state recognition of the 1967 borders, and it operates as a means to counter this slide into irreversible unsustainability. Despite the tangible disequilibrium between the two parties, the fates of Israel and Palestine remain indivisible; any progress in Israel's sustainability is premised upon the creation of a viable Palestinian state, where a new political leadership will enjoy the autonomy to make free choices for the future of the country. Even awaiting the consequences of the UN session in September, this prospect is nowhere on the horizon.

Past Events

MEDPRO Rome meeting: On 10th and 11th February 2011, the Istituto di Studi per l'Integrazione dei Sistemi (ISIS) hosted the MEDPRO Scenario Building Committee (SBC) meeting. Researchers presented the reference scenarios and discussed the impact of the events in Tunisia and Egypt.

Forthcoming Events

MEDPRO Brussels Scientific meeting: On 22nd and 23rd September during the next scientific Workshop, researchers will discuss their work progress, and in particular the reference as well as alternative scenarios in view of the recent upheavals in the southern Mediterranean.

MEDPRO Coordinator in Conferences

MEDPRO Coordinator Dr. Rym Ayadi was invited to the 26th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of North Africa organised by the United Nations – Economic Committee for Africa on 22-25 February 2011 in Rabat, Morocco. The Committee contributed the recommendations presented to the Conference of African Finance, Planning and Development Ministers of 24-29 March 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Dr. Rym Ayadi made an intervention on the role of states in financing development.

During the same week, Rym Ayadi was also invited to the MENA-OECD Working Group on SME Policy, Entrepreneurship and Human Capital Development organised on the 21st February 2011 in Casablanca, Morocco, where she spoke about the incentives to promote financing to small and medium-sized enterprises.

On 19-20 May 2011, Dr. Rym Ayadi was invited to a high level meeting in Tunisia to discuss the future of EU-Tunisia cooperation after the revolution.

On 27-28 May, the MEDPRO Coordinator gave a speech in Casablanca on the future of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership after the 2011 upheavals.

On 20th June 2011, Rym Ayadi presented MEDPRO's first conclusions at a high level meeting in Sfax, Tunisia about the role of the EU in promoting regional and local development.

MEDPRO Publications

free download at www.medpro-foresight.eu

State (un)Sustainability in the Southern Mediterranean and Scenarios to 2030, Nathalie Tocci, MEDPRO Policy Paper, August 2011

Tourism in the Mediterranean: Scenarios up to 2030, Robert Lanquar, MEDPRO Report, July 2011

Syria and Lebanon: Diverging paths of state unsustainability, Silvia Colombo, MEDPRO Technical report, June 2011

Israel and Palestine and state (un)sustainability, Paolo Napolitano, MEDPRO Technical report, June 2011

Tunisia: Changes and Challenges of Political Transition, Maria Cristina Paciello, MEDPRO Technical report, May 2011

Egypt: Changes and Challenges of Political Transition, Maria Cristina Paciello, MEDPRO Technical report, May 2011

Morocco at the Crossroads: Seizing the window of opportunity for sustainable development, Silvia Colombo, MEDPRO Technical report, April 2011

MEDPRO in a Nutshell

Title	MEDPRO – Prospective analysis for the Mediterranean Region
Funding Scheme	Collaborative Project (CP): small or medium-scale focused research project
Coordinator	Dr. Rym Ayadi Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)
Duration	1 April 2010 – 31March 2013 (36 months)
Contact e-mail	medpro@ceps.eu
Short Description	MEDPRO explores the challenges the countries in the South Mediterranean region, from Morocco to Turkey, will have to cope with in the coming decades. The project will undertake a foresight analysis to consider the interactions between development and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the fields of geopolitics; demography; education; social protection; energy; climate change; trade and finance. The outcome of this exercise will be to provide the best scientific underpinning for future policy decisions to be taken at both domestic and EU level within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Union for the Mediterranean frameworks (UfM).
Partners	16 (13 countries)
Consortium	Centre for European Policy Studies, **CEPS**, Belgium; Center for Social and Economic Research, **CASE**, Poland; Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs, **CCEIA**, Cyprus; Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, **FEEM**, Italy ; Forum Euro-Méditerranéen des Instituts de Sciences Economiques, **FEMISE**, France ; Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, **FEPS**, Egypt; Istituto Affari Internazionali, **IAI**, Italy; Institute of Communication and Computer Systems, **ICCS/NTUA**, Greece; Institut Europeu de la Mediterrania, **IEMed**, Spain; Institut Marocain des Relations Internationales, **IMRI**, Morocco; Istituto di Studi per l'Integrazione dei Sistemi, **ISIS**, Italy; Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Etudes Quantitatives, **ITCEQ**, Tunisia; Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, **MAIB**, Italy; Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, **MAS**, Palestine; Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, **NIDI**, Netherlands; Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, **UPM**, Spain; Centre for European Economic Research, **ZEW**, Germany
Website	www.medpro-foresight.eu
EC Funding	2,647,330€
EC Scientific Officer	Dr. Domenico Rossetti Di Valdalbero (Project Officer)