

This is the last issue of *International Politics and Society*. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's board and management have decided to cease publication of the journal at the end of 2011. Among the reasons for this »the changed market situation of print media, with its fixed publication schedule, had to be considered against topical specialist articles that can be promptly distributed to readers via the Internet. The two international departments have put their publishing activities on a new footing in recent years and offer uniform and high quality formats to satisfy a range of information needs. In our view, these current formats represent the profile of policy advice better and more topically than a printed quarterly journal.«

This brings to an end a long tradition: IPG was founded in 1994 as the successor of the journal *Vierteljahresberichte* (see »The End of a Tradition« in this issue). Preparations are under way to continue IPG online as a magazine for debating political and other issues. More information will be available on its launch in due course.

This issue of IPG focuses primarily on the upheavals in the Arab world, often referred to as the »Arab Spring.« Popular uprisings and mass demonstrations have overthrown authoritarian rulers such as Ben Ali (Tunisia) and Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), an armed movement in Libya has ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi, and in Syria a broad popular movement – and increasingly an armed one – is struggling against the dictatorial regime of Bashir al-Assad. The first outlines of a reshaped political landscape are beginning to emerge in the Middle East. Real democratic change is most likely to occur in Tunisia, where it all began in December 2010. According to Ralf Melzer's commentary, there is reason for optimism about the country's future. However, there are a fair number of stumbling blocks, including in particular the difficult economic situation and the high youth unemployment. To sum up, »if Tunisia fails to bring about political renewal it would send a catastrophic signal to the rest of the Arab world.«

But where the Middle East goes from here also remains open for foreign policy and geopolitical reasons. The ideal of a democratic, open and prosperous region contrasts with fears of a victory for Islamists in genuinely free elections. This is especially the case for Israel, but also for Europe which hitherto has got along quite nicely with the »stability« of these autocratic regimes, with which there was much discussion of security and migration, but little about democracy and human rights. Furthermore, there is still no prospect of a common European strategy

with regard to the new state of affairs in the Middle East, as *Niels Annen* remarks in his commentary. Germany in particular, with its shameful voting record in the UN Security Council on the Libya Resolution is preventing unity on this issue, while France and the United Kingdom rapidly seized the opportunity to exert some influence over the reshaping of the region.

According to *Christos Katsioulis* the case of Libya has proven to be a heavy burden for Germany with regard to its role in NATO and the EU. Its abstention in the Security Council represents the repudiation of the principle of responsibility to protect within the United Nations and heightens the unpredictability of German foreign policy in one of its most important institutional frameworks. Furthermore, an intensive debate on the instrument of intervention is needed because a responsible German foreign and security policy must position itself more clearly and comprehensibly.

In his article *Jens Heibach* deals with »national dialogue« as an instrument of conflict resolution and political transformation, taking the example of the »Arab Spring.« He warns against expecting too much of this instrument: experiences prior to the current upheavals show that it often amounts to mere pseudo-liberalization and boosts the legitimacy of authoritarian elites. National dialogues to date can in no way be compared to the »round tables« in the former Eastern Bloc, which led to real democracy.

The »Arab Spring« has affected individual countries in the region to different degrees. In Bahrain and Algeria demonstrations were brutally put down. In Syria the outcome remains open. In Jordan and Morocco the ruling monarchs are trying once again to avert apocalypse (from their standpoint) with promises of reform. In this issue, the cases of Jordan and Syria are examined in order to illustrate these diverging paths. Jordan, too, was seized by a wave of protests at the beginning of 2011 that shook the political system, as *Achim Vogt* describes. So far, the King has been able to maintain control over the movement with promises of reform, although whether the monarchy will really instigate substantial reform remains to be seen. However, if this does not happen the Hashemite kingdom will be shaken to its foundations. The situation in Syria is quite different. President Assad's regime is based exclusively on hard power, as *Carsten Wieland* calls it. This amounts to clan rule by parts of the Alawi minority, although its base has been progressively shrinking in the face of the increasingly violent unrest.

Two articles in this issue deal with a different topic, but one which is also relevant to the Middle East. This is nuclear weapons, in respect of which *Ulrich Kühn* provides a provisional assessment of President Barack Obama's plan for a nuclear weapons-free world announced in 2009. The results so far are ambivalent: because of the foot-dragging of national (us) and international actors arms control is currently at a standstill. However, even »civilised« Europe is having difficulties in this respect, as *Ursula Jasper* and *Clara Portela* make clear on the example of the United Kingdom's and France's nuclear weapons. Neither state is prepared to surrender its nuclear weapons. For the sake of credibility, however, Europe must begin to critically examine the nuclear weapons policy not only of rogue states, such as Iran and North Korea, but also of its own member states and take concrete measures.

In a further article *Defne Erzene-Bürgin* deals with the adaptation of Turkey's agricultural sector to the EU's *acquis communautaire*. Apart from the fact that the desire for EU membership is in continuous decline in Turkey, the EU's lack of commitment to the latter's accession is sapping its willingness to implement far-reaching reform. In his commentary *Dieter Reinhardt* describes the problems of humanitarian aid, which is often referred to as the »compassion industry,« taking the current catastrophic famine in East Africa as an example. The concluding article paints a portrait of over fifty years of the journal *International Politics and Society* and its predecessor *Vierteljahrsschriften*.