

Extract from:
Timo Behr, "After the Revolution: The EU and the Arab Transition",
Policy Paper No. 54, Notre Europe, April 2012.

Executive Summary

The ongoing transition processes in the Arab world represent a major challenge for the European Union. The EU responded to this challenge by conducting an ambitious review of its neighbourhood policies. In this review, the EU pledges to refocus its policies on building **deep democracies**, promoting **inclusive growth**, and developing **civil society partnerships** with its neighbours. One year after the Arab revolutions, it is time to assess in how far EU policies have really changed and whether the ENP review still provides an appropriate framework for EU action in a quickly evolving region.

Although the EU introduced some positive changes, the **review failed to alter the underlying format and direction of Euro-Mediterranean relations**. Just as in the past, the EU continues to pursue a **Eurocentric vision of integration** in the Mediterranean that builds on an "enlargement-light" approach. However, this approach does not provide a realistic vision for the future of EU engagement. Instead, the EU will need to find a way to reconcile its own Eurocentric vision with the revival of Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic trends and the emancipatory outlook of post-revolutionary states.

To meet this challenge, **another review** of the EU's Euro-Mediterranean policies is needed, **focusing on the fundamentals** of that relationship. The starting point for this exercise ought to be an acknowledgment of the EU's diminishing power and ability to dictate the direction of political and economic change in the region. A number of basic principles and elements should be streamlined into EU policies in order to move beyond the enlargement-light logic:

- **Primum non nocere:** The EU has to shirk excessive activism and ready-made solutions, by drawing on domestic impulses and emphasising local ownership.
- **Broad-based Engagement:** This will require the EU to engage “illiberal society” in its neighbourhood that does not share all of its core values, such as gender equality.
- **Articulating Interests:** The EU should be forthright in setting out its own interests and how these concretely relate to the normative goals it puts forward in its strategy.
- **Democracy Partnerships:** When countries reject closer integration, the EU should work closely with regional organizations to provide democracy aid and assistance.
- **Effective More-for-More:** When countries accept closer integration, the EU should inverse the logic of its conditionality and become more demanding and outspoken.
- **Multilateral Partnership:** The EU should explore proposals for a more limited, but broadly-based multilateral framework of regional engagement and scrap the Union for the Mediterranean.
- **Multipolar Mediterranean:** The EU needs to streamline governance and development issues into its strategic partnerships with new and old regional actors.

Adopting these measures will amount to a **downsizing of the EU's grand ambition** of creating a European Mediterranean. But they will go some way in turning the EU into a more effective and respected partner in an increasingly diverse and contested region.