Deepening democracy or stabilization?

European neighborhood policy (ENP) and the "Arab spring"

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Abstract

Purpose – Is the need for stability pre-empting the need for democratic values? How can the EU cope with two contradictory security requirements: the need to promote democratic norms and to secure geostrategic interests? This paper takes on the security-democracy dilemma in a complex way that transcends the realpolitik frame overshadowing the analysis of the EU's policy orientation in the Southern Mediterranean while considering its normative role as a fig leaf for security interests.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper investigates the EU's foreign policy orientation reflected in the ENP in terms of the two logics of action of consequentialism and appropriateness. Tracing changes at the policy level over time between 2011 and 2015, the paper zooms into the implementation of the "new" ENP in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia to highlight additional variation across countries.

Findings – Building on a document analysis of the official declarations for the policy-making level and of ENP action plans for the implementation level, the paper argues that local political dynamics and the level of the EU's threat perception shape the EU's response to the partner countries.

Keywords Arab spring, ENP, Democracy promotion, democracy-security dilemma, logic of action

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

While democracy and security have long been the leitmotifs of European policies in the Mediterranean, many commentators have criticized them as geared primarily toward preserving the bloc's security, stability and geo-strategic interests rather than promoting normative democratic values. In the event, the eruption of the Arab uprisings in 2011 and the removal of authoritarian leaders in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya threw the EU's long-held approach toward the region into disarray, as it raised doubts about the stability of authoritarian regimes in the Mediterranean Neighborhood. As some scholars hastened to describe the events of the Arab Spring as a "Fourth Wave" of democratization hitting the shores of North Africa (Howard and Hussain, 2013; Sadiki, 2015), the European Union interpreted this historical moment as a window of opportunity for democratic transition.

Popular demonstrations flooding the Arab region with the aim of overthrowing the autocratic rulers pushed the EU to review its policies toward the Southern Mediterranean Neighbors. Former High Representative Catherine Ashton announced in February 2011 that there should be a "fundamental review" of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in response to emerging challenges in the region. The version of ENP issued in 2011 consequently articulated a threefold strategy: building deep democracy, securing economic development, and facilitating people-to-people contact (Bauer, 2015).

The "people-to-people" approach in particular was aimed at empowering civil society and paving the way for a smooth democratic transformation. The actual unfolding of the Arab uprisings, however, placed different countries on forking paths, rendering the new all-encompassing "deepening democracy" tactic of the ENP impotent. As the crisis developed in unpredictable ways across the region, some EU member states engaged in armed intervention in Libya while the EU as a whole limited its democracy funding in Tunisia and prioritized security and stability issues in Egypt. In the end, the fluid local contexts of the Southern partners pushed the union to adopt a "lowest common denominator" approach to handle diverging outcomes among partner countries.

Developments after the Arab Spring reproduced the traditional democracy-security dilemma and called into question the normative foundation and proactive role of the EU. In November 2015, the EU overhauled the ENP and replaced the oft-cited reference to the "ring of friends" with the "ring of fire" (Charlemagne, 2014). The new version represents a noticeable downgrading of the ENP's ambitions in the region. While the 2011 review aimed at providing EU-neighborhood relations with a more forward-looking and sustainable framework in response to increasing popular expectations of the Arab uprisings, the latest review was driven by a wide-ranging threat perception among decision-making circles in Brussels amid the protracted conflicts in Syria and Libya, the rise of ISIS/Da'esh, and corresponding waves of internal and external displacement (COM, 2015d). Thus, the state of crisis in the Mediterranean has legitimized the *de facto* supremacy of inter-governmental relations over the "people-to-people" strategy, with potentially uncertain outcomes.

The puzzle of EU policy divergence toward Southern neighbors
The developments in the post Arab uprisings have pushed analysts to interrogate whether the new ENP approach constitutes a major policy shift or it is just "old wine in new wineskins". Is the need for stability pre-empting the need for democratic values? How can the EU cope with two often-contradictory security requirements: the need to promote democratic norms and to secure geostrategic interests? This paper takes on this security-democracy dilemma in a complex way that transcends the *realpolitik* frame overshadowing existing analysis of the EU's action in the Southern Mediterranean and considers its normative role as a fig leaf for actual material and security interests. It argues that the Arab uprising marked a shift in the logic of action of the policymakers in Brussels. The logic of action cannot be simply equated to foreign policy orientations or "choices" between "norms" and "interests", but rather, it underpins actors' dispositions toward fundamental actions and strategic choices (Olsen, 2009). The EU moved from the "Logic of Consequences" (LoC) – analyzes situations based on their anticipated cost and gains, and prioritizes security and material interests – toward the "Logic of Appropriateness" (LoA), which is driven by rules and normative beliefs and makes action appropriate under the new conditions.

The aim is not to show the 2011 ENP was a European call for security and stability through rhetoric of "deepening democracy". The paper rather examines the conditions under which the EU opts for one logic's mechanisms and/or combines both to reframe priorities

and orientation, and to consolidate polity. The ENP revision demonstrated how the two logics are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Policy enactment in this case retains some "heuristic utility" (Bicchi, 2010), as it underlines the gap between decision-making, implementation and assessment. The EU, therefore, adapts its normative role and material interests based on the contextual dynamics and redistribution of power between state and society in partner countries, curtailing the implementation of policy logics and altering the logics' mechanisms over time.

The article builds on a document analysis – of the official declarations and the Commission's communications for the policy-making level and of ENP action plans for the implementation level – to allow for comparison over time and across countries. It selects the three divergent cases of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya based on their different political trajectories in the aftermath of the uprisings. While Tunisia heeded a lesson of a smooth negotiated transition, Egypt witnessed a new authoritarian crackdown and Libya slipped into a civil war. The EU Commission had different disposition toward these political events, which accordingly motivated its policy choices and action plans in these countries.

In the following, the paper first brings into focus the European Union's initially vigilant reaction to unexpected events in the Southern Mediterranean and contextualizes the ENP version introduced in May 2011. Second, it elucidates how uncertain political transformation in the Southern neighborhood pushed the EU to vacillate between the two logics of actions, i.e. the LoC and the LoA, triggered security concerns, and hindered "deepening democracy" efforts with the EU's partner societies. It then offers an analysis of the EU's action plan in three particular cases (Tunisia, Egypt and Libya). In the fourth section, it demonstrates how volatile local contexts reproduced security-democracy dilemma in the latest ENP version in 2015 and set the LoC in motion. Finally, it introduces a new "logic of democratic solidarity and exemplarity" that bases the EU's action on a more reflexive and inclusive approach to the changing neighborhood, in a manner that balances security considerations with democratic norms.

The Arab uprisings and the EU: from risk-aversion to risk-sharing in the Southern Mediterranean

The launching of the ENP in 2003 was supposed to herald a new beginning in EU - Mediterranean relations. This version of the document articulated a "Wider Europe" strategy, which focused explicitly on proximity, prosperity and poverty as the three characteristics that define the main challenges and opportunities of neighborhood partners. Later, in 2011, the EU announced a "new" approach to support political transformation processes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), one that no longer indicates proximity as a uniting feature (Bouris, 2016, pp. 11,12; COM, 2011e). Instead, it focuses on the absence of "deep and sustainable democracy". Catherine Ashton stated in her speech at the European Parliament, Strasbourg, on 27 September 2011:

> [. . .] our response is built on the need to acknowledge past mistakes and listen without imposing. We are doing exactly that and it requires perseverance and sustained commitment. Success should translate into what I have called "deep democracy".

By this point, the EU had extended positive conditionality under the rubric of "more-for-more", as more reforms were to bring more concessions from the EU (money, market and mobility) to support political transformation in the MENA region. In addition, the idea of deep democracy and building civil society had become a trending theme of high-level deliberations and EU commission policy statements (Balfour, 2012).

By the end of 2011, the European Commission presented a regulatory proposal to establish an expeditious program to facilitate policy implementation and financial transfers in the context of the new ENP. A European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) replaced the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument to bundle all available financial resources and to speed up the implementation of the "more-for-more" strategy. A differentiation approach stood as the cornerstone of the ENI framework. The regulation outlined for the first time that the partner country "shall be differentiated in form and amounts according to the partner country's commitment to reforms and its progress in building deep and sustainable democracy, [. . .] in implementing agreed reform objectives" (COM, 2011f). The regulation also demarcated for the first-time measures for imposing negative conditionality, that is, the partial suspension of the Union's support to a partner country that "fails to observe the principles of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (COM, 2011f). The new focus of the ENI, however, raises several questions in regard to the EU democracy promotion policy before 2011. To what extent did the newly proclaimed democracy promotion objectives differ from the EU's rhetoric of good governance prior to 2011? How did these changes take place? How would these changes translate into effective instruments to meet the new goals?

Democracy promotion tied to development aid has long been one of the main strategic tools of the EU's foreign policy in the Mediterranean. Democracy has been a salient theme in the EU's key policy documents – Lisbon Treaty, Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership, European Security Strategy (ESS), European Development Policy and ENP (Singh, 2016). As Powel (2010: 196) put it, "democracy promotion becomes embroiled in processes of rational calculation" of the EU to introduce good governance policies, to fight poverty and stimulate development, and subsequently to build peace and stability (Powel, 2008).

Thus, the EU's orientation toward the Southern neighborhood before 2011 was characterized by a dilemma between the EU's stability and democratization goals (Pace, 2010). The good governance framework was based on consequentialist logic, strategic constellations and the political choices of state leaders and oppositions to undertake policy changes and assess its outcomes. It prioritized stabilized authoritarianism as a best course of action to first serve as a buffer against Islamic extremism and illegal migration, and second as a guarantee of the bloc's own economic and security interests, including a continuous flow of oil and maintaining a *modus vivendi* with Israel (Jan Wouters, 2013). It was not evident, though, why authoritarian regimes should respond positively to external democracy promotion efforts, in particular given the unique combination of authoritarian regimes and strong statehood. By delegating political actions to individual countries' bilateral relations, a wide schism between the policy initiatives and their implementation became salient (Balfour, 2012, pp. 28-33; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2011).

The Arab Spring in 2011 marked a potential key juncture involving the adaptation of the EU's ENP and democracy promotion rhetoric in the context of a new challenging environment after the collapse of political regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, as popular movements successfully confronted repressive regimes and toppled autocrats in these countries (Bicchi, 2009). The ENP review process at this stage entailed consultation with local civil society organizations parallel to governments' dialogue. The new "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity" epitomized a fundamental turn in the Mediterranean policy toward a more intense reflection on Southern Mediterranean partners' local contexts. The EU privileged the LoA and declared its normative commitment to democracy promotion.

Vacillation between the "logic of consequences" and the "logic of appropriateness" in the aftermath of the uprisings

The Arab uprisings marked a significant shift in the policy prioritization of the ENP. The EU moved away from its short-term calculus of material security interest, such as preventing conflict and setting up stable alliances, to a more long-term orientation that includes the risky policy of democracy promotion. The EU, therefore, built on the positive momentum of local actors and grounded its strategic action on a LoA that prioritizes the EU's normative role in democracy promotion (Olsen, 1996; Carothers, 2010).

My goal here is to capture the interplay between local dynamics in the neighbor countries and the EU's own threat perception in constructing the bloc's foreign policy outlook over time. It is a thorny task to fit different motivational reasoning and logics of action into a single framework, as the choice of logic is not static and changes over time in relation to actor's cognitive disposition (Youngs, 2013).

As it is shown in Table I, the security–democracy nexus may be broken down into three different strategic logics of action:

(1) When the political process in the "other" country is in flux and the level of threat is high, it offers the EU perspective clarity on the short-term security goals that involve tempering the radicalization that reinforces terrorism. The EU under these conditions opts for the LoC and short-term security interests become more prominent.

(2) Conversely, when power dynamics between state and society are stable and domestic players in the neighbor country show some degree of cooperation and commitment to open democratic process, the EU's LoA and democracy promotion tools become more salient. The positive momentum of the local actor gives the EU clear behavioral guidance for policy choice and makes it more likely that the LoA will dominate.

Level of threat perception Local political dynamics	High security threat	Low security threat
Instable and uncertain context	LoC Perspective clarity on the short-term security goals to temper the radicalization e.g. Libya	LoA ← → LoC Institutionalization of sequential ordering logics of action, so that different phases follow different logics and the basis of actions changes over time in a predictable and pre-emptive way e.g. Egypt before Morsi's ascent to power
Degree of commitment to open democratic process	LoA ← → LoC Institutionalization of chronological ordering logics of action, so that different phases follow different logics and the bases of actions change over time in a predictable and pre-emptive way e.g. Egypt under Morsi's reign till his ousting from office	LoA The positive momentum of local actor, gives the EU clear behavioral guidance and make it more likely that the LoA will dominate e.g. Tunisia

Table I.
Variation in the degree of stability of political governance in partner countries, the EU's threat perception and the EU's logics of action

(3) Between these two poles, there is a third possible trajectory, wherein the two logics of action tend to be invoked sequentially. The EU implements both logics when there is high threat perception but the partner country has a degree of democratic and institutional building commitment, or when there is an instable political context with low security threat. Hence, a policy may constitute sequential ordering logics of action, so that different phases follow different logics and the bases of action change over time in a predictable and pre-emptive way.

Before the outburst of the demonstrations in 2011, what the EU deemed possible *vis-à-vis* democratic change in the MENA region was focused on economic development and political stability. The EU refrained from taking on a risky policy of prioritizing democracy promotion for the sake of short-term security interests (Radaelli, 2004). Rising threat perceptions from the local environment of the partner country may be interpreted here as a central hindering factor of democracy promotion. In the post-uprisings phase, decision makers in Brussels had to precipitously cut through the plethora of compound local contexts, which pushed the EU to assert its normative power in the Southern neighborhood. The LoA became increasingly noticeable and the EU pronounced its new "deepen democracy" strategy to influence partner societies through different mechanisms: "anchoring, imitation, confidence pulls" (Huber, 2015, p. 41). Thus, the EU reframed its policy orientation and policy foundation in the region. Vibrant civil society organizations became widely conceived as both bedrocks of successful democratic development and bulwarks against predatory power centers that breed violence (COM, 2011).

The European External Action Service (EEAS)-SPRING program's action fiche report of 2011 registered the pivotal role of local civil society organization in securing homegrown information flow to enhance the EU's policy outputs toward the region. The report noted that "consultations with civil society organizations, social partners and different community groups are envisaged as they are at the heart of a sustainable civil democratic modernization path "Spring" (COM, 2011a). The inclusion of a civil society consultation mechanism in the EU policy formulation process marked a significant change in existing policy instruments. Under the "more-for-more" policy frame introduced in 2011 ENP, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) was created to encourage bottom-up initiatives of democratic reforms in the Southern Mediterranean. The EED targets political parties, non-registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions and other "social partners" such as bloggers, social media activists, dependent media and journalists, foundations and educational institutions (Bauer, 2013). EED's financial sources are based on voluntary contributions, though it should be noted that after its emergence no member state made a firm pledge. Only Poland and Sweden made a declaration of intent to offer €5 to 10m, together with the Commission's contribution of €16 to 20m (Richter, 2012).

The EED Board of Governors discussed on 6 June 2013 the Endowment's key priorities and action plan that guided its operations from the inception phase through the end of 2013. The prime focus remained rhetorically on "respect for the rule of law, freedom of speech, an independent judiciary and impartial administration" (Nitoiu, 2015, p. 81). However, the plan lacked a clear vision on how the EED could potentially represent an important financial component of the EU political strategy of popular empowerment (Pace, 2014). The EED's guiding statement needed to spell out in clear terms how to identify and reach out beyond established civil society interlocutors and address the MENA people's basic political demands. Furthermore, supporting popular movements that are heterogeneous, fluid, diverse, decentralized, and often loosely structured is challenging. The foreign aid provider

could be denounced of meddling in internal affairs if they support organized movements that contest the practices of allied partner governments (Teti, 2012).

Taken together, one can conclude that the most imperative policy change in the ENP – the differentiated approach – was triggered mainly by regime changes in the Arab world. Improvements in policy implementation were contingent on the constraints that the EU encountered in its interaction with the Mediterranean partners (Tömmel, 2013, p. 24). The "deepening democracy" strategy was exposed to further risks amid contingent local processes of democratization in the Southern Mediterranean. This pushed the EU to revert to its traditional LoC and sometimes mix it with the LoA to emphasize its commitment to declared normative objectives.

Contingent domestic context of "partner societies": "deepening democracy" and geopolitical concerns

A reactive policy frame anchored in instruments such as the ENI and EED represented a fundamental revision of the logic of action of the EU's traditionally ill-thought-out democracy promotion policy in the Southern neighborhood. However, there is a need to assess the compatibility of the EU's LoA and normative goals with the nature of existing challenges entrenched in the politics of the region. The contingent domestic contexts revealed a wide gulf between the rhetoric of "deepening democracy" and the actual reality. Shifting away from a LoC that favors a stabilization paradigm toward supporting grass-roots democratization in the region merits a positive assessment. Nevertheless, it is not just a question of assuring political and civil rights, but also of how the domestic regulatory framework and institutional setting are conducive to the evolution of vibrant civil society.

Assuming a normative role and adopting an actor-centered democracy promotion approach in intricate and fluid situations of radical change is a highly risky venture. The new policy of the EU underestimated the medium- and long-term repercussions of the political development in the Arab region, which created a misalignment between security needs and security policies. The complexity of MENA societies and the heterogeneity of domestic players in the Southern neighbors produced different conceptions of democratic change among secular nationalists, Islamists, liberals and anarchists and, as a result, diverse political trajectories in the post-Arab Spring phase (Bauer, 2015, p. 14).

The impact of internal dynamics such as a country's domestic structures needs to be examined while assessing the EU's move toward the LoA to foster the role of civil society in the Mediterranean. The question of the democratic and normative role of the EU will be examined by embedding actors in their strategic environment in three cases: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. This in-depth examination of local contexts will show how the popular uprisings originating from inside society turned into conflictual and open-ended transformations which enhanced the threat perception of the EU member states' capitals and brought back the LoC as a preferred option in determining alternative courses of action.

Tunisia's smooth transition: low threat perception and conducive context of the EU's normative role

The scholarly literature on democratic transitions normally makes a distinction between the tasks of popular resistance within "civil society" that help to break down authoritarian rule, and the tasks of "political society" that help to navigate democratic rule. Effective political society brings different forces into agreement on plans for the supplanting of authoritarian structures and institutional engineering (Mora, 1998). In Tunisia, after the ousting of Ben Ali, a secure alliance has taken shape between the moderate Islamic movement and the liberal-leftist-religious-friendly parties. Post 2011, Tunisian political forces have explicitly

evoked the consensual legacy to reflect on their own thoughts and their hopes for the future of their country. Throughout roughly a decade, the Islamic movement claims to have developed its philosophical doctrine and harmonized it with democratic principles. Islamic and secular leaders have worked to overcome their mutual fears and distrust by crafting agreements and credible guarantees in institutional engineering process.

This cooperative legacy and cumulative collaborative experience between different political and social forces created a permissive domestic political environment for democratic reforms. The En-Nahda Party formed a coalition with the center-left Congress for the Republic and the left-wing party Et-Takafol to facilitate institutional engineering following Ben Ali's fall. The Trade Union Federation (UGTT), along with members of the Tunisian Union for Industry and Handicrafts (UTICA), the Tunisian League for Human Rights, and the National Order of Lawyers mediated the negotiations between En-Nahda and the opposition. After tense negotiations, Tunisian elites managed to come to an agreement to craft a new constitution that adheres to the pillars of democratic governance and civic state (Stepan, 2012, p. 93).

In this context, EU support for civil society has gained momentum in Tunisia after being obstructed by the previous autocratic regime. The EU funded several actions to strengthen the capacity building of civil society actors and promote an open dialogue. During the first phase of democratic reform, many civil society groups in the EU and its member states developed programs to strengthen their Tunisian counterparts and to promote a more structured dialogue between the EU and civil society organizations. Poland, for example, set up a financial and training program to support Tunisian civil society and democratic transition within the framework of Support for Democracy 2012. The program included projects aimed at not only developing civil society activities but also educating the participants on the significant role of active citizenry and their relation to the state in a functioning democratic context. Examples include "Project I: Training program for Tunisian youth non-governmental organizations (in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tunis)" and Project II, "Study visit to Poland for Tunisian local leaders" (Dandashly, 2014, pp. 43,44). Implementing these projects in the Tunisian permissive environment reflected the new shift of the ENP strategy to boost civil society alongside the traditional task, which targets polity and democratic institutions.

Since 2011, the EU Delegation in Tunisia has been responsible for roughly 70 projects worth €58.5m, funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Non-State Actors program (NSA), the Civil Society Facility and ENI. The projects reflect the EU's LoA and cover a wide range of issues, such as women's rights, promotion of democratic values, freedom of expression, and domestic monitoring of elections (COM, 2016a).

Egypt's feckless civil society: alternation between EU's normative power and re-enactment of its rhetoric of stability
Reflecting Egypt's status as a key geopolitical power in the EU's Mediterranean design, the Union has engaged in promoting democracy in that country for the past two decades, to achieve long-term stability (Franco, 2016). Soon after Mubarak stepped down in February 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) ran the country till the first presidential elections in the post-transition period took place in June 2012. In response to these developments, the EU launched a package in the amount of €20m to support civil society and approved programs of €132m to alleviate Egypt's socio-economic problems (COM, 2011b).

Contrary to Tunisia, Egypt has done remarkably little to create an effective political society in the post-Mubarak era. In a period of less than three years, Egypt had four different heads of the state, and seven cabinets with six different prime ministers. The instability in governments was accompanied by a change in the composition of the legislative body after the Islamists dominated the elected parliament in 2012. Contrary to the Islamists in the Tunisian case, Islamic forces received a much bigger piece of the pie in Egypt, and the liberal and secular forces were skeptical about any potential collaboration with them. Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's party had no well-articulated project to harmonize its Islamic ideology with democracy and its grandiose guarantee of personal freedoms (Hasso, 2015).

The introduction of Islamic forces to the Egypt-EU relationship was a new phenomenon. Islamists lacked any clear understanding of genuine democratic practices, which affected the appropriate role and argumentation of the EU in promoting democracy. The EU strategy paper issued in 2012 to amend the ENP entitled "Delivering on a new European Neighborhood Policy" stated that "Democratic transformation in a number of southern neighbors is bringing new political parties to the center of the political scene, in particular, but not exclusively, parties that have Islamic roots. The EU needs, and is open to developing its dialogue with these parties as well as with all democratically elected governments." The strategy paper also indicated that "the EU intends to broaden this engagement, in particular through the engagement of civil society organizations in the preparation and monitoring of action plans or similar documents." (COM, 2012a) Youth movements and women groups were constant attendees of all the EU consultation activities during the policy-planning phase in 2011.

Moreover, the proliferation of NGOs and other forms of licensed association was not a significant indicator of anchoring democratic rule. In Egypt, the combination of effectively inherited authoritarian power and the limited mobilizational capacities of NGOs prevented new social forces from playing an active political role in a transition period irrespective of their genuine democratic aspirations. Mubarak's regime strove to pit opposition forces against one another in ways that maximized the ruler's room for maneuver and restrained the opposition's capacity to establish alliances. According to Abdelrahman (2004, p. 1), in Mubarak's Egypt, civil society was "characterized by authoritarian and repressive tendencies. Moreover, its organizations, such as NGOs, often actively engaged in reproducing unequal relations and an unjust status quo rather than providing alternatives to existing systems of power". Under such circumstances, civil society institutions are more a reflection of authoritative structure than a mechanism of collective empowerment. Thus, political forces in Egypt, contrary to their counterparts in Tunisia, evoked a conflict-ridden legacy that impeded the meaningful operation of democracy promotion action.

Amid such a fluid context of transformation, the EU had to slip back into its consequentialist logic of analysis to assume the role of a "passive observer" that merely engaged in contradictory declaratory rhetoric (Schumacher, 2016, p. 563). The LoA was subjected to constraints of unpredictable consequences and the EU had to refine its previous decision of supporting grass-roots movements. In response to former President Morsi's adoption of a constitutional decree in December 2012 which was supposed to give him a sweeping judicial power, Ashton stressed the need to have "strategic patience" with Egypt to maintain political stability (Pinfari, 2013), whereas the European Parliament asked for the suspension of any budgetary support to Egypt "if no major progress is made regarding respect for human rights and freedoms, democratic governance and the rule of law" (COM, 2016b).

Yet the European Court of Auditors made the most explicit criticism toward the EU's aid program to Egypt, describing it as "ineffective [….] in improving governance." It also underscored the poor record in areas such as women and minorities rights and highlighted how the EU reconsidered some aid programs and canceled a €4m fund for enhancing capacity of CSOs because of "lack of commitment form the Egyptian authorities." The EU showed a degree of dissatisfaction with Morsi's policies, as a consequence, the EU responded to the military action and the removal of Mohamed Morsi with a degree of caution.

The Foreign Affairs Council convened and issued a declaration reiterating its "deep concerns about the situation in Egypt". The Council called upon the army not to play a "political role in a democracy" and to release all political detainees, including Morsi. Ashton reacted mildly, inviting "all sides to rapidly return to the democratic process and condemning "all violent acts". The EU, however, refrained from dubbing the military action a coup, to secure a stable alliance with the new ruling elites. Only on 14 August when the main international human rights organizations strongly condemned the forcible dispersal of the Morsi's supports sit-ins, Ashton unequivocally condemned violence, called on the security forces "to exercise utmost restraint", described the "toll of death and injury" as "shocking" and finally asked the EU's foreign ministers to take "appropriate measures in response to the situation in Egypt." Effectively, no appropriate measures were taken to respond to internal repression, despite the initial talks between some EU's foreign ministers about the potential imposition of trade sanctions (Pinfari, 2013, pp. 464-266).

Libya's civil war: high level of threat perception and the EU's vital security interests

Under the banner of his "permanent revolution", the Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi had established a post-colonial state on patronage to kin and clan. Qaddafi had ruled the country without a modern public-sector bureaucracy and police apparatus; he relied, instead, on kin networks to provide security service. Libyan society and the military institution, therefore, were fractured by kinship and regional cleavages. When the regime's capacity started to unravel at the beginning of the social turmoil, the military divided into two camps, where some forces joined the opposition and tried to deploy sophisticated military equipment to take over power. Whereas social protests in Tunis and Cairo successfully pushed autocratic leaders to step down and ensue political transformation, Tripoli slipped into a protracted civil war that has lasted well past the death of al-Qaddafi (Anderson, 2011).

The EU's response to the civil war in Libya was more outspoken and determined. The bloc undertook wide-ranging drastic measures against the systematic human rights infringements and brutal repression carried out by the regime. Restrictive measures included arms embargoes, asset freezes, a travel ban and trade sanctions. In the meantime, the domestic political context was not favorable to democratic and institutional reform measures. Revitalizing trust across clans and provinces, rebuilding public administration, and constructing political parties became the most vexing and daunting tasks of the post-Qaddafi regime. This lack of social and political cohesion hampered any prospect for the EU's normative role in democracy promotion. Thus, the EU prioritized the short-term persistent security issue by "integrating the militias that participated in toppling Qaddafi in the security forces and military and declaring the south of the country a closed military zone and formally shutting the southern borders" (COM, 2012b).

The consecutive Libyan Governments have failed to disarm the militias and restore security and stability, sparking European fears that Libya would become a failed state on the EU's borders. Thus, the EU opted to focus on security concerns and humanitarian and

technical aid. The Union's involvement in Libya has been much reduced when compared to Tunisia and Egypt. The EU has defined its priorities in Libya in three support areas:

(1) improving the quality of human capital;

(2) increasing the sustainability of economic and social development; and

(3) addressing jointly the challenge of managing migration.

Following the social upheaval, the EU activated a number of thematic programs under the framework of the Development Cooperation Instrument DCI (COM, 2011d). The security sector received €24.3m allocated for criminal investigations, security sector reform, Physical Security and Stockpile Management of conventional weapons and ammunition, and disposal of unused munitions (COM, 2013a).

However, the migration issue has been the topmost security issue of the EU strategic policy toward Libya. Migratory flows' management from Libya was delineated as a significant EU interest in the National Indicative Program (2011-2013). Libya is "both a destination country for economic migrants and a transit country for irregular migrants and people in need of international protection, heading towards the EU". Under the thematic program for asylum and migration, the EU allocated 33 per cent of the total fund to support Libyan governments in dealing with migration flows and to provide assistance and voluntary repatriation to the migrants. At the beginning of 2014, the EU announced a new program of €10m to support human rights-based migration management and asylum system. The main target of this program is to strengthen administrative capacities of the Libyan authorities in regard to border management and control (COM, 2013b).

Still, the EU supplemented the LoC with purposeful logic of supporting democracy in Libya as a part of long-term peace-building process among combatants. In 2014, Libya benefited from a thematic program for Civil Society and Local Authorities, albeit with a modest fund of €5m. The EU set up the "Civil Initiative Libya" to establish four training centers (in Benghazi, Tripoli, Misrata and Sabha) to increase the capacity of grassroots organizations. The program aims to create a conducive environment for the social sector and promote political dialogue with national and local authorities (COM, 2013b).

In sum, examining the three local contexts shows how the EU relegated democracy promotion priorities to each context to frame its substantive interest in different hierarchies of logics. The monolithic approach in dealing with the region in the aftermath of the popular uprisings in a way that would facilitate lengthy consensus building between diverse societal forces reduced the EU's strategic logic of action to stability and security concerns as a sequential ordering logic that would lead to democratization on the long run (COM, 2015b).

ENP's review of November 18, 2015: back to the logic of consequences

The EU launched a joint consultation paper on March 4, 2015, meant to start a debate with member states and other stakeholders on how to revise the ENP. The paper called for "a need to understand between the different aspirations, values and interests of our partners" (COM, 2015a). The EU revisited its incentive-based approach summarized in the motto "more for more" and downgraded its ambitions in the Southern neighborhood in the ENP's Review of 18 November 2015.

The EU reshuffled its strategic priorities and logic of action to overcome protracted migration problems across its borders, and respond to the Islamic State spreading its tentacles in the Mediterranean (Singh, 2016). In her press release, the EU High

Representative Federica Mogherini declared that "the new ENP will take stabilization as its main political priority" (COM, 2015d). The latest ENP entails acceptance of and thus support for autocratic rule in the Southern neighborhood. It reflects more clearly the EU's security concerns, and its normative role is no longer deemed appropriate to the occasion or high on the agenda. The revised strategy recognizes not only the ENP's past failures, but also the EU's inability and, so it seems, reluctance to hold on to its values and norms amid the state of crisis pervading the region. The ENP abolishes any reference to positive ("more for more") or negative ("less for less") conditionality. Instead, it is predicated rather explicitly on the assumption that "holding on to, and strengthening "partners" – a euphemism for non-democratic regimes in the Southern neighborhood – is conducive to containing instability" (Schumacher, 2016). The EU recovers its LoC and pragmatic orientation, as it perceives the autocratic rule in a post- "Arab Spring" context as less evil when contrasted with potential turbulence, state failure, and radicalism.

For example, according to an updated country progress report, the EU faces difficulties in supporting civil society groups in Egypt because of governmental stricter controls (COM, 2015c). Banning foreign funds has long been an effective tool in that country to disempower and undermine domestic civil society. The Ministry of Social Solidarity registers and licenses NGOs and monitors their budgets and activities as stipulated by an amendment to the already restrictive Law on Community Associations and Foundations – Law 84 of 2002 – restricting foreign support for civil society and targeting international flows of democracy aid. The legal constraints hinder essential material and technical assistance to social groups that monitor the government, promote human rights, and support the democratic process (Weinstein, 2013, p. 78). Therefore, the EU's cooperation with civil society has suffered because of the lengthy process for authorizing foreign project funding and suspended substantial number of projects, including those delivering critical basic public services. The bloc, however, officially interprets these restrictions in light of "difficult regional and internal security context with Egypt that confronting the ongoing insurgency of militant groups and the escalating threat of Da'esh". The EU's statement is obviously neutral, not raising any critical remarks to the Egyptian partner (COM, 2015c).

In a similar vein, despite the EU's support for democratic elections in Libya, most of the EU's instruments in that country are limited to a financial and technical nature, meant to help stabilize the country, tackle urgent issues and sustain the borders' control. Only in Tunisia, a specific Program to Support Civil Society worth €7m is currently under implementation. The program contributes to the capacity building of civil society organizations, so that they can better advance the democratic development in the country. The program "facilitates dialogue and partnerships between civil society organizations and public actors, and makes recommendations for legislative reviews related to actions promoted by NGOs as well as their working environment." The EU also co-founded the creation of the "jamaity.org platform" in 2014, bringing together more than 1600 Tunisian civil society organizations and offering a platform for NGOs to coordinate, cooperate, network, and to implement sustained action plan for participation and building partnerships (Dandashly, 2014, p. 43).

Recognizing the differences between partners and reflecting the needs of each country concerning the priority areas of its partnership with the EU, the recent ENP shifts away from a regionalist approach to bilateralism and promises even greater differentiation and localism than was already the case in past versions. The EU acknowledges the limitation to its leverage and limits its role to creating the conditions for positive development. The states of the Southern Mediterranean, for their part, continue to "cherry pick" policy priorities from

the EU package that correspond to their own socio-economic interests (market access, development aid, technological innovation) or do not affect the stability of their political power (women's rights, children's welfare and social projects). The ambitious projects of democracy promotion have been officially set on the back burner by both sides of the 'partnership'.

Logic of democratic solidarity and exemplarity: toward a more reflexive and didactic approach

The EU has been juggling with its normative aspirations and realist interests but hardly corresponding to the needs and expectations of the partner societies. Shifting between different "logics" would not pose a problem as such, the misconception of the democratic discourse and sources of democratic legitimacy, however, led to the overall ineffectual claim of democracy promotion over the past three decades in the Mediterranean. The external promotion of democracy cannot lay the groundwork for the European liberal democratic model through socialization and diffusion mechanisms. Nor does it create vibrant domestic civil society, stimulate new agendas or reframe local struggles. On the contrary, external democratic support allows partner regimes to take on a defensive position playing the role of guards of national sovereignty against "foreign" intervention in domestic affairs.

The Arab uprising proved that popular movements could change the status quo. This behooves the EU to regularly interrogate the contextual sources of democratic legitimacy and continually engage with the plight of societal groups pursuing their basic rights and freedom. However, painting the entire region with a broad brush without clear specification of the pivotal players and the balance of power between them, made EU's assertion on "partner society" overly abstract or lofty.

Indeed, the EU's "core strategies" of the LoA (e.g. election monitoring, leadership workshops, twinning programs, academic exchanges, etc.) have very little to do with the grievances of ordinary citizens at the local level. Adherence to the principle of public inclusivity as part and parcel of EU dialogue about the future of democracy highlights the importance of the underlying ideals of mutual respect and exemplifies the merits of democratic norms in practice. Supporting civil society groups and offering deliberative space for them can go in tandem with inter-governmental relations with the Southern neighborhood. The inclusion principle does not entail acceptance; the principle merely promises that different and opposing political viewpoints can be exposed freely and equally.

Decoupling the pursuit of democracy promotion from elite-oriented considerations, helps articulate an alternative "logic" of democratic solidarity. The new logic of solidarity action aims at asserting the priority of the domestic sources of political legitimacy over any stability concerns (as the LoC emphasizes), encouraging a nonlinear perception of democratic development, and highlighting the importance of time and the didactic dimension (what the LoA lacks).

The logic of solidarity is predicated on a nonlinear perception of democratic progression and preparation for extra-institutional actions. External players must come to terms with the fact that democratic transition may not always be linear and that civic actors may choose to engage in nonviolent, extra-systemic tactics to advance socio-political change. At the same time, popular movements in the MENA have shown that contentious practices do not straightforwardly lead to clear political transformation and the restoration of stability. As contentious means entail the potential eruption of violence, especially if the rebels have acute cumulative grievances, international actors can minimize the risk of violent instability by investing in capacity-building and training programs to maintain nonviolent discipline and maximize resilience.

A nonfinancial aid approach and developing an effective learning environment using a range of historical exemplar cases would be more credible for capacity building that helps peer-to-peer learning and mentoring than institutionally-oriented training. Examples cannot be thought of as mere exemplifications of certain courses of action. They instead offer a space for reflective judgment and serve as premises of arguments in the domain of public reason that would trigger change.

The crushing of the Arab Spring revived scholarly debates about the cultural preconditions for democracy that make authoritarian rule so intractable in the MENA region. Those debates would do well to take heed of the Latin American example and the scholarship it generated during the last decades of the twentieth century. Following several aborted "waves" of democratic experimentation in the late 1970s – citizens in 16 of the 19 countries in Latin America lived under authoritarian rule. Scholarship on the region concluded that authoritarianism was, if not inevitable, at least the normal pattern of governance in Latin American societies. The parallels to more recent literature on the resilience or robustness of authoritarian rule in the Arab world are remarkable.

Drawing parallels between the position of the radical left in Latin America during the 1960s that polarized societies and led to the establishment of highly repressive authoritarian regimes on the one hand, and the role of radical Islamists in the Middle East on the other, could help civil society groups to reflect on their educative role and to shape their future agenda. Latin American examples show how civil society engaged in the production of ideological "socialist renovation" (Garretón, 1989), which led to the re-emergence of a new version of a moderate left since 2006. The essence of the "socialist renovation" was to de-Leninize socialism by breaking with the notion of a revolutionary conquest of state power and re-conceptualizing socialism as a pluralistic and open-ended process of "deepening democracy". This analogy would offer a reflective space for social forces in partner societies to mull over the existing transition predicament and redefine their tasks to embark on a didactic project that enables tolerance, pluralism and inclusiveness.

Conclusion

The Arab uprisings caught the EU by surprise, limiting its capacity to see through the uncertain democratic trajectory and to put together a realistic political response. Consequently, the Union has responded to the Arab Spring with a broad range of tools, from claiming a normative role, offering humanitarian assistance and revising some modalities of long-term programmatic policies. In response to the Arab uprisings, the EU's narrative of democracy promotion served as a powerful rationale for its political, economic, and security interests in the Mediterranean. The EU initially issued a new ENP in 2011 based on three pillars: deepening democracy, economic development, and people-to-people contacts. The "deep democracy" concept consists mainly of the explicit inclusion of civil society, and the "more for more" incentives heralded as a fundamental step change in the EU's logic of action and strategic orientation toward the region.

However, deepening democracy did not withstand the test of implementation. Assisting civil society actors whose structures and dynamics are unfamiliar to donors and might involve confrontational campaign tactics is challenging. The challenges are more serious when citizens are mobilized to encounter the abuses of governments that are allies of major foreign aid providers. These realities in a variety of different contexts throughout the region rendered the new ENP strategic orientation of democracy promotion untenable.

In November 2015, once more the EU overhauled the ENP and substituted the frequently used terms of the "ring of friends" for "ring of fire". That is, decision-makers in Brussels have shifted away from the LoA that was the cornerstone of the ENP version of 2011 toward a LoC that heightens security concerns amid the state of crisis flooding the region with the rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Despite its philanthropic essence, the ENP 2015 is caught up in geopolitics and driven by the EU's threat perception related to issues of migration, energy, and combating radicalism. The EU has awakened its security interests and returned to stability as the most preferable rational choice in the Mediterranean region at the expense of newly volatile democracy.

However, there is still a need to develop solidarity logic of action to meet partner societies' aspirations. The logic of solidarity brings time dimension into the analysis and bridges the dichotomous choice between the two other logics (i.e. LoC and LoA). The Logic of Solidarity is seen here as one of several constraints within which both dynamics of consequentiality and appropriateness operate. Therefore, the EU may refine its decisions contingent upon the local dynamics in partner countries by didactically offering inclusive programs, reflexively investigating probable choices on non-members and preemptively adapting to them.

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