

Brussels Forum

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Uprisings, Realignment, and Confusion in the Middle East and North Africa

Sylke Tempel: Let's wait a minute for this to be rearranged.

[audio gap 08:21:08 - 08:22:13]

Sylke Tempel: ...pretty much overshadowed by the Ukrainian crisis. We don't have to restate this again. Three years ago, I remember very well--and excuse me for making up a word here--the GMF Forum was over-lit by an equally unexpected event, namely the Arab uprisings. I do remember very well how quickly the organizers of the forum had brought some of the most important bloggers here to Brussels.

I do remember (Inaudible) in one of the most memorable sessions probably was when (Inaudible) in the night owl session was sitting with a Bulgarian foreign minister. And a Bulgarian foreign minister told him how difficult it was to get into a writing of a constitution process and what they should keep in mind. Thank you again for a blackout. Put your--put your pads up so that, again, we can sort of--that's a very cozy session here.

[audio gap 08:23:08 - 08:23:48]

Sylke Tempel: ...realignment and most of all confusion in the Middle East and North Africa. And to

underline this, we of course will watch a short video to see what's happening in what we call the Arab world, or the MENA region. We basically have--I was thinking actually very hard whether I should give you a tour of optimism or tour the pessimism first, whether I would shock you first and then sort of get you to cheerful again.

So I'll start with the pessimistic view. Here, we have Egypt. They seemed to be very promising in the very beginning. And then a Muslim Brother president was voted into office which worried the Europeans and the Americans quite a bit. And by now, we see yet another transition from authoritarian regime to probably even more authoritarian regime and reinstalling a military rule. We have Syria, of course, and you remember very well the session this morning. And obviously we are not too imaginative when it comes to solutions, this being a major tragedy here. We have Bahrain, we have Yemen where the results are pretty mixed.

And now to get you a bit on the more optimistic side, we have still a pretty stable Morocco. We have a Jordan that is still pretty stable, even though they've been hosting 300- to 400,000 refugees. We have a Lebanon that is luckily still stable, but it's not all too promising whether it's--remains like this in the future. And as I said, we are going to watch a video to give us a bit more of a background into a region that

we try to find out what the ailments are that we have to tackle. Can we have the video?

Narrator: Beyond the tragic war raging in Syria and the still unresolved Israeli-Palestinian question, Europe's near abroad continues to challenge the global order. The series of uprisings that shook Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Libya have created political confusion and repercussions that stretched across much of the Middle East and North Africa. Dramatic developments compound the greater regional governance deficiencies and violent extremism, thereby ensuring that a geopolitical pivot out of the region will be improbable for the foreseeable future.

How will the post-Arab Spring states of North Africa develop? Will violent extremism be contained? Will Islamism prove compatible with democracy? What role will the Euro-Atlantic alliance play in resolving these plaguing questions? What is the role of the greater international community?

Sylke Tempel: Thank you very much. This being the Brussels Forum, of course, I have a very--the privilege and the pleasure to introduce a very distinguished panel to you. From left to right, we have Pierre Vimont who is--Cathy Ashton's just been talking about, the secretary general of the European External Action Service. Welcome, Pierre. We have--and this, I forgot to mention this almost--but this is a ray of light when

we look at the developments in the Arab world, a representative of Tunisia with Mr. Ghannouchi. We have one of the most outstanding thinkers in political Islam. Thank you for making it here. Wendy Sherman is the undersecretary for political affairs. Thank you for coming here. And we have the foreign minister of Qatar, Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah. Thank you for coming here.

I actually would like to start with Europe here, if you allow me. And the question probably not only I, but many have been thinking about is, when we look at the record of the European record, taking into consideration that the MENA region and the near Middle East is our immediate neighborhood, if I was friendly, I would say our record is there's quite a bit of room for improvement. And if I would be less cheerful, I would say it's pretty abysmal when it comes to humanitarian issues like taking in, for example, refugees from Syria. As I said, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan have taken hundreds in thousand. We've taken in, what, a few ten thousands? So the question, of course, to you is, where is the strategic ambition of Europe when it comes to our direct neighborhood? Are we still aiming at something? Do we have something in mind when we come to this region? Is there something that we really want to shape here?

Pierre Vimont: Let's start.

Sylke Tempel: Well, I was told I was not supposed to be all too cheerful.

Pierre Vimont: No, no, you're absolutely right. And I think it's a question that many ask themselves, and even inside the European Union. It's about our neighborhood. And as it is just as much as it easy, it can be easy to find a goal for our Eastern partnership because, at the end of the day, the countries that belong to the European continent and could look for accession or membership of the European Union.

It's a bit different, of course, with our Southern neighbors. We have to find a goal for this kind of partnership we have with them. And let's be honest. We've always been struggling a little bit with that in trying to find out exactly what was the final goal of the partnership we wanted to have with these countries as it cannot be accession. It has to be something else, a very close partnership.

But what should this partnership be made of? It's about having a common market. It's about trade. It's about mobility also, allowing students, researchers, workers to come in and to come out. It's about cooperation with research, cooperation in every possible field. And it's about helping them to build up their own regional market. It's all about this. And it takes time. And it takes time.

Sylke Tempel: But, wait, if I take that, then I would say, when we can't offer the price of membership, accession to the European Union, when it's not joining the club at the end, our imagination in foreign politics seems to be somewhat limited?

Pierre Vimont: No. I think it's joining the club by other means and through other ways. What I think we're missing, maybe at the moment, is to understand exactly what was the importance not only of the political problem, but also of the economic problems they were facing. And we came back to them with our usual answers, which was let's try to build a trade agreement. But trade agreements usually take five or six or seven years to be negotiated.

And what all these countries need is quick urgent answers and support and assistance immediately. And this is where I think we have to do a better job. Coming just back one second to what you were saying about refugees. Of course we haven't done enough and we should do more, but it's, of course, totally different whether you are a country of the neighborhood of Syria, namely Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey and whether you are Sweden, France, Germany or Spain. You're much further away. It's not exactly the same distance.

And, therefore, I don't think you can make exactly the same kind of comparison. I think you have to take that into account. But, of course, we should all do

more and, of course, the best way that we can help Syrian refugees is to try to find a political solution to the problem. I mean, we'll always come back to that.

Sylke Tempel: Ambassador Sherman, a couple weeks ago, I was listening to a lecture by Richard Haass, the head of the Foreign Council. And he was very adamant that really the pivot to Asia meant to (inaudible) and pivot to Asia and that U.S. is going to withdraw, more or less, from the Middle East. And he tried to assure his audience that, you know, you won't see much of the Middle East in the future.

I kept wondering about two things. One is the Middle East has a tendency to drag everybody back in, whoever tries to get out. And the second thing is why is he trying to prove to us that the Americans are really sort of leaving the Middle East when we haven't seen much of strategic ambitions of this government, this U.S. government and the Middle East either?

I cannot remember that I've heard or seen too much on Libya after the military intervention. We seem to be all pretty helpless when it comes to Syria. Yes, there is initiative on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but forgive me about saying this, just doesn't seem to be the uttermost urgent issue right now in the Middle East or others. So I'll ask the question to you. Where is the U.S. administration strategic ambition when it comes to this region?

Wendy Sherman: Well, I think I would obviously challenge your premise that the United States has left the Middle East. I think the Foreign Minister would tell you that he and Secretary Kerry probably talk every week, if not more frequently than that, see each other all over the world in many capitals, all focused on the political, economic and security situation and challenges in the Middle East.

And when I say the Middle East, I mean a very large swath from the Gulf and the Levant all the way to the Maghreb and the Sahel, quite frankly, because the security challenges really move from east to west across of the way. I think our very good friend here, who has really been, as you said, an intellectual leader and a party leader in Tunisia is really the beginning of an aspiration that is throughout the Middle East and throughout the world, quite frankly.

I just came here this afternoon after spending two days in Ukraine. And the way the two pieces come together, because I know it's so much on everybody's mind, is that this is all about aspiration for a better life. This is about Ukrainians saying we want European values. We want American values. We want the prosperity that we see on Al-Jazeera that is happening in other places. This is about the street vendor who wanted a better life, a decent wage, a better job.

We have huge populations of young people throughout the Middle East who wonder where their future is going to be. They know that in many countries that might be oil rich that that is not sustainable into the next century as they grow up, as they raise their families. So they're looking for diversification of their economy and coming into modernity without losing their cultural sense of self.

And I think the America is very present, not only in the Middle East peace process, which both the President and Secretary Kerry have put their heart and souls into, but Libya--the Secretary was just in Libya. We were all just at a Rome Ministerial trying to take count of where we were, what else we can do to support Libya moving forward. Tunisia has done extraordinary things and I want to give credit to the Nahda Party, which just made very tough decisions to probably now have the most progressive constitution in the entire Middle East. And this is really a testament to a set of values that, I think, is also strategically how we have to think going into the next century.

And that is, it is not about Islamism and secularism or Russia and the West or Shia and Sunni. It's about pluralism in the rule of law versus imposition of one's values on someone else, whether they want them or not. And that is the strategic value that we're all trying to charter a course for.

Sylke Tempel: Understood. On the other hand, it does remind me a bit of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, because for 20 years basically, at least for the last 20 years, we basically know what it is supposed to look at the end. The one problem we have is we don't know how to get there.

Now, same here. We know it is about participation. We know it's about having a better life. We know it's about getting young people into jobs, et cetera, et cetera. But it seems to be such a long stretch for them. What is it that we do on the ground to help solve these problems economically--or mainly economically?

Wendy Sherman: I think economics is a critical part of it and everybody in this room, from whatever country you're in, has probably provided assistance, provided trade, provided assistance where the IMF is concerned, where that's an appropriate instrument, trade agreements, all manner of ways to help people develop their own economy and their own aspirations.

It is a tough world, but if we learned anything from 2008, it is not a decoupled world. We are all integrated with each other. We are all connected with each other so whatever we do in one part of the world it's going to have a ripple effect in another part of the world. So if we cannot, Europe and the United States, the transatlantic relationship, bring up our global economy, it will have an impact on the price of

oil in the Middle East. It will have an impact on the ability to create jobs for the future. It will have an impact on our ability to create a trading system where everybody has to play by the same set of rules. So we all have to lift towards that end in every region of the world.

Sylke Tempel: Mr. Al-Attiyah, while I've been probably a bit, you know, overreaching when it came to the overall strategic ambition of both Europe and the United States, I was wondering if there is a bit of over-ambition on the side of Qatar. You've been very active over the last years, and for a while it seemed that the Qatar government was mainly busy with supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

There were complaints that Qatar was sending weapons to opposition forces who were, to say the least, not always clearly supporting the transition into democracy. And that's nicely put. Again, I'll ask it to you. What do you have in mind? How do you want to shape your immediate neighborhood? What is it supposed to look like?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: (Inaudible) that I have to be short with my answer. (Inaudible) answer.

Sylke Tempel: That's not an easy way out. It still has to be short.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: (Inaudible) has a strategic role to do. We are a part of the

international community. We have obligation, as most of our colleagues here has an obligation, toward each other. As Wendy said, we are all interconnected. Every one of us has a role to do, a couple being--playing very positive roles in all the...

Sylke Tempel: I did expect that you would say that.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Well, this is what we believe we are doing and we would like to hear otherwise if there is. And we have three things to think about in Qatar. First of all, we are one of the largest exporter of energy to the world so we want to keep our area as stable as possible so we can reach out to other friends who needs this energy. And it's not about just selling oil and gas getting--we have to have a very stable flow of energy to the world. This is one.

Two, we have a humanitarian obligation toward the world, and this is where we stand up and supported the Arab Spring. From Tunisia--and thank you that you brought one of the wise men in Tunisia who managed to sail through this rough sea. And we can all see that Tunisia is coming to a safe shore now with their wise men ship in Tunisia, and wish that everyone follow this boat.

In Qatar, we believe that all the Arab Spring countries going through now is a yo-yo example, I might call it. It will settle down. We have this experience in all the European countries in the past. Everyone

went through revolution and went through struggle for their justice and free world. And in the end of the day, they settle down and they are flourishing now and prosper the same.

In our region, you have one-third of our region are youth. So in Qatar, we have to take care of them. They need to have decent life. They need to have jobs. And all of you here are responsible to help on this, because in the end of day, if you see most of the Arab Spring countries are--sit on the Mediterranean so next door to them are the neighbor of Europe.

And you be in suffering for a long time from the illegal immigrant so we have to put hands on hands, altogether, to work to bring stability to their country so they have the ambition. They have the intellectual ability to build their own countries. They only need us to give them this jumpstart thing. And this is what we have to go together.

This is what--how we think in Qatar about reaching out. We never have a strategic ambition. We have a strategic role and this is what we are playing in Qatar.

Sylke Tempel: So let me just ask this, why is it that the Gulf Cooperation Council sometimes is so mad at Qatar?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Well, you know, these things--we always advise our colleagues in other

Arab countries to solve their issues in dialogue. And this is what we are trying to tell our colleagues in the other GCC that dialogue is the best way.

You know, sometimes maybe we are too fast in trying to enlighten our people, maybe, and maybe we are little bit more, you know, mobilized. We can--but in the end of the day, let me assure you one thing and this is not a hypocrite or anything. This is real situation in the GCC.

In the GCC, no matter what you do, the social fabric of the GCC people does overwhelm and does, you know, dedicate the terms on the whole GCC countries, because I have cousin in Kuwait, my nephew in Bahrain, my uncle is in Saudi and my grandfather (inaudible). So you cannot--the fabric of the GCC, they are the one where, you know, will override any misunderstanding among the political figures.

Sylke Tempel: Just one last question and it can be answered, probably, with one word. Are good relations with Saudi Arabia a strategic asset for Qatar? Are they very important to you...

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Absolutely.

Sylke Tempel: ...in what you do, almost everything to keep these relations?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Absolutely. Saudi Arabia is our strategic depth. Absolutely. And with--and let me tell you something. There is--I read a lot

of articles these days so I'll do it short--about this agreement between Qatar and Saudi and Syria. This is not true.

In Syria, we have the highest coordination with our colleagues, friend of Syria and namely Saudi Arabia. So this is a fact.

Sylke Tempel: Thank you so much. Mr. Ghannouchi, now I can come to you. You've been praised very much, also by Wendy Sherman just now, for the constitution that was just written in Tunisia. And it was a long and very tedious, very complicated process. And I think we all acknowledge this and this is why I'm saying Tunisia certainly has been a ray of hope. And, unfortunately, it's the smallest of all the transitional countries. But still it's an example.

I wanted to ask you a couple of years ago, I believe, you've been asked if you're not going to be elected, would you still, you know, stand for office? Would you still run in another election and then you said, yes, and we just have to try harder to convince people of our model." And now you've agreed to a constitution that is very liberal, that has included rise of women, minority rights, very important, and is really a very big step forward. What would you tell skepticists who would say, in the end, the Islamists are only out there to wait for the moment to change all

this? Was this a tactical move or is this a strategic thing? How long do you think would a constitution last?

Rached Ghannouchi: I think we haven't judged Islamist by intention, to condemn them fairly. We have to judge them through their gifts, what they said and that what they do. I think all Tunisians are very proud now that they succeed to have very important, very progressive constitution signed by 22 parties, 200 of 216, all fractions, all parties are agree that the constitution represent themselves. This constitution represent very important combination on good marriage between Islam and democracy, between Islam and human rights, between Islam and the universal values. So but this constitution is not simple accident. It's fruit of long discussion, long national dialogue between us and others.

Sylke Temple: And the dialogue that you insisted had to be peaceful all the time.

Rached Ghannouchi: You know that you pay--as Islamists, we pay a high price for having this constitution. We see the government not through elections, but through discussion because without that, we couldn't have--Tunisian people cannot have this constitution so we pay a high price. We fund and sell our service, oblige to choose between continue have--in government because we have been elected or resign, with intention, without any force to have--to give

Tunisian's this constitution. I think we bet on the winner horse when we give this agreement, we have this constitution.

Sylke Temple: Does this mean also that you had to make some, how would I say it, that you had to pay a price also on your core beliefs? That you have to give up some of the core beliefs of the political Islam that you helped to form in order to have a constitution that would include all of Tunisia's citizens just because the reality is different from what you wanted it to be? Did you...

Rached Ghannouchi: I think who can follow our culture, our Tunisian Islamist, he can discover that since 1981 when we established our movement, we still insist on the compatibility between Islam and democracy, between Islam and the human values. And since that, until we draft this constitution, we didn't contradict our self. So this constitution, this beliefs is not simple accident, but it's itinerary...

Sylke Temple: It's a different approach.

Rached Ghannouchi: A long itinerary.

Sylke Temple: Thank you. We've put up a question here for you to vote on. If you have--if can have this question on for a moment because we really wanted to know what is your view might stand in the way of a peaceful, stable and possibly democratic development in Arab transitional countries: A, economic challenges, B,

problems of governance/bad governance, three, place of religion in society, including fundamentalism, or the fourth option, all of the above. You know that you have 15 seconds. Vote now, please. And I am aware there are a few factors missing. I like that you get such quick results. Oh, well, all of the above. But what is really interesting is to me that when it comes to the economic challenges, just 4.8 percent. That's a very small minority of you who think that it really is about jobs and it really is about a future and about earning enough money, et cetera. Problems of governance/bad governance is almost 20 percent. The largest group of-- except of the all of the above group, is place of religion in society and fundamentalism.

Wendy Sherman, you've been so positively speaking about the constitution in Tunisia. Why would you think the problems of the place of religion and fundamentalism would be the most urgent problem when it comes to these countries? I mean, you were so adamant saying really there shouldn't be a problem with compatibility of Islam and democracy. Right?

Wendy Sherman: I think the real quantitative number on there is the 53.2 percent.

Sylke Temple: The all of the above?

Wendy Sherman: The all of the above and these things are interwoven. I do think we lose focus a little bit when we forget that the largest Muslim

country in the world, Indonesia, is an imperfect but pretty thriving democracy. The second largest Islamic population, the world Muslim population in the world, is India, which has a difficult democracy and a coalition democracy, but seems to have a democracy.

So I think that one of the issues is really how that third sentence was written, which is the place of religion society/fundamentalism as if religion and fundamentalism are one in the same things and they are not. We all have fundamentalists in our country and fundamentalism does not mean extremist either, which we conflate from time to time. So I actually think one has to disaggregate number three. I think it's a poorly worded question because I think the anxiety in the West is about extremism.

Secondly, fundamentalism that turns into extremism or denies the rule of law or denies pluralism or denies right, universal rights, but religion, far be it from an American to say that religion doesn't matter when I think most of you know Bruce Stokes and I have been around together for quite many years now and Pew's numbers show that the United States believes that to be moral, you have to believe in God. We are an incredibly religious society. We believe that, you know, we can determine our future, but God has an awful lot to do with it. So I think it's a rather misplaced question, actually.

Sylke Temple: If we could rephrase it for a minute, if we would say this is about separation of religion and state--because you can be an awfully religious society, but as long as there's separation of religion and state, you know, you can make sure that God is not in charge of that, of things, because politically really you cannot vote God out of power. And that seems to be the problem with one--with some of these societies where...

Wendy Sherman: Yes, but we also have to remember there are differences. Indonesia has its version of madrasas, schools where religion is very tied into how children learn because there's a set of values that go with that. So I just think we often, because it's easier, get rather reductionist about all of these issues when the world is far more complex. And the focus really ought to be on, as I said, not Islamism versus secularism or even religiosity versus secularism. It's about whether we are putting systems in place that allow for pluralism and human rights and rule of law because it is that governing system, to the second point there, that creates the platform for economic development.

Sylke Temple: Understood. Mr. Ghannouchi, quick question to you because we've just been mentioning this and I was wondering how far this would go. Would your engagement in the political process in Tunisia and all

this interaction with the political process and forming the political process in Tunisia, go so far as to say, yes, what in the end we need in order to have checks and balances, in order to have better governments is really a separation of religion and state?

Rached Ghannouchi: The Tunisian constitution accepts and it's very clear in this constitution there is real separation. The state is neutral, vis a vis all of the religion, all the minorities. And the main problem now is how to practice, in reality, these values because there is some extremism, some (inaudible) groups who couldn't accept or even understand that separation or that neutrality, vis a vis all religion and all ideas because we believe that the state has no to do vis a vis ideologies, these ideas. The state has to be neutral, vis a vis all ideologies and religions.

Sylke Temple: Ideas and religion.

Rached Ghannouchi: So the problem is now how to implement this ideology, this constitution, and the main problem in Tunisia now who face our transition of democracy is the economy issue because the origins is where the revolution start still waiting that the revolution changed positively their life.

Sylke Tempel: There's a lot of frustration (inaudible).

Rached Ghannouchi: But so far, they don't feel that the revolution has changed positively...

Sylke Temple: That there has--change in their life positively.

Rached Ghannouchi: So we appreciate what, for example, Qatar has done to assist Tunisia and European and Western countries, but I think if this model, if the Tunisian example, if this candle, we believe that it has to continue to shine and affect positively the Arab regime would have to invest in democracy. Because the Western countries, for a long time they invest in dictatorship regime so it's time to invest in democracy because the democracy is the only way to...

Sylke Temple: Guarantee peaceful development.

Rached Ghannouchi: ...guarantee the peace in the world and to guarantee the real economy and real justice.

Sylke Temple: I'm sure there are plenty of questions now that you have--same rules, I'm sorry about this. Same rules. Quickly introduce yourself, be short and I will be taking your questions. There's one in the back and then we go to you. We have a mic here.

Roland Freudenstein: Yeah, thanks very much. I'm Roland Freudenstein from the Wilfred Martin Center for European Studies here in Brussels and I've got a question to Minister Al-Attayah and I think it's a very simple question. You talked about--you praised the Arab

Spring. You talked about the strategic role that Qatar can play and other panelists have talked about the value of democracy. Now, yet, I read that the Emirate of Qatar has no independent legislature, has no political parties, and that elections that were planned for 2005 have been postponed indefinitely. How do you bring that together?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Thank you for the question. But first of all, Qatar has a constitution. Qatar was not planning for election in 2005. In fact, election is by the end of 2013. And for some technical reason, it's postponed to maybe the end of 2014. The thing you have to understand is, like our colleague just says now, it is the style or the way of life. If you utilize your resources for the prosperity of your people and you set the stage for them for the best education, the best health, I think it is the people who we should go and ask if they wanted their system to be changed or not. If the people ask to change the system, rest assured that we will do so.

Sylke Tempel: Which means that you will have elections very soon, which will not be postponed for some technical measures again?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: No, no, no. The election has not been postponed because we don't want, otherwise we wouldn't issue our constitution. The new constitution of Qatar said that there will be election

for the Parliament. And this is--we are, at the end of the day, we have a vision for 2030. We want to develop our country. I will extend invitation for all of you to come to see Qatar.

Sylke Tempel: We might take your word.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: We are going onto our way to improve our country and to reach our vision. And this is why we welcome any criticism. This will help us to fix things, if we have things to be fixed.

Sylke Tempel: Oh, well, that was an invitation. Here, there is a second question here.

Hari Harrun: Wendy, this is a question for you.

Sylke Tempel: Can you quickly introduce yourself?

Hari Harrun (ph): Sorry. My name is Hari Harrun. I'm from New York. I run a hedge fund in New York. Without being judgmental at all, stateside it's quite common to hear a few refrains right now. One about Ukraine is that we don't have a dog in this fight. One about the Middle East is that as we get energy independent, the relative interests of America in the region takes a different hue.

The question I want to ask you is, polls would indicate a fatigue in the American population about matters principally residing in the State Department. In fact, there is even some suggestion that this, other than State Department activism right now, a lot of Americans have a lot of issues at home to worry about.

How do you respond to that? Is it possible that the expectations of America now are running way ahead of what the population in America is willing to support?

Wendy Sherman: I don't think it's a mystery to anybody in this room that Americans are tired of foreign intervention. We just finished Iraq and we're not finished yet. We're trying to finish Afghanistan and that is difficult. Both NATO forces and American forces have spent 10 years, a decade, of blood and treasure in Afghanistan. So, sure, the American people would not like to bear the cost or the lives or the disruption to lives that another intervention would create.

At the same time, Americans understand the world is not decoupled. As I said, the 2008 crisis showed us how connected we all are. America knows that two oceans cannot protect us from evil, after 9/11. So, yes, Americans are exhausted. They would like to focus on finishing the recovery from the recession and, like every other family in the world, creating jobs and making sure their kids have a good education, they have a good job and a decent retirement and good health care seems to be a topic of conversation these days in America.

But Americans also pay more dues to the U.N. than any other country, provide more humanitarian assistance and charity than any other country, provide our forces

and technical assistance to the world more than any other country, provide more foreign assistance than any other country in total sum. So I don't think you can say we aren't there. We are very there. What is so challenging and so difficult and Heaven only knows I just felt it two days in Ukraine, is we are the last remaining super power.

And we have a military that is different than any other. And we've had long debates with Europe about Europe's defense capabilities, NATO's a very important source of that, and we are all looking for what tools, what capabilities we can bring to bear to help ensure that Ukraine stays sovereign, territorial integrity, what tools we can bring to bear when there are upheavals in the Middle East to go to the topic that we are talking about now.

What's appropriate? What's not appropriate? We are building the strongest security relationship with the Gulf States that has ever existed because we understand how critical that is. And even though we will be probably the largest oil producer within five years, we won't be energy independent for 20. And it will take all of us to keep the global economy and the energy flows working throughout the world so that the global economy is strong. So you can't take one piece and disaggregate it.

So, yes, there are all of these streams happening consequentially, but there are enough Americans who remember, and certainly remember their parents' memories, of World War II to want to ensure we're back there in Europe again.

Sylke Tempel: Allow me to pick up this question and to give it to you, Pierre, because when I'm listening to Wendy and when I'm--I've been listening, of course, to all the panels and we're all talking about revival of the Transatlantic relations. But obviously, this is a lot about burden-sharing. And isn't this the moment, especially when it comes to rebuilding or helping rebuild the MENA region, you know. Not only from the upheavals that we've seen over the last couple of years, but also of the 40 years of stalemate, economic, political, social stalemate they've been in, that there has to be a lot more done in the department of resources, creative thinking, assistance to the Americans.

Pierre Vimont: You know, Europe has a long history of a relationship with the Mediterranean area and they have a long history of cooperation with these countries. We have poured a lot of financial resources, a lot of expertise in those countries. And I think we have to be aware that that takes time. I'm a bit puzzled by the way we too easily put all these

different countries together and talk about the Arab Spring.

First of all, each one of these countries at the moment is facing a totally different situation. Tunisia, as you were saying, is coming out with a very interesting constitution. Egypt is also coming out with a constitution. It is different.

Sylke Tempel: Totally different one, I'd say, yeah.

Pierre Vimont: It is different, but (inaudible) interesting elements in it also. Yemen--we were not talking about Yemen, but Yemen has found a way out of its turmoil with a different solution. And we could go on and on. And of course, there is Libya and of course, there is Syria.

Sylke Tempel: But there are some similarities with all the differences of all the countries. There are some similarities and this is--you can wrap it up in two or three words, youth (inaudible), no jobs, dysfunctional economy.

Pierre Vimont: No, there's more than that. There is economy, as you were saying in one of your question there's the whole issue of helping those countries to build state capacities because many of them are facing problems in terms of government. And thirdly, you have the issue a political democracy, how to build a deep democracy in those countries.

But for each one of them, we need to take into account their differences and their specificities. And secondly, may I underline that I think you need to take in account time. It takes time, you know. We ourselves in Europe pride ourselves about democracy. But for some of our countries, the one I know best, it took nearly a century to come out with a decent democratic system. So it takes time. You don't do this in a few days. And you don't build an economy so easily in one or two years. It takes time.

The problem we're facing with many of these countries, I think the one single feature you find out in each one of these countries, is the problem of youth--is the fact that you have youth and the middle, I would say, middle classes. The class moyen, as we say in French. Because these are people who have got through some good training, who have now some good expertise and who just don't find a job as they come out of school or they come out of university. This is where we need to help them.

But here again, it takes time. It's building up a market. It's building up, more than anything else, I think, in North Africa, building between Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and maybe others, a single market. And that takes time, for many reasons, political hurdles or whatsoever.

But I think this is the kind of thing we can all work on. And there, let's look at it, America has been doing a lot, but Europe has been doing a lot. You know, we had the Barcelona process, we had the (inaudible) about 20 or 30 years ago. We have now other ways of going ahead with them. So it's not that we're not trying to help and getting involved on that. It's building slowly. It takes time, a state, a governance system that works. It's helping them in building their market. It's helping them in building industries. And for this, we need not only the help of the public sector, we need also private sector. This is why we've gone through--the high representative has gone through this whole task force where we bring together private sector and public sector, the financial circles, the industries, to try to work and help these countries to build their future.

Sylke Tempel: There was a question here in the back and I'm going here and here. The microphone has just left you, just turn around. Yeah.

Audia Harvey (ph): My name is Audia Harvey. I am an EU journalist from France. My question is addressed first to (inaudible) Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah and perhaps may also concern the other people on the panel. I noticed that there are a lot of initiatives in Qatar on the front of education and training. Like, WISE, you know, is the Qatar Foundation and (inaudible), we're

very active on that. I also noticed last week, I heard that in Dubai, the organized prize for the best teachers and I think was quite a lot of money addressed to the best teachers in the world. And I just would like to know, all these initiatives, of course, you know, considering that this morning at the session on unemployment, education was voted first one as the main concern.

Now in your region, do you address those initiatives and others? All these efforts for education and training, do you address them to the people from your region, but also for other regions? Like, for instance, Africa where there are 34 out of 49 least developed countries are in Africa or is it just a prestige for, you know, universities from the West?

Sylke Tempel: Is this a general question about education in Qatar and how much they invest into it?

Audia Harvey: No, it's just, you know, the role of the...

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: I think I understand her question. Yeah, okay.

Sylke Tempel: Will you take the question?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Yeah. Thank you for asking me this. This is a very important question. Yes, you are right. We have this initiative WISE, but we link this WISE initiative with our own initiative called Silatech, which targeted a hundred million in

the region in North Africa and the Arab countries and in Africa. And what we have done in Qatar not only for prestige, as you say, we managed to bring all the topnotch, if you may call, universities from the United States and the Europe and we have them as Qatar as their main campus in Qatar. I'll just give some example, like, Georgetown in Qatar, HAC from France. We have Carnegie-Mellon. And this is not only for the student in Qatar. What we did is, the Qatar Development Fund, which is a fund meant for development to reach out and help, well, the most country needed in the world, have made allocation of 50 percent of its income for education abroad. This is what we have made.

And we link them with WISE and Silatech so we have synergy in the way we reach out. So most of our national development fund, the Sovereign Development Fund, 50 percent of it goes to education for our country as such, if I answered your question.

Sylke Tempel: Thanks. Yeah. There was a question here. Can we have the mike over here, second row? Thank you. Yes, you're next.

Nassim Ahmid (ph): I'm Nassim Ahmid, from Morocco OCP Policy Center. Well, two quick comments about the MENA region. Every time we...

Sylke Tempel: Very quick comment.

Nassim Ahmid: Very quick--we speak about the MENA region, there is something to remember. There is a huge

misunderstanding. And, well, I met a lot of people from European countries, from America, and they know very little about the region. Almost nobody speaks Arabic. They don't go there. The visa procedures for Arabs to come are so complex that they don't even get to meet these people. And they speak a lot about them. I read so many papers about the Arab world.

So, first of all, when you speak about cooperation, you have to start by at least knowing the people you want to trade with, you want to cooperate with. And the second one is I, from my understanding, nobody really understood what--the region went through tremendous change, a huge change. And the Arab Spring was all about human dignity, whereas, the question asked is about Islam and democracy. I think there is a problem with this focus--never-ending focus in Europe about Islam and women and whether they need to be..

Sylke Tempel: It did, it did contend two or three other issues as well.

Nassim Amid: Yes, but the results of the poll show that people still focus on Islam and democracy. I don't think the youth looking for jobs there are asking whether they should pray or not, how they should do it. They just look for jobs. They are waiting for job offers basically. So we defend human values on Europe, but whenever it comes to foreign policy, we do not

implement them anymore. So these were just two very quick comments. Sorry.

Sylke Tempel: Thank you.

Nassim Ahmid: And just one very quick question. Well, you mentioned economic (inaudible) and structural reforms on very different sectors, but what about the reinforcing the South-South Cooperation, because finally Europe is closing itself? America has shifting priorities. It's now more focused on national issues. So what about the South-South Cooperation? There's Latin America, there's Asia. What are we doing with these people?

Sylke Tempel: Is this a question directed specifically to one of the panelists or?

Nassim Ahmid: To Mr. Ghannouchi, maybe, because Tunisia is also concerned about the cooperation with Europe and other countries.

Sylke Tempel: Okay. Thank you very much. So about the South-South Cooperation, would you like to give an answer?

Rached Ghannouchi: About?

Sylke Tempel: The South-South Cooperation. Would Tunisia and it's partly--not instead, but definitely in addition to Europe, rather also work with southern states like Latin America, seek economic cooperation with, for example, Latin America?

Rached Ghannouchi: Tunisia is linked with Europe with partnership agreement. And during the Natha (ph) government, this agreement has developed toward advanced partnership. So would like that agreement will be...

Sylke Tempel: (Inaudible) even.

Rached Ghannouchi: Yes, will be implemented and the products in reality under--when we are gathered here under the Marshall German Funds.

Sylke Tempel: The German Marshall Fund, yeah.

Rached Ghannouchi: I'm asking myself, why we couldn't see such project...

Sylke Tempel: Marshall Plan for the region?

Rached Ghannouchi: ...for Tunisia, for this new democracy, which is successful story and can affect positively the relation between Islam and the West, between Islam and democracy, between Islam and women's rights, and affect the peace in Mediterranean people. Not that that isn't the same measure when they compare, for example, between what Europe, what the West have done for develop the East countries toward the democracy and what they have done for the Arab Spring.

Sylke Tempel: Unfortunately, perhaps, the Arab Spring happened after the worst economic crisis hit both the United States and Europe and that might have been a bit of an obstacle to a new Marshall Plan. There

was one question here. I'll line you up, sir. Yeah, here. Microphone goes here, thank you very much.

Khalid Agasi (ph): Thank you very much.

Sylke Tempel: Gosh, there are so many, number two, three, four, five.

Khalid Agasi: I'll try to be brief then. My name is Khalid Agasi from TUSIAD, Turkish Business and Industrial Association. While seen from Istanbul, from the shores of the Bosphorus, connecting Black Sea with Mediterranean or the Balkans with the Caspian, democracy is important. And it is certainly about the constitution, institutions, freedoms, (inaudible) but it's also more than that, social development, income disparities, education and, in the 21st century, about new technologies and the way the youth has started to evolve through this new society of information--this global society of information. Therefore, about your concept, Mr. Ghannouchi, of (inaudible) democracy, I think it deserves to be elaborated a little more, as I observed also other panelists approved your value sets. So what is this investing in democracy?

Sylke Tempel: That's a big--that's a very big question. Can you do it very shortly, really? What is this investing in the democracy?

Rached Ghannouchi: Yes, investing in democracy means a simple thing with a new experiences, which are threatened by lack of development, economic

development, which is threatened by some security problems, comes also from the lack of development. So, if we are eager to support democracy in the world, especially in the Mediterranean, so we have to invest in democracy to anchorage investment in these democracies, the new democracies to...

[audio gap 9:21:49 - 9:22:27]

Sylke Tempel: ...change. Would that be a correct translation?

Rached Ghannouchi: To anchorage investment in Tunisia, to anchorage tourism, to implement the agreement, partnership between Tunisia and the EU countries.

Sylke Tempel: Thank you. There's been one question over here and then we have to go over here because I've got a whole line-up of questions over here.

Nawab Khan: My name is Nawab Khan. I'm the correspondent of the Kuwait news agency, KUNA, in Brussels. And my question is to His Excellency, the Foreign Minister of Qatar. Sir, next week, there is an important Arab Summit in Kuwait. What are your expectations from this summit? Thank you.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: It will start tomorrow, actually. The Ministerial meeting is tomorrow so I'm rushing from here to the airport so I can catch the Ministerial meeting tomorrow. I think the agenda has three items. We have the peace process and the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And this is-- maybe I can elaborate on a little bit. This is maybe the first time--which we are all supporting because this is the first time that the United States is real mediators and not a messenger or facilitator. And this is what's giving us our hope. And we wish Kerry all the best, too, on this.

The second thing is we would be talking about the-- how to help in reforming the structure of the Arab League and then it will be a Syria issue. So it's already been set, the agenda for the meeting, for the summit, is set. This is the main three issues that will be discussed in the Arab League, if I answered your question.

Sylke Tempel: Thank you. I have one more question here. Yeah, I know. I see your arm, just afraid that we can't fit it all into the last 10--in the 10 minutes that we have left. Can we have the microphone over here? Right here, the gentleman here in this. Thanks. And then we go over to you. And then, hopefully, we'll have one more question over here.

Martin Stranke (ph): My name is Martin Stranke and, as we were speaking before...

Sylke Tempel: The mic's not on. It's out. It's out. We'll get him another mic, please. Here we are. Thank you.

Martin Stranke: Now, as we were speaking and saying about low unemployment rates and all the problems that you are facing, I come from Latin America and many of the issues that you're mentioning, apart from the religious side, were also faced by the country--by the countries in the region. And, as we built up the democracies in the region, and I can say that it's more stable now, one of the things that we didn't see is that democracy is also a concept that can be abused. Like Venezuela, it can have elections. It could do stuff like that, that may sound like a democracy, but it really isn't. My question to you basically, sir, from Qatar...

Sylke Tempel: To you is all the panel or to..

Martin Stranke: To the--no, Mr. Al-Attiyah, as you, you know, as the region develops the concept of democracy even more intensively, do you foresee that this democracy that you're building in the future could be abused? And what are the things that you're going to implement in order to make sure that it doesn't happen?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: I'll give you a...

Sylke Tempel: That's a tough one.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: I'll do a quick answer. I'll pick on what Mr. Ghannouchi just said, that investing in democracy, one of the investments that all of us should do is try to protect this process and not to tamper with this new emerging democracy

process. I think this is all--obligation of all of us to do, try to protect this process and not to be fed up or jump conclusion for a result. It needs its time.

Sylke Tempel: Well, Anton, you had a question here. Can we have the mic over here? And then, if you're really asking--a very short question. We'll have a last question over here.

Anton La Guardia: I'll be as brief as I can. My name is Anton La Guardia from The Economist. The European policy towards the Middle East, towards North Africa, has been denoted by the letter "M" and more for more, supposedly, and then money, migration and mobility, at a time when Europe has no money, it doesn't like migrants and it doesn't want to let North African tomatoes into Southern Europe. I detected from Pierre Vimont, sort of, a note that maybe policy needs to be changed. I mean, I'd like to know how should it change? And I'd like to know from Mr. Ghannouchi and Mr. Al-Attayah what they think the real priorities should be--and maybe Wendy Sherman wants to add to it as well--the real priorities for a European policy that makes sense.

Sylke Tempel: That was a clever move. He asked one question, but there's three panelists. Okay. So here we are. Pierre, would you like to go first?

Pierre Vimont: I mean, this is a discussion I think that should be left mostly for the new commission when they will come in. But that's clever.

Sylke Tempel: That's a clever move as well.

Pierre Vimont: Even smarter. But everybody agrees that, whether it be our Eastern Neighborhood or our Southern Neighborhood, we need to adapt a partnership to the new reality that is there. And we just can't go on as we were going on before. It's going to be about many of the tools that we have used already. But adapting them in a better way and a more efficient way to what--I'm quite struck, I said it at the beginning, but, I mean, to some extent, it's the same thing we're facing at the moment with Ukraine--is that we're facing countries that have a short-term urgent problem, where they need, I would say, cash or whatever it is. But they need urgently an assistance, and that they need medium-term and long-term support also.

And quite often, the instruments that Europe has are very good instruments for the medium-term and the long-term. It's about trade concessions, as I was saying, building a sort of a common market on which we can work, helping them in training their youth, whatsoever. But many of these countries right now, as Mr. Ghannouchi was saying, is how can you help us right now, for the next six months or one year, to get tourists back into Tunisia. I come from Tunisia myself.

I know this country and how much they need, just like Egypt, tourists to come back. And that's something that is very urgent, that you have to look at it immediately. And I think we have to be able to diversify our resources and of a way of helping these countries. And this is really the problem we're facing at the moment, and something that we have all to struggle with as we move along.

Sylke Tempel: Mr. Ghannouchi, would you also like to answer to this question?

Rached Ghannouchi: Yes, I'm agreeing to it..

Sylke Tempel: Wonderful.

Rached Ghannouchi: ...that Tunisia needs quickly assistance, and because the priorities of Tunisia, first is the economy. That is a crisis. That is a real high level of unemployment. So we need that this young democracy has to be supported because it can save the whole region to promote, to shine the democracy in the region. And this is in favor of all sides.

Sylke Tempel: Let's--quick follow-up question to you, Pierre. And Wendy just--because I know that, Monsieur, you, of course, will say yes. But do you think that this new constitution will enhance trust of investors to invest in Tunisia, that they would get some peace and quiet and the rule of law that they need to invest, and that it might also enhance the much-sought-for tourism?

Wendy Sherman: I certainly think it helps, of course.

Pierre Vimont: Yes.

Sylke Tempel: True enough. So we can take one last question over here, the gentleman over here, the second row. And I'm afraid that I can't take all you--I mean, I know there are plenty of questions, but we are running out of time. So one quick last question, yeah.

Unidentified Male: I address myself to the foreign minister of Qatar. You seem to assume that the more you spend on education, the better quality you get. I'm afraid this is not an assumption that is borne out by facts. Saudi Arabia spends much more than so many other countries, and yet the educational quality over there is poor. In fact, good education requires a certain mindset. If that mindset is not present in Saudi Arabia, in Qatar, in UAE, it will not matter how much you spend. We have seen this happen in other countries. In my country, Pakistan, where I've been teaching for 40 years, we substantially increase the university budgets over there, in fact, by a factor of 10. It did not result in the output that one could have hoped for.

Sylke Tempel: So let's just ask him. Do you think that the necessary mindset is there to really enhance education and to make young educated people of Qatar, you know, able to compete with a global competition, Khalid?

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: Well, I can speak only about Qatar. For sure, we give our youth the proper tools, and it is for them to use it properly for the benefit of Qatar. And we have so many examples showed that our own people, with what they have, what tools we give them, they manage to do so many great things, one of which is getting the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. This is by Qatari hands.

Sylke Tempel: Well, as a soccer fan, I have to say there's been much criticism out there about getting the World 2020 World Soccer-ship to Qatar. But we'll see about this. I'm just happy now of optimism. Let's thank our panel, please.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah: We can speak about it if you want.

Mr. Craig Kennedy: You're a very good moderator. That was a very, very interesting time. We're going to take a coffee break. And then when we come back, we're going to talk trade with Karel De Gucht and Mike Froman.