

*First Draft-All comments are welcomed*

## **The EU and the Southern Neighbors in the Wake of the Arab Spring**

### **The Democracy-Security Dilemma**

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#### Abstract

For more than two decades, the European Union (EU) has increasingly been using soft power to consolidate democracy, spread human rights and market economy principles to its neighbors (east and south) in addition to maintaining security and stability on its expanding borders. While economic cooperation, security and immigration areas were the most advanced in the relations with the neighbors (mainly southern), the story with respect to democratization was a failure. Since the Barcelona Process in 1995, many agreements, summits and policies between the EU and the MENA took place showing a combination of external EU territorilization and functionalism at work. However, functionalism was more dominant as the focus of the EU was on security at the expense of spreading European democratic values and human rights. The EU has used democracy promotion as a tool and not as a goal with respect to the southern neighbors. So the question this chapter seeks to answer is: With the Arab Spring events, is there a change in the EU democratization attitude regarding the MENA region to support a democratic change that will bring the neighbors closer to the EU norms and values? To answer this question, the paper argues that despite the Arab Spring revolts; the EU continues to pursue an interest-based realist approach to maintain stability and security on its southern borders.

## 1. Introduction

The decades of European Union (EU) engagement in democracy promotion, human rights, and civil liberties in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) countries<sup>1</sup> – mainly southern Arab neighbors – has had very limited positive results. This EU democratization failure has been recognized in the EU reports in the wake of the Arab Spring. The EU has never really pushed for democratization due to the continuous fear from security threats and chaos on its southern borders. This fear pushed the EU to apply a very soft approach instead of strict negative conditionality with the Middle East and North African countries (MENA).<sup>2</sup> And as the security concern is the main concern for the EU, the EU will continue to avoid using negative conditionality and focus more on the soft power approach and socialization.

The Arab Spring events have been a surprise to the EU, its member states and the entire the Western World. The EU and its member states were surprised to see their ally in Tunisia (Tunisian former president Ben Ali) falls without being able to help him. The Tunisian events spilled over to other neighbors. The Moroccan King Mohammed VI tried to absorb the pressure and announced some constitutional reforms. Despite the democratic measures these reforms entailed; they kept all security, military, religious and veto powers in the King's hands. Libya and Egypt's leaders took a more aggressive attitude towards their people which resulted by toppling them. As for Syria, over two years have passed with neither side (neither the regime nor the opposition) able to resolve the conflict.

The history of EU engagement in the region has increased significantly since the end of the Cold War. The EU has been using soft power (Nye, 1990) to consolidate democracy, spread human rights and market economy principles to its neighbors (east and south) in addition to

maintaining security and stability on its expanding borders. While economic cooperation, security and immigration areas were the most advanced in the relations with the neighbors (mainly southern), EU democratization efforts ranged between a very limited success to a total failure. For most parties involved (the EU on one hand and ENP countries regimes (the Arab regimes in this paper) on the other), it was a win-win situation, third countries gain economic and institutional benefits, while the EU maintain secure borders and guarantee the cooperation of the MENA countries on immigration, organized crime, border control issues.

All the agreements, summits and cooperation between the EU and the MENA since the Barcelona process in 1995 show a combination of external EU territorialization and functionalism at work. The EU has become “a geopolitical stronger actor involved in spatial ordering not only within its territory but also in relation to its close neighbours” (Fritsch, 2009: 7). The components of this territorialization include the transfer of “some foreign policy competencies” to the supranational level; strengthening of the external borders with the increased internal integration as a result of Schengen; and the increased use of soft power such with the enlargement and ENP (Fritsch, 2009: 7). Through the territorialization of security and immigration, the EU seeks to solve the border security and any kind of threat posed by terrorist groups, organized crime, illegal immigration by cooperating with third countries in the MENA. Economic carrots provided by the EU push the neighbors to adopt firmer policies regarding borders’ control and security. This argument could be accepted if taken from a geographical perspective as the region is very close to the EU – especially southern EU members. However, and at the same time this could be considered as a matter of functionality in which the EU cooperate with those countries to solve common problems (whether economic or security) despite the geographic proximity issue. This issue clashes with some of the territorialization principles since despite the geographic location, the MENA countries have significant cultural, political,

economic differences not only with the EU but even among themselves. Despite this fact, we have seen a strengthening in the relations with some countries in North Africa for example (advanced status of Morocco in 2008; strong relations with Tunisia under Ben Ali, Algeria and even Libya in the last years prior to the toppling of Qadhafi).

One could expect that the Arab Spring events would have created a paradigm shift in the EU democracy promotion policy towards the MENA, so the question this paper seeks to answer is: With the Arab Spring events, is there a change in the EU democratization attitude regarding the MENA to support/push for a democratic change that bring the neighbors closer to the EU norms and values? To answer this question, the paper argues that despite the Arab Spring revolts, the EU continues to pursue an interest-based approach based on both functionalism and territorialization to maintain stability and security on its southern borders.

The next section discusses the literature review and the analytical framework of the paper. This will be followed by analyzing the EU involvement in the MENA. The fourth section examines the changes in the EU relations with the MENA countries in the wake of the Arab Spring. The final section concludes with the main findings.

## 2. EU Engagement in the MENA: Current Literature and its Critique

International relations scholars have been studying the effect of international players, such as international organizations and influential countries, on domestic change and influence. From Central and East European Countries, going through the east neighbors to the Arab World, all of these regions have been under this influence at various levels. The EU has been engaged in democracy promotion, human rights and civil liberties in the Mediterranean countries for over two decades with results ranging from a very limited success to a total failure. This

ineffectiveness resulted from the EU view to the Mediterranean from the security and stability angle even if that meant stabilizing authoritarian regimes and maintaining the fragile security and cooperation of those regimes in fighting terrorism and illegal immigration. So the EU considered democracy promotion as a tool and not a goal by itself. And since it was viewed as negatively correlated with security and stability, the EU and other Western powers such as the United States (US) supported the authoritarian regimes that maintained this fragile security. The EU and the West have been fearful of the threat not originating from military aggression; but due to the consequences of political instability in these countries (terrorism, crime, religious extremism, oppression, violations of human and civil rights, etc.) and the problems of illegal immigration arising from their poor economic performance and political oppression. The 2011 review of the ENP highlighted the lack of EU effectiveness stating that the current uprisings in the region “have shown that EU support to political reforms in neighbouring countries has met with limited results (European Commission, 2011: 1).

The incidents of September 11 have contributed to the feeling that more cooperation is needed in the political/security arena and not only in the field of economics and trade. With September 11 incidents, democratization, social and economic reforms in the MENA gained momentum. The West considered economic, political and social failures of the MENA regimes to have led to the increase in terrorist behaviours that contributed to attacks all over the globe (see Youngs, 2006). However, the EU priority was always given to security and stability even if it meant turning a blind eye to democratic violations. The same story applies to the American approach that also favoured stability and alliances with the authoritarian elites at the expense of democratic reforms. The major difference between the US and the EU strategies has been the US mainly used a bottom-up approach supporting NGOs and civil society groups while the EU adopted a top-bottom approach dealing with the elites and governments of the neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of what democratization approach implemented, cooperation with the Arab authoritarian regimes in the war against terrorism and fundamental groups took priority for the EU and other international actors. This situation resulted in no serious democratization attempts in the region that might cause a regime change and a rise of Islamic parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or *En-Nahda* in Tunisia for example.

## 2.1 The European Neighborhood Policy: Leverage, Linkage, and Governance

The EU's democratization efforts outside Europe have been incoherent and weak (Schimmelfennig 2007), mostly based on "linkage", "leverage", and, more recently, "governance" (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011). Linkage is a bottom-up approach in which the EU supports civil society groups hoping that this will be reflected in a change at the political level. Leverage is a top-down approach that targets the political system, i.e., governments, expecting that they will implement democratic reforms. While linkage is mainly based on socialization, leverage uses political conditionality (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011). The EU applies positive and negative conditionality in which the compliance and positive reforms are rewarded while noncompliance and lack of reforms are sanctioned. However, "EU's leverage and effectiveness might be severely limited due to the lack of attractive incentives"<sup>4</sup> (Gawrich, Melnykovska and Schweickert, 2010: 6).

These two models of leverage and linkage were implemented with a focus on the former since relations with neighboring countries have been mostly based on cooperation, as negative conditionality has been on hold for a long time. While leverage has never been implemented fully as political conditionality has never been applied, leverage is highly dependent on the targeted country's compliance. Leverage is effective when the targeted country cooperates and the

domestic environment is supportive. With the launch of the ENP, a new “indirect way of democratic governance promotion” (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011: 895) was created. This new method targets various sectors and “locates the notion of democracy at the level of the principles that guide administrative rules and practices in the conduct of public policy” (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011: 895). So this territorialization aims at exporting “forms of political organization and governance that are typical and distinct for Europe” beyond the EU borders (east and south neighbors) (Olsen, 2002: 924).

### 2.1.1 Limits to the EU’s linkage, leverage, and governance

The continuous fear from terrorism, illegal immigration and security issues in addition to the importance of the smooth access to natural resources have influenced the relations between the EU and the Arab World. It pushed the EU to focus more on the security and economic dimension of the relations at the expense of human rights and democracy. Furthermore, the Arab dictators succeeded in convincing the EU that they are the guardians of stability and the main line of defense against the spread of radicalism and terrorism in the region. Arab dictators supported their position by relying on what happened in Algeria’s parliamentary elections (December 26, 1991) resulting in the Islamists (*Front Islamique du Salut*) winning a majority of seats, which ended with a military coup and a civil war. In addition, the examples of Hamas winning the January 25, 2006 Palestinian legislative elections (considered by most observers as free and fair elections) and Hizbullah in Lebanon added to the fear of a similar scenario spreading in the rest of the region<sup>5</sup>: The spread of Islamic extremism through democratic parliamentary elections.

The EU – mainly Mediterranean EU members – believed it is easier to deal with the current status quo rather than pushing for a democratic change that has unpredictable results (see

Powel, 2009a and 2009b). So the EU and the West played an important role in stabilizing those authoritarian regimes for a long time. This fear of the unknown and possible instability gave a higher edge for a continuation of functionalism rather than strengthening territorialization in which the EU cooperate with similar regimes that share same values and beliefs.

Except for Israel, the MENA countries have not been free – i.e. they used to have dictatorships (up until the revolutions started by the end of 2010 in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Libya and others) – or are only partly free (Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco). Moreover, while the cooperation with the EU focuses in part on democracy and political dialogue, the EU efforts resulted in stabilizing “the governments rather than the kind of short-term systemic political change that may bring to power Islamist parties” (Youngs, 2009: 911).

The EU’s preference for stability over domestic transformation was reinforced by the weak statehood of most Mediterranean countries (see van Hüllen, 2009), their weak human rights’ record, lack of civil liberties, underdeveloped institutions and poor governance outcomes. The EU’s leverage is not circumscribed by the absence of a membership perspective, but by other interests. Many Mediterranean countries have not shown any interest in joining the EU in the first place,<sup>6</sup> Some countries, including Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, have expressed interest in developing relations beyond the Association Agreements and being part of the European Single Market. Yet, this would require significant domestic reforms, as these countries would have to meet significant elements of the *acquis communautaire*.

The success of any democratization method is based on the extent to which the concerned member is willing to cooperate and implement democratic reforms. The best outcomes in ENP countries so far have been “liberalized nondemocratic regimes”, “pseudo-democracies”, or “hybrid democracies where some democratic institutions coexist with nondemocratic institutions outside the control of the democratic state” (Linz and Stepan, 1996a: 15; see also Linz and



Stepan, 1996b). So for a long time the EU has been cooperating with neighboring authoritarian regimes that do not share common values and beliefs in order to maintain stability and security. The fear from MENA regimes' non-compliance with issues related to security and stability pushed the EU to use a softer attitude focusing more on linkage and governance approaches at the expense of leverage. This is because leverage might push the authoritarian regimes in the MENA region away from cooperating with the EU due to the fear of political changes that might threaten their iron grip over their countries. Therefore, all EU policies aiming at bringing the MENA countries closer to Western democratic systems and respect of human rights (favoring territorialization more) have been weak without significant implications.

### 3 EU-MENA Relations Prior to the Arab Spring

For a long time, the EU has focused upon its southern neighbors as a possible threat to its security. The perceived threat does not originate from military aggression; however, it is due to the consequences of political instability in these countries (terrorism, crime, religious extremism, oppression, violations of human and civil rights, etc.) and the problems of migratory pressure arising from their poor economic performance. The institutionalization of the EU-Mediterranean relations started with the Barcelona Process in 1995, followed by several summits.

The institutionalization of the EU-Mediterranean relations started with the Barcelona Process in 1995, followed by several summits. With the success of Europeanization in CEECs, a new EU attempt was developed for the same purpose through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2004. The main aim of this policy is to have good relations with EU neighbours and give them privileges based on a joint obligation to shared norms and principles (e.g., democracy; good

governance) (European Commission, 2009), in addition to “preparing partners for gradually obtaining a stake in the EU’s Internal Market” (European Commission, 2004). ENP has developed “an explicit positive political conditionality, which is based on the negotiation, implementation, and regular monitoring of the bilateral AP” (van Hüllen, 2009: 7). No sanctions or “negative political conditionality” are involved in the EU-Mediterranean relations (van Hüllen, 2009: 8).<sup>7</sup> This lack of conditionality usage is due to the security dimension involved which makes it harder for the EU to push for democratic reforms. With the ENP launch, the focus on promoting human rights, freedoms and democracy increased. The hope was that a clearer set of conditions and rewards would be highlighted. However, it is still unclear which conditions have to be fulfilled in order to get certain rewards. Besides the terms used are vague and too broad.<sup>8</sup>

The emphasis on these three main dimensions (democracy, security and market) was raised again at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in July 2008 and further elaborated during Marseille Meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean in November 2008. The quality of governance (covers a wide range of issues such as: free and fair elections, political parties, civil society, separation of powers and independent Judiciary, etc.) is a crucial component of the ENP. Moreover, ENP with the Mediterranean neighbours focuses on issues related to illegal immigration and trafficking, which are crucial for the EU security.

In its relations with the MENA, the EU has viewed security as the main issue and considered it as the dependent variable while democratic reforms were used as a selective independent variable. What I mean by selective is that democracy promotion is there as a tool ready to be used in case security is never infringed. Therefore, with the fear of the rise of Islamists to power and chaos, the EU almost never used the democracy tool effectively in its relations with the MENA region. In EU official documents—such as *The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*—democracy efforts are one

of the tools to combat the spread of radical Islam. The EU should “promote good governance, human rights, democracy, as well as education and economic prosperity, through [...] political dialogue and assistance programmes” (Council of the European Union, 2005: 4). However, when it comes to practice and by looking at the changes regarding governance, human rights, democracy, etc., we notice either very limited progress or none at all. This situation shows that the EU is not sincere in its endeavor regarding democracy promotion and that the normative power and tools for security and stability are different than what is highlighted in those documents (see Powel, 2009a: 201-205).

By looking at the democracy and freedoms record in the MENA region, we see that all of the countries (except for Israel) are either not free or partly free (see table 1). The main reason for that, as mentioned earlier, is that ENP with the Mediterranean neighbours focuses on issues related to economic cooperation, security, illegal immigration and trafficking, which are crucial for the EU security even at the expense of democracy, human rights and civil liberties. So the EU could not implement leverage (as negative conditionality has never been implemented) and had to focus more on linkage and governance approaches.

**Table 1: Freedoms in the MENA Region**

| Country                | Political Rights 2009 | Civil Liberties 2009 | Status 2009 | Political Rights 2010 | Civil Liberties 2010 | Status 2010 | Political Rights 2011 | Civil Liberties 2011 | Status 2011 | Political Rights 2012 | Civil Liberties 2012 | Status 2012 |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Algeria</b>         | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          |
| <b>Egypt</b>           | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          |
| <b>Israel</b>          | 1                     | 2                    | F           | 1                     | 2                    | F           | 1                     | 2                    | F           | 1                     | 2                    | F           |
| <b>Jordan</b>          | 5                     | 5                    | PF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          |
| <b>Lebanon</b>         | 5                     | 4                    | PF          | 5                     | 3                    | PF          | 5                     | 3                    | PF          | 5                     | 4                    | PF          |
| <b>Libya</b>           | 7                     | 7                    | NF          | 7                     | 7                    | NF          | 7                     | 7                    | NF          | 7                     | 6                    | NF          |
| <b>Morocco</b>         | 5                     | 4                    | PF          | 5                     | 4                    | PF          | 5                     | 4                    | PF          | 5                     | 4                    | PF          |
| <b>Syria</b>           | 7                     | 6                    | NF          | 7                     | 6                    | NF          | 7                     | 6                    | NF          | 7                     | 7                    | NF          |
| <b>Tunisia</b>         | 7                     | 5                    | NF          | 7                     | 5                    | NF          | 7                     | 5                    | NF          | 3                     | 4                    | PF          |
| <b>West Bank (PNA)</b> | -                     | -                    | NF          | 6                     | 6                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          | 6                     | 5                    | NF          |

Source: Freedom House (2013)

\*Not Free (NF); Free (F); Partly Free (PF)

One of the main EU concerns is to decrease illegal immigration from the Mediterranean Countries (particularly Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia), which is causing a lot of pressure on the security and economic conditions (mainly southern flanks of the EU). One way to do that is through developing the economic conditions and creating more jobs in those countries, knowing that the high birth rate (in the Mediterranean countries) has created a flux of people joining the job market looking for a job. The EU seeks to help those countries create more jobs to absorb the increased demands and to lower the number of immigrants seeking better life in the EU. An economically advanced MENA region will not only lower the immigration threat but also will “offer new outlets to European businesses which are strongly and durably implanted in this market of 250 million people where they have a far better commercial performance than in any other region” (Radwan and Reiffers, 2005: 2).

Another concern for Europe is through its outlook for the security concept which is developed to cover the geopolitical periphery for the international and regional communities; that is to say the unstable situation (politically and economically) the MENA countries are going through, will have direct negative effects on the EU. The deteriorating political and economic conditions along with the increased radicalization of the societies in many MENA countries increase the fear from the rise of terrorist threats. With the increased terrorism across the globe with September 11 incidents, democratization, social and economic reforms in the Arab world became a priority for the EU and the US. The deteriorating economic, social and political conditions in the Arab world were considered by Western powers to have led to the rise of terrorism and terrorist ideology in the world. However, the EU support for reforms was narrowed down to the economic aspect and an increased cooperation with the current regimes who promised to hit with an iron fist any signs of religious fanaticism.

Instead of supporting democratic transition and reforms in the MENA, the EU preferred to deal with the current regimes in order to guarantee security and stability on its borders. The fight against terrorism has become an integral part of the EU's external relations. Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) external measures to combat terrorism have manifested themselves at the multilateral level, through political cooperation and dialogue, and in support to third countries to improve their counter-terrorism capacities. Counter-terrorism clauses are also systematically included in agreements with MP countries.

Despite the focus on democratization on the official documents, the EU has not pushed hard for reforms in that field. The main focus has always been security, illegal immigration and stability. Sharing same borders and falling in the same Mediterranean region could give more support to territorialisation framework, however the significant cultural, political and economic differences make functionalism more dominant in understanding the EU approach in the MENA. With the Arab Spring incidents, new political changes are witnessed in the MENA which raises the following question: Has the Arab Spring incidents change the EU approach towards the MENA or not? And will the EU focus more on democracy promotion to get the MENA countries closer to its values and democratic political systems?

#### 4 EU-MENA Relations Post Arab Spring...What Changed?

##### 4.1 The Arab Spring

The fragile security and stability on the southern EU borders could not last long with the unexpected protests out-breaking in Tunisia and spilling over to the neighbors. Significant

domestic changes are witnessed which would pose new threats to security and stability and will put the ENP to a new test. The new changes will challenge the long-term status quo that was protected by the EU and other players. The EU, as other international actors, was caught by surprise seeing one of their closest allies, former Tunisian President Zein al-‘Abedin Ben Ali, being challenged. The “decades of oppression and lack of basic freedoms” along with the inability of Ben Ali’s regime to use “socio-economic tools to secure the stability of its rule, as it has done before”, created suitable conditions for a public explosion (Dandashly, 2012: 11).<sup>9</sup> While the US took the initiative to support the protests and the calls for reform, democracy and freedoms, the EU was initially reluctant to follow suit. Turkey, in turn, has been playing an active role in supporting the people’s choice and calls for reforms and change ever since the protests started in Tunisia.

The Tunisian incidents had a positive spillover to Egypt, Libya, Syria and other Arab countries. Each country has had a unique experience. For decades, those countries have lived under oppression, absence political freedom, non-existing freedom of speech and extremely corrupt regimes. All this happened under the eyes and the approval of EU countries and the US. The deterioration of the economic situation in the region, rising unemployment rates, high inflation, lower growth, etc., along with the oppression, resulted in domestic voices calling for change. In addition, the region suffered from the repercussions of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and the European Financial and Sovereign Debt Crisis.

While Syria is still in the mid of a civil war between the opposition and the regime, Libya is still struggling to bring back stability and security. Egypt and Tunisia succeeded in having free and fair elections but the road for democratic consolidation and institutional building is still far from complete and relapses in authoritarianism – of an Islamist variety this time – is far from

excluded, as recent events in Egypt and Tunisia demonstrate. There is an important role that the EU and other international actors could play to support democratic transition in the countries that have a favorable domestic situation, such as Tunisia and to a lesser extent Egypt and Libya.

#### 4.2 Post Arab Spring EU involvement in the MENA

The window of opportunity that has opened in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya makes the domestic environment favorable to democratic reforms. For a long time, the West viewed stability and security to be negatively correlated with democracy in the MENA. That is why they focused on the former at the expense of the latter. The democratic deficit in the MENA shows that the EU efforts to promote democracy have been ineffective and useless. The ENP is put into real test to help these countries in their transition, as was the case with CEECs post 1989. The EU should move beyond its mere economic and security motive in its relation with these countries. The continuous fear of the rise of political Islamic parties should not stop the EU democratization efforts in the region. Now there is an opportunity for the transformative power of Europe – in the areas of democracy promotion and human rights – to be effective. A successful democratization in Tunisia might prove to the Arab countries (in general) and the North African countries (in particular) that this *Arab exceptionalism* is not true. It might push for further democratic reforms in Morocco and might give the calls for more freedoms, reforms and social justice in Algeria a new momentum against the army's control and oppression.

Now, in the Arab Spring countries, I believe the negative correlation between security and stability on one hand and democracy on the other has changed. The lack of democratic reforms in the Arab Spring countries is a source of instability and security threat. This situation could lead us to conclude that the EU would be more supportive of democratic transition in Tunisia, Egypt

and Libya for example. If the Arab Spring countries move closer to democracy, then we might see an increased territorialization at the expense of functionalism in the EU attitude towards them. This does not mean that the EU priorities have changed as democracy is still used as a tool for security. In the Arab Spring countries, democracy promotion could lead to stability and security and that is the main reason for supporting it.

The 2011 review of the ENP highlighted the EU failure in the area of democracy promotion. The current uprisings in the region “have shown that EU support to political reforms in neighbouring countries has met with limited results. There is for example a need for greater flexibility and more tailored responses in dealing with rapidly evolving partners and reform needs – whether they are experiencing fast regime change or a prolonged process of reform and democratic consolidation” (European Commission, 2011: 1). Among the plans recommended was the establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (EED) on the basis of the Polish presidency suggestion. The EED will foster the creation of a multi-party democratic system by supporting political parties, civil society organizations, media and journalists, social movements and actors, NGOs, etc. (Council of the European Union, 2011).

The Arab Spring incidents have triggered a faster review of the EU and other Western players’ policies in the MENA in order to address the new challenges. Among the challenges that the EU has been trying to avoid for decades have happened now: Islamists are taking over in several Arab countries. The EU should understand that there is not a single vision of Islam: Islamists such as *En-Nahda* in Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco are totally different from the Salafis or the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt for example. Both adhere to a more Western kind of Islam – a mix of Islamic and Western traditions, not only from a cultural perspective, but also from a political one. So in the Arab Spring countries, democratic transition and consolidation is a necessary step to guarantee stability and security on the Southern borders.



Otherwise, the situation might end up with another failed or hybrid democracy that will create security threats to the EU and the whole region (trans-Mediterranean terrorism, illegal immigration, organized crime etc.). So the Arab Spring incidents “have pointed to the need to go beyond support for top-down models of reform in the Arab world”; “Western political referents in the Arab world can no longer be Arab governments, but have to be much more socially inclusive”; and the new EU policies have to engage “social and political actors across the political spectrum and not just the usual candidates (traditionally pro-Western, secular and self-referential elites)” (Hanau Santini and Hassan, 2012: 77).

However, by looking at the EU approach towards the region, we do not see many changes in the EU view of the MENA. On documents and in public speeches we still see the same EU tone regarding the importance of democracy, political freedoms, human rights, civil liberties, free and fair elections, and strong civil society. Many EU officials such as Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, have highlighted the importance of democracy. “The EU is engaging with the new leaderships and supports transition that proceeds on the basis of respect for democratic values, human rights, women’s rights, freedom of speech and religious tolerance. The EU position will be lucid as well as vigilant on these issues” (Füle, Speech in Barcelona, 8 March 2012). But when it comes to practice, the EU view is still dominated by security and stability.

What we might witness by the EU is applying a double standard policy with the MENA countries: Arab Spring countries and non-Arab Spring countries. The reason is not a change in attitude towards democracy promotion. However, in the Arab Spring countries, economic development and democracy promotion are considered tools towards stability and security and not an aim by itself. Dealing with the main reasons of the revolutions (economic issues in the first place and authoritarianism in the second place in Tunisia for example) requires an increased EU

financial and technical support in order to help those countries get back to stability and to secure the EU borders from floods of immigrants (whether legal or illegal) trying to escape from the chaos and deteriorating economic situation. All this might put more pressures on the EU borders' security and stability plans. So the dominant aim of the EU and the West is maintaining security, stability and a continuation of the MENA regimes' cooperation in fighting illegal immigration and terrorism. That is why we do not see many changes in the EU policies towards the MENA – new reality (Arab Spring); same old EU tools. The same approach is still implemented with the rest of the MENA countries with no significant changes. The EU will continue to have a territorialization and functionalism attitude towards its southern neighbors. But the difference is that we might see a variation in the application of those approaches in according to the targeted MENA country.

## 5 Conclusion

The Arab Spring caught the EU by surprise. Even though the EU has since launched a critical review of the ENP focusing on how to reform it, a lot of work still needs to be done. The EU democratization efforts have not been successful in the region due to the focus on security and stability at the expense of democracy. This approach favored functionalism at the expense of territorialization. The new changes in the region, the democratic road taken by some countries such as Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, would require “a new [EU] policy paradigm, but this is not easy to devise because democratic openings in the region exacerbate the conflict of interest that lie at the heart of [the EU...] engagement with the region” (Hanau Santini and Hassan, 2012: 79).

At the moment, Arab Spring countries need a new political, technical and economical Marshall Plan that brings together expertise from the West and takes into consideration the

domestic needs of the south. Political and economic reforms have to be implemented together. The main economic and social reasons for the revolution (structural problems and high unemployment rates) necessitate an urgent economic reform strategy. Without a functioning economy that is capable of creating jobs and providing the needs for the region's people, there is no hope for democracy to prosper and the reasons for the revolutions will not be addressed. Europeanization beyond Europe can be effective without membership. In its relation with the MENA, the EU could replace the big carrot by another one such as more economic cooperation and gradual access to the single market. This new incentive will increase the effectiveness of the EU role in democracy promotion beyond its borders. By doing so we would witness an increased territorialization in case the MENA countries, or at least the Arab Spring countries (mainly Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) move closer to democratic system that respect human rights and civil liberties.

So, there are certain needs that the region requires and might not be in accordance with what the EU interests might be regarding security, stability, and fight against radicalism, terrorism and illegal immigration. And it seems that the EU is not planning to change its entire policy towards the region as it would threaten all the security and stability it maintained throughout the region for a long time. The EU does not seem to be interested in changing its attitude regarding democracy promotion. Democracy promotion continues to be a tool that the EU will promote in case it is positively correlated with security and stability. And this might be the case with the Arab Spring countries. However, if the case is not so, as it has been in most of the MENA countries, even the Arab Spring countries prior to the revolutions, the EU continues to support the authoritarian regimes for the sake of security and cooperation of those regimes in fighting illegal immigration and terrorism.

With the Arab Spring countries, we might witness more support for the domestic efforts for democratic reforms that would bring stability. This might lead to an increased EU territorialization with those countries as the cooperation on other issues, such as security, will be with countries that share similar European values and beliefs. As for the rest of the region, we do not see any changes in the EU attitude nor tone.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the successful transition in Central and East European Countries (CEEC) towards meeting the *acquis communautaire*, ENP was launched in 2004 in which the EU has sought to use the same tools used with CEECs to push the further east and southern neighbors to move closer to becoming democratic countries with shared European values and principles. The aim has been to create a ring of democratic friends by offering them everything but membership. ENP countries are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, MENA countries are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria and Tunisia.

<sup>3</sup> The exception is the countries where a military intervention took place such as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<sup>4</sup> Although the MENA countries are not interested in EU membership, which is the main incentive provided for candidate countries and the eastern neighbors are interested in, the EU is reluctant to provide more economic incentives that are of interest to the MENA neighbors. Among those incentives could be more visa facilitation, more access to the single market, liberalization of agricultural products, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Both parties— Hamas and Hizbullah—are considered by the US and the West as terrorist organizations and/or supporting terrorism.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to highlight that among the Arab countries, Morocco was the first and only country to apply for membership on July 20, 1987 to the European Communities at that time. However, the application was not successful, as Morocco was not considered a European country.

<sup>7</sup> ENP is based on bilateral agreements – the so-called ENP Action Plans. The aim of such plans is the agenda setting “of political and economic reforms with short and medium-term priorities. Implementation of the ENP Action Plans (agreed in 2005 with Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Ukraine, in 2006 with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and in 2007 with Egypt and Lebanon) is underway” (For more information see European Commission, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> For example, in the agreements and Action Plans you can find terms such ENP will lead to *privileged relations* between the EU and its neighbors; what does privileged relation mean? Another example is visa facilitation, so what does that mean? There are no real explanations or details for these rewards. By looking at the time and documents needed to get a Schengen or domestic visa to any EU member by nationals of the neighboring countries, it is still very complicated, time consuming and costly.

<sup>9</sup> Ben Ali had to escape to Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011 ending 23 years of oppression.

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