The Future Prospect of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: An Assessment of the EU’s most Recent Proposal for Adapting its Approach towards the North African Region

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Abbreviations

AA = Association Agreement          UfM = Union for the Mediterranean
AP = Action Plan                        SME = Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SMCs = Southern Mediterranean Countries
BD = Barcelona Declaration
BP = Barcelona Process
CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy
Com = Commission
EMP = Euro-Mediterranean partnership
ENP = European Neighborhood Policy
ENPI = European Neighborhood Policy Instrument
EU = European Union
Euro-Med = Euro-Mediterranean
FTA = Free Trade Area
IR = International Relations
LI = Liberal Intergovernmentalism
LIT = Liberal Institutionalism
MEDA = MEsures D’Accompagnement (program of the EU)
NGO = Non-governmental organization
Summary

Contemporary democratic revolts in North Africa have been met with yet another Commission initiative with the purpose of addressing the changing conditions in the southern Mediterranean. In the attempt to deem this proposal’s potential for more effective democracy promotion on the part of the EU, previous Euro-Med initiatives have been assessed by dividing such promotion into direct and indirect strategies, while focusing on post-1995 relations of the BP, ENP and the UfM.

For one thing, direct democracy promotion within the BP and ENP has proven rather disappointing: first, the negative conditionality of the BP has suffered from low effectiveness, low credibility and CFSP constraints on EU decision-making; all of which are connected to the lack of EU consistency in using its promotion tools. Second, positive conditionality of the ENP remains incredible, as it does not provide membership, access to EU agricultural markets or sufficient financial compensation for reform; further, these weak incentives and the co-ownership of APs have entailed non-ambitious political benchmarks, impeding democratic development. For another thing, indirect promotion via the multilateral baskets of the BP has been impeded by EU agricultural protectionism; the shadow of differentiated bilateralism; lack of strengthening and regional institutionalization of civil society actors critical of SMC regimes; and the UfM’s short-term pragmatism.

With this historic analysis in mind, the new initiative’s direct promotion may be said to provide little encouragement for future relations. First, the proposal adopts the same flawed logic as the ENP in its direct positive promotion with its lack of substantial incentives, although upgraded funding and democratic standards for participation may enhance conditionality credibility. Further, its ‘more for more’ concept improves the incentives of differentiation; however, reallocation of funds among SMCs has previously not been very pronounced due to short-term neo-realist preferences of stability. Second, advanced status may constitute a weak incentive, while not being a proper indicator for democracy since rewarding it depends on the progress made on non-ambitious AP benchmarks. Third, minimum benchmarks, on which to measure performance, resemble previously violated ‘shared’ ENP values; hence inevitably drawing attention to the EU rhetoric-capabilities gap. Forth, quite diplomacy, rather than credible threat rhetoric of negative conditionality, seems to be carried on; thus underlining a EU short-term neo-realist stability focus, or constructivist notions of the prevalence of the discourse of partnership outdoing the discourse of democracy promotion.

As for indirect promotion of democratic development, the major part of the initiative arouses concern too. First, the continuing reluctance to fully include agriculture in commerce impedes the realization of the
vision of the BP’s long-term ‘twin liberalization’ strategy due to diverse North-South internal EU preferences of short-term nature and desires to maintain the asymmetrical dependency relationship towards North Africa. Second, however, civil society advancement is indicated, thus perhaps reviving the long-term prospect of the BP’s cultural basket; in LIT and constructivist notions this may fertilize democratic development, but in a neo-realist vein civil society cooperation merely paves the way for security cooperation aiming at limiting migration to the EU. Third, the indirect strategy of using region-building to achieve democratization in the long run remains relatively overridden by differentiated bilateralism like with the ENP. Indeed, the regional ideas of the proposal seems to adhere to the same pragmatism as that of the UfM with limited focus on fertilizing the ground for democratizing the region bottom-up wise in the longer run due to lack of institutional robustness.

On these grounds, and in spite of some positive elements regarding support and institutionalization of civil society across the region, the new initiative may be deemed insufficient, so as to improve the clout and effectiveness of EU democracy promotion in North Africa; however, the unpredictability of events and the complexity of developments should give rise to caution so as to provide any definite conclusions on the future Euro-Med relationship.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation
North Africa is undergoing comprehensive political changes at the moment in the immediate wake of democratic revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. These have been spurred on by civil society frustration with the local regimes’ reluctance to pursue and uphold democratic reforms and principles, including human rights. In spite of the authoritarian nature of North African regimes, however, international actors’ attempts to promote democratic development in the region have been rather unsuccessful considering contemporary resentment of North African governments. The European Union (EU), however, has displayed a high level of determination in promoting economic as well as political liberalization in the region: In 1995 the EU launched the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) providing an overarching framework for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Within the scope of this framework, - also known as the Barcelona Process (BP) - the EU stressed fundamental democratic principles through negative conditionality (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, pp. 154-158). The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), subsequently, carried on the priority of democratization in a more positive form; however, despite the ‘best intentions’ rhetoric the EU’s efforts have, interestingly, yielded little result in the political sphere (Kauch & Youngs, 2009); exemplified by contemporary revolutions in North Africa.

Although previous contributions have been concerned with EU inability and reluctance to honor its rhetoric about guiding the southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) in a democratic direction using available tools, the 2011 Commission initiative for proposing an updated and efficient strategy towards the region remains unexplored. Consequently, this paper will endeavor assessing the survival capacity of the new initiative in an attempt to find out whether this framework has the potential to improve EU democracy promotion in the face of the partnership’s evolution, using a three-step approach constituted by the EMP, ENP and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

1.2 Thesis statement
The Commissions initiative, proposing a reformulation and update of the EU’s strategy vis-à-vis North Africa, is called: ‘A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean’. It builds on previous EU approaches, namely the BP and the ENP, in the quest to incite and support further democratic transition and reform in the SMCs. The aim of this paper is thus to examine whether this new initiative will actually provide an improved framework for addressing the challenges of establishing viable democracies in the light of how the EU historically has managed to handle this issue. In examining this
subject matter, one particular question arises: To which extent can the Commission’s new initiative – ‘a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean’ – be said to improve the effectiveness and clout of EU democracy promotion? In the treatment of this research question, this thesis will focus on the parameters connected to democracy promotion in the context of previous Euro-Med schemes and in the context of the Commission’s recent proposal in order to assess its particular value.

1.3 Delimitations
The scope of this paper is restricted to the examination of North Africa as a whole, thus disregarding Middle-Eastern partners as well as case studies of single SMCs. I will limit the historical scope to include post-1995 initiatives meaning that the Global Mediterranean Policy will not feature in the processing of previous Euro-Med manifestations, as more recent initiatives constitute a more appropriate background for assessing the proposal; this is true for two reasons: first, the new proposal adheres to ideas of conditionality also enshrined within the EMP and ENP frameworks, but not in earlier manifestations; thus the proposal should be viewed as a part of the process launched in 1995 with the BP. Second, the bilateral concept saturating the proposal builds on the ENP’s skeleton which also stresses differentiation based on co-established benchmarks trying to adapt to the somewhat diverse conditions in the SMCs. Beyond the scope of this paper also lays the issue of balancing power towards the US on the part of the EU, in the quest to manifest itself as an alternative great power in the international system, in neo-realist terms. Further, the scope excludes any deeper treatment of specific programs of direct democracy promotion such as the MEDA democracy program and European Instrument for Democracy and Human rights.

1.4 Structure of thesis
This thesis will be presented in a logical manner in order to provide a thorough chain of argumentation connecting the thematic aspect appropriately. First I will account for those methodological considerations that have proven vital for the inclusion of the paper’s sub-elements. Second, I will build a theoretical framework consisting of approaches within International Relations (IR), thus, aiming to keep a lid on the argumentation process, while providing explanatory power to the subject matter. Third, I will provide contextual sections describing the general framework of the relation in an effort to set the scene for the analysis. The analysis will, fourthly, deal with direct promotion as well as indirect approaches employed in the promotion of democracy within the frameworks. In particular this analysis is composed of sections treating relevant empirical and political communication, while trying to explain and illuminate the flaws of the EU’s previous approaches. On these grounds, I will discuss the prospect of the Commission’s latest initiative, while finally tying up loose ends in the concluding remarks.
2. Methodology

This theoretical project adopts a hermeneutic and qualitative approach in examining the promotion of democracy. In doing so, I have found it most suitable to collect naturally occurring data that is data that already exists in the form of academically peer reviewed literature published in journals and books as well as political documents mainly deriving from the Commission’s webpage. My methodological considerations are founded on the belief that naturally occurring data composes an appropriate empirical basis for examining the particular issue of democracy promotion within the discipline of IR.

Throughout the paper I will put to good use some helpful theoretical and methodological tools, as I strive to establish a sufficient level of structure in the paper. First, for purposes of transparency, I put forward two polarized hypotheses framing an analytical field of tensions in which the analysis and discussion will play out:

**Positive**: The new initiative will reinvigorate the partnership by enabling the EU to obtain a high level of influence in the region which will materialize into substantial promotion of further democratic development

**Negative**: The new initiative will not affect the nature of Euro-Med relations and thus the initiative will not entail substantial or successful promotion of further democratic progress in North Africa

Indeed, the extent to which one of these may precede the other may prove hard to deem taking into consideration the unpredictability of current developments in the region, thus a definite conclusion in this regard may not be realistic in the end. Nonetheless, the assessment of these hypotheses will be based on the recent history of the Euro-Med relationship in terms of its flaws and successes, thus assuming that the EU’s main concern remains that of self-security. Second, in order to measure the relative development of democratization in the region, it seems prudent to provide a defining skeleton for democratic development. To that end, some of Robert Dahl’s (1998) large-scale democracy criteria will constitute a scale with which specific democracy-related issues may be assessed:

**Elected officials**: refers to the representative democracy where elected officials control government decisions

**Free, fair, and frequent elections**: the election of the officials is conducted frequently and fairly without the use of coercion

**Freedom of expression**: any citizen may express his or her freely without being punished

**Associational autonomy**: refers to the right of people to form independent organizations such as political parties or interest groups
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Obviously, the success of the EU’s promotion of democracy in North African regimes should not be measured up against the EU’s own standards and quality of democracy as this would be a naive point of departure: it would therefore not be desirable to solely apply Dahl’s criteria to deem the level of democratic development in North Africa; instead, the introduction and complementary application of the three phases of political transformation in autocracies, as suggested by Schneider & Schmitter (2004) and cited in Del Sarto et al. (2007, pp. 45-58), may prove fertile as a way of conceptualizing Dahl’s criteria within a Euro-Med context:

- **Political liberalization of autocracies**: the level of reforms on political participation and human rights
- **Democratic transition**: contested elections with mass participation and accountability
- **Democratic consolidation**: acceptance of election results by the political elite as well as the electorate

According to this outline, political liberalization does not automatically bring about the rise of democracy. Rather, political reforms and respect for human rights should be seen as vital steps in a process. As will be documented by use of ‘Freedomhouse’, the states occupying the region in question only partly engage in the first two phases; consequently, indicating the rate of success of EU’s promotion of democratization. Finally, I have chosen to divide my analysis of EU democracy promotion into two modes: I will distinguish between direct and indirect approaches to democracy promotion in order to better manage the very overlapping nature of EU presence in North Africa. Subsequently, the analysis of the flaws of such promotion will be divided in the same manner to maintain coherence. In brief, I will draw this distinction by, first, treating aspects connected to democratic conditionality rhetoric in political documents and briefly evaluate the practical angle; and then, second, deal with the EU’s indirect approach inherent in the baskets of the BP, hence examining the bottom-up prosperity and civil society angles of democratization.

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1 Carsten Q. Schneider belongs to the Doctoral School of Political Science and specializes in political regime transitions and qualities of democracies while being associate professor in political science (http://disc.ceu.hu/profiles/faculty/carsten-q_schneider). His research has thus not been tailored to frame the SMCs in particular.

2 Philippe C. Schmitter is a professor of political science and specializes in the transition from authoritarian rule in Southern Europe as well as democratic consolidation in Southern and Eastern countries (http://www.eui.eu/DepartmentsAndCentres/PoliticalAndSocialSciences/People/Professors/Schmitter.aspx). Hence, Schmitter does not specialize in the SMCs per se.

3 Freedomhouse is an independent US founded organization advocating freedom, democracy and human rights. It strives to divert the world’s policy-makers’ attention towards advancing the spread of freedom via respect for democracy and human rights (http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=2). Being an independent NGO, Freedomhouse displays high credibility.
As for the prosperity angle, I will employ the theoretical theme of ‘twin liberalization’, as presented in Schmid (2003, pp. 7-11). This concept denotes the idea that economic reform and liberalization spill over to political ditto. In theory, this means that promotion of democratization may be facilitated by stimulating economic growth, as increased prosperity will eventually establish fertile conditions for political liberalization. It ought to be stressed, however, that debate exists on the credibility of the concept, as examples refute this logic. According to the EU, however, it may apply to the SMCs if the prospects of the political and economic baskets of the BP manage to materialize into substantial cooperation. I therefore critically examine how the economic basket has been administrated in order to assess the quality of indirect EU democracy promotion. In a similar vein, it is worth noting that Schmid’s EuroMesco paper is funded by the Commission, thus demanding a critical application of its findings.

In my examination of issues related to democracy promotion, I employ liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) to explain the constrained nature of EU direct promotion through negative conditionality as well as the obstacles related to indirect promotion by way of fostering prosperity. Further, I use liberal institutionalism (LIT) to shed light on the institutional set-up of the EMP, while adhering to neo-realist and neo-Marxist notions in my explanation of the underlying rationale constraining EU promotion.

3. Theoretical framework
In the analysis of the EU’s previous initiatives and the Commission’s new proposal, the use of theories may come in handy in the attempt to explain EU’s behavior towards North Africa. This section thus accounts for the IR theories that will later be applied. I shall distinguish between mainstream theories and alternative approaches.

3.1 Mainstream approaches

3.1.1 Neo-realism
Neo-realism, as presented in Jackson & Sørensen (2007, pp. 74-79), initially adheres to the platform contending that states operate in an anarchical international system. This structured system shapes the behavior of the main actors, subsequently making the structure of the system the most interesting object of analysis. Indeed, a basic assumption of this strand denotes the universality of the structured anarchy between states; however, while acknowledging certain interstate differences, such as culture, Waltz claims that the only central aspect of differentiation among states relates to their varying capabilities to perform similar tasks. Essentially, changes occur when the distribution of capabilities changes; hence balance of power considerations remains vital for neo-realist.
Neo-realism differs from classical realism, as it neglects the classical focus on human nature as constitutive of the system, because the hands of leaders are perceivably forced by the structure of the international system. Neo-realists, nonetheless, employ concepts reflecting normative tendencies; for instance, the concept of state sovereignty here refers to the independence of states in the strict legal sense that they are each other’s equals with regard to state sovereignty; however, beyond the formal-legal sense, states remain materially unequal. Further, self-interest will always be the guide of state’s foreign policy in practice, as international or moral obligations will never supersede domestic interests; hence security and survival must be provided by the state.

3.1.2 Liberalism

Liberalists consider IR as mainly driven by absolute gains rather than relative gains, as proposed by realism (Andreatta, 2005, p 24). For the purposes of this paper, however, the following account focuses on the stands of LIT and LI.

First of all, LITs acknowledge the potential of international institutions to pool relative sovereignty in the attempt to solve common IR issues of concern. Further, international institutions recompense for interstate mistrust and fear over the intentions and hidden agendas of others by strengthening the solidity of mutual agreements; enhancing credibility of states’ commitments to each other; and increasing information flows, and opportunities to collaborate. While institutions promote cooperation, however, it is not blindly believed that these may transform IR into a flawlessly civilized structure. Institutions, thus, does not constitute mere servants of the powerful states; on the contrary, cooperation may be promoted by independent international institutions (Jackson & Sørensen, 2007, pp. 108-111). In turn, the degree of institutionalization of states is measured on two dimensions: scope and depth. One the hand, scope denotes the number of policy areas included within the institutional framework; while, on the other hand, depth refers to three aspects: first, commonality reflects the degree to which certain expectations about appropriate behavior and the understanding of how to interpret action are shared by the members; second, specificity, refers to the degree to which members’ expectations are specified in the common rules; finally, autonomy has to do with the extent to which institutions can alter its rules itself, without its members doing so (Keohane, 1989, as cited in Jackson & Sørensen, 2007, pp. 108-109).

Second of all, LI, as discussed by Pollack (2005, pp.17-19), proposes a three-step model consisting of: a liberal theory of national preference formation; an intergovernmental model of EU-level bargaining; and, a model of institutional choice emphasizing the role of international institutions in providing credible commitments for member governments. First, the liberal stage reflects the aggregation of the interests of domestic constituencies and those of the political elite that is the heads of national governments; these are
then communicated to the EU as the preferences of the state. Thus, complex national preferences resemble patchworks that are formed domestically in accordance with the interests of societal stakeholders. Second, the intergovernmental stage refers to the bargaining of agreements within the institutional framework which is influenced and characterized by the relative power of each member state. Indeed, the hardball bargaining of relevant actors, rather than the influence of supranational organizations, is what determines the outcome of agreements. Third, states relinquish sovereignty to supranational entities in order to increase the credibility of their mutual commitments.

3.2 Alternative approaches

3.2.1 Constructivism
Alternative constructivist approaches are concerned with endogenous explanations of behavior, thus perceiving agents and structures as mutually constitutive. These approaches stress the vitality of the social origins of behavior and the power of discourse. This corresponds to the notion of ‘bounded rationality’ which draws attention to the cognitive constraints of decision-makers in their way of making political decisions. In other words: when engaged in foreign policy, actors make political decisions based on endogenous factors beyond those connected with full rationality. Thus, it becomes clear that states adopt the logic of appropriateness when dealing with international institutions, in the sense that they conform to the conventions and rules of institutions. Consequently, the foreign policy of national governments may be shaped by common platforms proposed by institutions; thus creating closer positions on matters that, in theory, remain within the realm of national sovereignty. In addition, policy networks and epistemic communities may influence the process of policy-making in institutions through transnational bargaining power. Similarly, institutions should be viewed as normative entities capable of harmonizing national positions in the direction of common ones, thus shaping homogenous views, identities and interdependencies making states undergo a process of socialization through internalization. In brief, the creation of such a norm-based community provides an opportunity to promote such normative discourses in the face of the external environment (Andreatta, 2005, p. 31-33).

3.2.2 Neo-Marxism
Neo-Marxism, as cited in Jack & Sørensen (2007, pp. 190-192), contends that world systems are composed of unified areas that share some economic and political structures, and where the existence of some asymmetrical dependence among states characterizes the system which, in turn, ties political and economic structures closely together. These areas can be divided into core; periphery; and semi-periphery areas. Core areas denote the mass-market industries and the sophisticated agriculture controlled by the bourgeoisie; the periphery areas refer to the producers of, say, grain and sugar which are placed at the
bottom of the hierarchy; the semi-periphery areas indicate areas of economically mixed conditions; hence they are placed in the middle of the hierarchy. Another basic element of the capitalist world-economy is the mechanism of unequal exchange. This relates to the transfer of surplus from the periphery to the core, as the surplus of low-wage, low-profit producers, in fact, relocates to high-wage, high-profit producers in the core. This is exaggerated by the core’s stronger state machineries. The system’s flexibility, however, allows areas to switch hierarchical ranking; however, the structure of the capitalist system remains the same.

4. Contextual framework

4.1 The BP

The launch of the BP in 1995 should be viewed in the light of post-Cold War shifts in attention towards Eastern Europe, hence making southern EU Member States call for a similar focus on the SMCs. The signing of the Barcelona Declaration (BD) also denotes the wish to influence the Middle-East conflict and, in more general terms, address the potential threats of instability deriving from the region. The BP’s innovative nature refers to the multilateral framework made up by three baskets of collaboration: a political and security basket; an economic and financial basket; and a social, cultural and human relations basket (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, pp. 154-156). First, the political and security dialogue was eventually meant to establish a cooperative security regime to address regional instability, especially with an eye on remedying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, this basket introduced political conditionality in the form of democracy and human rights provisions. Second, the economic and financial dialogue denoted the prospect of completing a bilateral free trade area (FTA) between the SMCs and the EU by 2010, while striving for the eventual establishment of a South-South regional FTA. The financial aspect here referred to the increase in financial assistance via the MEDA budget line and the improvement of lending capacity from the European Investment Bank in order to realize the aspirations of creating FTAs. Finally, the cultural basket emphasized mutual appreciation of cultures and societies with the purpose of strengthening civil society (Joffé, 2008, pp. 312-313).

Complementing the multilateral framework, the EMP also encompassed bilateral Euro-Med Association Agreements (AAs) intended to function as a tool for achieving the goals presented in the BD (1995), thus: ‘...turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity...’. These AAs emphasize economic cooperation aiming at free trade in industrial goods and services; while restricting access for agricultural products, however (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, pp. 156-157). The underlying logic behind eventually adopting trade reciprocity was made up
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by the prospect of appropriate economic reforms being made in the SMCs in the face of unfettered competition from EU industries. In addition, the bilateral AAs were intended to reflect the respect for democracy and human rights by the inclusion of political conditionality capable of suspending MEDA aid and dissolving the foundation of the AAs. While limited economic liberalization has taken place, the hopes of creating a regional security regime and South-South integration have been left relatively barren (Joffé, 2008, pp. 312-323).

4.2 The ENP

Introduced for the first time in 2003 at the Commission’s request, the ENP approach represented another manifestation of the EU’s attempt to handle relations with its closest neighbors in the eastern and southern peripheries. The introduction of the ENP reflected the EU’s attempt ‘to address the question of how to manage the impact of the accession of Eastern states on those for whom this is not an immediate prospect, as well as how to square it with relations with the more extended neighborhood’ (Ulrich, 2005, p. 425). The ENP scheme should thus be seen as a way for the EU to create a notion of inclusiveness in relation to the SMCs in the wake of the attention given by the EU to the new Eastern neighbors; the overall purpose was, indeed, to create a ‘ring of friends’ (Wider Europe, 2003) with whom to enjoy peaceful and close relations.

In its substance, the ENP was not meant to override the existing framework of the EMP. Instead, it replaced the bilateral component of the EMP: the introduction of Action Plans (AP) tailored to meet the specific needs of the individual partners, thus, marked a shift towards a much more differentiated approach, while continuing, however, to emphasize the importance of respecting values of democracy and human rights (Bretherton & vogler, 2006, p. 157). Indeed, the shift in methodology, with regards to inciting partners to pursue liberal reform of varied kinds, towards a more rewards-based approach constituted one of the main points of departure vis-à-vis the EMP. Intended to incite partners to adapt to democratic and economic reform, the ENP uses the bilateral agreements to create incentives by offering ‘silver carrots’ in the form of deeper integration with the EU. Another point of departure was the emphasis placed on the fight against trafficking in drugs and people, crime and terrorism issues as a consequence of the decision not to extend EU enlargement; this of course related to the recognition of pragmatic security concerns originating from the SMCs (Joffé, 2008, pp. 321-323).

4.3 The UfM

This 2008 initiative constitutes yet another EU attempt to revive relations with North Africa within an allegedly new multilateral frame of cooperation. While stressing the renewed element of the UfM, however, it builds on the existing foundation of the BP, as it remains true to the original goals of peace, stability and prosperity; thus, elements of renewability remain rather uncontroversial. The purpose of the
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initiative, however, is to shape relations in a more concrete and more visible direction by enhancing the level of relevancy for the individual partner and its citizens. While these areas of cooperation, including natural disaster management, support of small businesses and a solar energy project, remain rather uncontroversial in nature - due their low-politics character and disregard of policy areas of real contention - its’ focus on joint ownership comprising a structure of co-presidency and the establishment of a Barcelona-based secretariat constitute a point of departure from previous approaches which has often been criticized of favoring the EU in all its asymmetries (Tassinari & Holm, 2010, pp. 11-12; Kausch & Youngs, 2009, pp. 963-964).

5. Analysis

This chapter explains and analyzes the EU’s attempts to rhetorically and practically promote democracy in North Africa. In line with the methodology, I examine, first, direct promotion and its obstacles by looking at the instruments of conditionality within the context of previous frameworks by using conditionality theory as presented by Schmid (2003) and Schimmelfennig & Scholtz (2008, 2010); second, I scrutinize indirect attempts at promoting democracy as well as subsequent obstacles by using IR theories and the work of Schimmelfennig & Scholtz (2008; 2010). The analysis thus provides a sound foundation for discussing the Commission’s new initiative.

5.1 Direct promotion within previous Euro-Med schemes

5.1.1 Direct promotion within the EMP framework

Ever since the signing of the BD in 1995, conditionality has been a part of the legal relations between the EU and the SMCs. As a matter of fact, all bilateral AAs signed ever since have contained a standardized human rights and democracy clause, as in the case of Egypt: ‘Relations between the parties, as well as all the provisions of the agreement itself, shall be based on respect of democratic principles and fundamental human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which guides their internal and international policy and constitutes an essential element of this agreement’(EU-Egypt AA, 2001, article 2). This obligatory article 2 clause has been complemented by a mutual suspension clause with the purpose of dissolving the agreements if one of the parties disrespected these essential elements, thus: ‘If either party considers that the other party has failed to fulfill its obligations under this agreement, it may take appropriate measures’ (EU-Egypt AA, 2001, article 86). Indeed, this twin conditionality theme marks a shift in the EU’s attention towards cooperation based on the observation of certain conditions originating from what could be termed the EU’s normative values.
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Specifically, the introduction of negative (punitive) conditionality may be understood in the light of the notion of the donor-recipient dichotomy which claims that the balance of power must be in favor of the donor for the donor to influence recipients by threatening to suspend agreements, if certain conditions are not respected (Schmid, 2003, p. 6). Adopting this line of thinking, thus, the EU certainly had a good reason to believe, that it would be able to successfully apply this instrument in the SMCs, as both political and economical power remain in favor of the EU. It has, however, been widely agreed that the EU has not succeeded in influencing its partners in any manner connected to its normative aims in the AAs; exemplified by the EU’s passivity towards the human rights violations - a first phase prerequisite for democracy - committed under the Algerian civil war between 1992 and 2000 (Joffé, 2008, p. 314).

Multilaterally, negative conditionality manifested itself in the MEDA Regulation system. MEDA covered the EU’s financial support for reaching the objects of the three multilateral baskets of the BP and formally laid the foundation for punitive conditionality: ‘This regulation is based on the respect for democratic principles and the rule of law and also for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which constitute an essential element thereof, the violation of which element will justify the adoption of appropriate measures’ (MEDA Regulation, 1996, article 3). In theory this allows for the withdrawal of assistance in three areas: economic restructuring and liberalization; socio-economic support: and, regional, sub-regional and cross-border cooperation - all of which support bilateral and regional integration.

However, MEDA conditionality, in this period, did not make any substantial difference in the region; exemplified by the severe first phase democratic violations that continued to saturate the SMCs, exemplified with Tunisia: severe human rights violations reported and extremely restricted press freedom, while ‘presidential elections lack any pretense of competition’ (Freedomhouse, Tunisia 2003).

5.1.2 Direct promotion within the ENP framework
The ENP was intended to correct some of the shortcomings of the EMP related to the failure of negative conditionality. The shift towards a more positive promotion strategy was thus already revealed in the Commission’s ‘Wider Europe’ (Com, 2003, 104 final) scheme: ‘The extension of the benefits set out in Chapter 3, including increased financial assistance, should be conducted so as to encourage and reward reform...’ Relative to Schmid’s (2003, p. 13) notion of symmetrical conditionality, thus, this reward-based approach, combined with punitive clauses in AAs, could make up an effective tandem in promoting

\[ \text{Equation} \]

4 MEDA was the regional financial instrument of the EU from 1996-2000 (MEDA I) and from 2000-2006 (MEDA II)
5 Restricted press freedom also refers to the freedom of expression here
6 For an overview of the ENP’s logic see appendix 1
democratization, if a common set of norms exists within the partnership; however, the level of norm commonality, in the Euro-Med case, may be too weak, as we shall see.

In practice incentive-driven conditionality adheres to complex guidelines. First, the ENP itself prescribes the commitment of parties to shared values on which the scheme is based: democracy, human rights and the fight against terrorism, to mention a few. In return, the ENP offers some short-term benefits of political, economic, security and cultural character and in the long-term potentially closer economic and political integration with the EU. Second, in order to obtain these goals, joint and differentiated APs are formed with two areas of priority: ensuring the commitment to the shared values on a differentiated basis; and inciting SMCs to adopt political and economic reforms by offering horizontal integration with EU extending to: ‘everything but the institutions’ (Romano Prodi, 2002, cited in Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, p.157). In effect, the individual and co-designed priorities of APs constitute benchmarks on the basis of which progress is monitored by EU bodies (Com, 2004, 373 final). In theory, then, these competitive benchmarks lay the foundation for the allocation of long- and short-term assistance among the SMCs, hence rewarding good performers and indirectly punishing laggards by withholding various forms of extended aid (Del Sarto et al., 2007, pp. 24-25).

Indeed, positive conditionality was also reflected in MEDA II, and ENPI (2007-2013). First, the launch of the ENP made it clear, that the financially upgraded MEDA II was a step towards no single partner being entitled to a specific financial amount, thus attempting to incite interstate competition on the basis of individual benchmarks (Holden, 2008, p. 235). This meant that MEDA II was to allocate aid to support regional-related policies, so as to mirror the individual progress of SMCs relative to their AP benchmarks. Second, the ENPI rhetorically incites cross-border cooperation and increases available aid amounts; however, most attention is given to bilaterally differentiated priorities recognizing varied conditions and reform willingness in the SMCs. In theory, ENPI thus employs combined conditionality: it steps up financial aid, while carrying a suspension clause endorsing the Copenhagen criteria (ENPI Regulation, 2006, article 28).

As with the EMP, however, the ENP has so far not managed to incite substantial political development by use of its various ‘silver carrots’ (Holden, 2008, p. 242). Indeed, multiple examples exist on the violation in SMCs of the ENP’s supposedly shared values: first, Egypt passed a constitutional amendment in 2007 allowing citizens to form parties; however, these cannot be based on religion, thus excluding the strong opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood, and making it impossible for other parties to have presidential candidates; thus breaking with the associational autonomy criteria. Second, Tunisian president Ben Ali strongly restricted media coverage and thus the possibilities for other presidential candidates to compete.
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fairly, hence violating several of Dahl’s and the first phase’ criteria (Freedomhouse, Egypt 2008; Tunisia 2009).

5.1.3 The EMP’s conflict-ridden nature
First, despite numerous examples of violations of democratic fundamentals, the EU has disregarded its legal opportunities enshrined within the AAs and MEDA. Relative to Schimmelfennig & Scholtz (2010. p. 450), the need to utilize the instrument of political conditionality in a consistent manner remains vital in order to establish credible conditionality. In short, political conditionality appears most effective in cases where the donor acts consistently and in accordance with agreed arrangements towards the recipients. However, the EU has completely undermined its own strongest tool in the box by not having brought it to use, despite several obvious opportunities to do so. The direct causes for adopting such reservations derive from the EU’s preference for exercising ‘quite diplomacy’ (Joffé, 2008, p. 314) to avoid any unconstructive developments. Alternatively, fears of being perceived as second generation European imperialists (Kaczynski & Kazmierkiewicz, 2005, p. 10) aiming to force through democracy in the quest to ensure its own security may be another explanation. Indeed, stimulating such perception in the SMCs could jeopardize the Euro-Med relation.

Second, the notion of top-down democratization, as presented by Schimmelfennig & Scholtz (2010, p. 446) may generally be questioned in terms of effectiveness. Thus, the attempt to influence a region saturated by illiberal regimes by use of external top-down governance without demonstrating any determination to live up to legal treats may constitute a rather naive notion. It may be more optimal to adopt a bottom-up democratization strategy; however, the presumed anxiety of the EU to be unable to produce short-term results may, in fact, carry with it an impossible mission: to externally incite democracy by the use of incredible threats; consequently leading to nothing more than superficial political and economic reforms covering for the absolutism of still-authoritarian governments. Hence, the clout of EMP’s punitive conditionality may prevail only as a discourse (Schmid, 2003, p. 6); however, even constructivists might hesitate to claim that the mere discourse of imposing sanctions will suffice in bringing about democratization.

Finally, internal EU issues provide explanatory power. On the one hand, EU decisions that have to do with the EMP remain under the intergovernmental part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Consequently, decisions are taken on the basis of QMW in the Council on the Commission’s proposal; hence, deciding on punitive measure to be adopted would, in practice, require a search for consensus in the Council (Schmid, 2003). Indeed, this institutional practice relates to individual EU member’s preferences: as argued by LI, EU states bring their preferences to the EU table in an effort to take into
account their domestic constituencies and the political elite. EU members thus struggle to reach common ground on whether to impose negative conditionality measures or not, as the northern EU members may advocate for punitive measures to be taken, while those south European countries who maintain strong post-colonial ties with violators may adopt a much softer standpoint; eventually preventing measures from being imposed. On the other hand, constructivists may contend that the existence of ‘shared’ norms holds the capacity to mobilize shame, relative to the concept of ‘naming and shaming’ (Snyder, 2004, p.60). Thus, the EU would be able to use its ominous rhetoric to illuminate, and thus mitigate, the illegitimate violation of, say, human rights.

5.1.4 The ENP’s conflict-ridden nature
The ENP’s positive and symmetrical conditionality has also proven problematic. First, the ENP has not used the punitive measures enshrined in MEDA II and ENPI; most likely for the same reasons as with the EMP. Second, the incentive-driven approach struggles in terms of credibility. According to Schimmelfennig & Scholtz (2008), the ENP’s incentives constitute consolation prices in comparison to the membership incentive, while the actual political standards for participation are weak, thus rendering the positive approach rather incredible and inefficient. For one thing, the lack of membership-incentive seems to demotivate adoption of democratic values, contrary to the enlargement process. However, this paper argues that alternative incentives for reform, including full access to the EU’s agricultural market and increased financial compensation/incentive via for instance the ENP Governance Facility7, may directly mitigate reform reluctance. For another thing, in relation to low standards of participation, it may be problematic that the SMCs co-decide the nature of already ill-defined political benchmarks in the APs, due to compromising effects and subsequent ‘automatic’ lowering of democratic ambitions. Thus, far from all violations of the shared democratic values are actually addressed in the APs; hence partly disregarding the content of country reports8, as in the case of Morocco (Baracani, 2005, p.16).

The issues in relation to Morocco are twofold: first, the persistent refusal of offering full access to EU agricultural markets may hamper true reforming zeal: in the absence of vast financial compensation, agricultural access may rebalance the economy instead. Second, this imbalance is, arguably, reflected in the consensus-loving AP benchmarks, whose lack of strictness seems to justify equally weak incentives and vice versa. In this light, Morocco’s reward of Advanced Status9 in 2008 represents a rhetorical upgrade

7 This facility strives to reward good political reformers beyond the normal country allocations
8 Country reports refer to Country Strategy Papers and Progress Report drawn up by the EU to outline e.g. democratic and human rights conditions in the SMCs
9 Advanced Status refers to an upgrade in political and economic relations within AAs
reflecting limited genuine democratic progress in Morocco and no substantial new incentives; in other words: Morocco has adhered to smart political reforms posing as a shining democracy in the eyes of an uncritical EU, while in fact, managing to rouge semi-authoritarianism with superficial reforms towards perceived democratic liberalization (Kausch, 2008, p. 2).

Adhering to neo-realist explanations of ENP conditionality, the EU neglects its punitive opportunities within MEDA II and ENPI due to security concerns over the amplifications of further authoritarian instability spilling over to Europe. Further, the positive approach is incredible and inefficient due to vague incentives characterized by relatively low funding of democratic development - and subsequent economic shocks - and limited market access in agriculture. In a neo-Marxist vein, the EU’s status as a core area in the world-system entails the persistence of asymmetry (Crawford, 2004, p. 106), as the EU believes it may offer a minimum of incentives and still be able to maintain short-term stability; in practice thus preferring superficial and selective reforms. However, the EU overlooks its own flaw of not being in possession of credible punitive conditionality tools; hence, the SMCs do not fear the suspension of trade agreement and aid in cases of severe violations, as they are aware of their value to the EU in security-related matters. In a constructivist vein, arguably, the internalization of the ‘discourse of partnership’, due to gradual routines of socialization over time, in preference to the ‘discourse of democracy promotion’, have impeded the ambitiousness of AP benchmarks; however, this may relate more to weaknesses of institutional commonality10, in LIT terms.

5.2 Indirect promotion within previous Euro-Med schemes

5.2.1 The EU as an indirect promoter of democratization

The BP envisioned relations with North Africa as a work in progress, officially with the long-term purpose of fostering security on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea by the hand of the rise of some European version of modern democracy, but ever since the real political purpose has obviously been one of self-protection on the part of the EU (Schmid, 2003). According to the BP, regional stability was to be achieved with the introduction of the three baskets of the BP intended to engage in a process of mutual reinforcement in their materialization into a coherent framework, thus eventually building a region symbolized by deep integration, South-South FTA and a North-South security community held together by cultural proximity, in short: a soft security approach (Joffé, 2008, p.311).

10 Refers to the divide in North Africa-EU perceptions of appropriate behavior
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The indirect and long-term approach may advantageously be summed up as the ‘twin liberalization theme’, referring to the political and economic baskets of the BP. Despite this controversial theme, the idea was to make probable the rise of democratization through better living conditions which would prevent migration flows and attraction to radical Islamism in the region, in other words: avert the EU’s main security-related concerns (Schmid, 2003, p.7). Indeed, as Schimmelfennig & Scholtz (2008, p. 192) have hypothesized on the basis of Lipset (1960): ‘the level of democracy in a country increases with the level of economic development’. In a LIT notion this may hold true due to the quite wide institutional scope of the BP; however, some conditions related to depth should be meet: first, commonality of norms among the SMCs and the EU must be relatively shared; second, the boundaries for accepted behavior must be specified in the form of rules. Arguably, the BP framework does not yet seem to be robust enough to reduce EU fears and mistrust over IR with North Africa.

While the cultural basket was meant to contribute to the mutual reinforcement and depth of institutionalization relative to LIT, it may also be explained by constructivism. First, institutionalizing the agenda of cultural and religious diversity as well as social rights may strengthen the discourse of cultural proximity, making SMCs actors associate with normative values connected to those democratic practices inherent in European cultures. Second, the Euro-Med multilateral platform institutionalizes civil societies, by use of the Anna Lindh Foundation; so as to promote cultural proximity among the anchors of societies by way of transnational exchange, (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 193) where bottom-up democratization is promoted through cultural and academic exchanges via various channels. Thus, the values on which this forum is founded may create common ground on cultural, human and political matters, thus inciting SMCs actors to adopt the logic of appropriateness due to bounded rationality in matters related to democracy on the home front. Indeed, the creation of a common cultural platform shaped by appropriate structures and the discourse of friendliness may foster internalization and normalization of democratic principles, while empowering capabilities of civil society actors with bottom-up democratization potential.

5.2.2 The conflict-ridden nature of EU’s indirect promotion

This paper suggests three obstacles, so as to explain the relative lack of success with regard to promoting democratization by way of indirect strategies: restricted SMC access to EU agricultural markets; the ENP’s hampering effects on regionalism; and, the UfM’s nature.

First of all, the twin liberalization theme’s horizontal strategy of employing economic development to stimulate processes of democratization has been subject to serious impediment, arguably due to EU reluctance to include certain agricultural products in AAs (Magnan-Marionnet, 2008, p. 17); hence
hampering the establishment of a full north-south and eventually south-south FTA. In fact, the SMCs in North Africa hold rather voluminous comparative advantages with agricultural products, such as tomatoes, citrus fruits, olives, potatoes, dates, figs and fisheries. However, these coincide with southern European agricultural production, hence impeding the liberalization agenda of the BP’s economic basket. Indeed, this emphasizes the asymmetry of the EMP in terms of bargaining power as argued by Montanari (2007, p.1015): ‘...the EU enjoyed a much stronger bargaining power than any of the MCs and consequently EMAAs have largely been shaped by the EU’s position’. The asymmetry here refers to the unequal balance of economic and political power in favor of the EU which may also explain the inability of SMCs to come through with their demands of fully including agriculture in trade agreements in order to counterbalance the EU’s free access in many industrial products. Since the SMCs heavily rely on EU imports in terms of trade, I will further examine the reasons for EU persistence in this regard, while keeping in mind the growth potential for SMCs in this sector (Magnan-Marionnet, 2008, p. 17) and thus also the long-term potential of using such growth as a vehicle for bottom-up democratization.

LI explains the lack of access for SMCs’, despite a low market share, to the EU’s agricultural market. Thus, the first stage of domestic preference formation in the EU countries is significant here due to the sensitivity of southern European farmers in relation to corresponding producers in the SMCs. In fact, agricultural NGOs in southern Europe oppose liberalization in free trade agreements at the national level for reasons of fears of increased competition. The domestic preferences is then bargained among other relevant national actors, and industrial producers will typically agitate for EU agricultural liberalization as compensation for the opening up of SMCs’ industrial markets (Montanari, 2007 p. 1017). In the second stage domestic interests are bargained at the EU level at which southern European representatives protect their domestic interests by arguing for hesitant positions on agricultural liberalization. In practice this means that EU members may oppose the formal signing of trade agreements in spite of exclusive Commission competence in the field of external trade; thus the EU’s interests seem to bow for the lowest common denominator, but due to North-South asymmetry in power and sluggishness in EU preference formation, relative to the diversity of domestic interests, the EU remains the stronger and more adamant negotiator.

While LI contribute to the understanding of the EMP’s inability to promote deeper North-South and South-South integration with the prospect of achieving democratic consolidation, neo-Marxism sheds further pessimistic light on the issue. Thus, the EU, being the core, will naturally try to exploit its superior trade power to sustain the North-South asymmetrical dependence relationship. Consequently, the EU’s reluctance to fully include agriculture in its trade agreements may denote unequal exchange, as the EU’s relative access to SMCs’ industrial markets does not correspond to the restrained agricultural market
access given to SMCs. Similarly, extensive growth in North African agriculture may eventually pose a threat to European hegemony and superiority, hence framing the contradictory nature of long-term EU democracy promotion.

Second of all, the BP’s long-term prospect of South-South region-building, including the promotion of normative values of democracy and human rights with the purpose of eventually shaping a region of security, seems to be partially overridden by the ENP, as also argued by Joffé (2008, p. 323). For one thing, the ENP itself hails the concept of bilateralism between the EU and its individual partners with its differentiation stressing a one-way Eurocentric focus on maintaining influence, while ensuring short-term stability through support of status quo in the SMCs. Thus, the undermining of a key aspect of the BD (1995) stating that SMCs should: ‘Promote conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, security, prosperity and regional and subregional cooperation’. Indeed, with the transition from MEDA II to the ENPI, attention is drawn away from South-South integration, as funding is mainly targeted at rewarding and supporting the realization of bilateral co-established benchmarks aiming at closer integration with the EU, thus downgrading integration among the SMCs. For another thing, the jointly designed APs provide no basis for punishing SMCs (Joffé, 2008, p.323) that do not live up to benchmarks, thus aggravating chances of long-term regional effects of benchmarks connected to the so-called ‘shared values’ of the ENP. So, instead of promoting multilateral dialogue with the aim of establishing a holistic security community building on democratic values, the ENP impatiently seeks to export its normative values, while practically obtaining short-term stability (Youngs, 2009, p. 897) in otherwise unstable semi-authoritarian regimes. In fact, this practical approach resembles neo-realist notions of maintaining asymmetrical dependency relationships and containing political Islam (Crawford, 2004, pp. 105-106), in recognition of the inability of the BP to do so within an acceptable time frame. Or in an even more pessimistic and simple notion: the democratization strategy merely covers EU’s true intention of avoiding competition, while maintaining relative stability.

In short, however, this paper claims that investing further in inciting regional integration; including security communities and economic communities will triumph over short-term differentiated bilateralism in terms of ensuring lasting and genuine democracies and subsequently regional security. In a constructivist vein, thus, normative notions of democracy and human rights improvements hold the capacity to change status quo over time within the EMP framework, as forming institutional communities that build on normative discourses of respect for democratic principles will, within an extended timeframe, shape perceptions of normal; thus making the SMCs adopt the logic of appropriateness in order to remain true to the discourse of being a value-based region.
The final hurdle is the latest multilateral manifestation: the UfM. It constitutes the third step in the EU’s relation with North Africa, while formally building on the normative aquis of the BP in the sense that democratic principles in its broadest meaning and the horizontal prospect of establishing institutionalized communities to ensure stability officially still underpin the agenda. However, the UfM actually stands on three real-political legs (Aliboni & Ammor, 2009, p.24): an intergovernmental approach with focus on pragmatic politics; a focus on selected economic and social projects characterized by a low-politics nature; co-ownership of the process perhaps aiming to compensate for the BP’s overtly asymmetric conditionality approach which proved problematic. It dilutes the vision of long-term democratization of the BP for three reasons. First, it waters down the normative long-term approach by downgrading the multilateral dialogue in the areas of democracy and human rights, hence recognizing the hollowness of the EU’s empty threats. Further, political dialogue with Islamist movements, representing more democratic intentions in the SMCs, remains limited, as the EU prefers short-term stability in firmly governed regimes, relative to realist views of the EU as a security-concerned actor. Thirdly, the overwhelming focus on selected policy areas of multilateral cooperation overshadows the EMP’s focus on economic restructuring intended to incite political change on a regional basis. In fact, the UfM seeks to divert attention away from sensitive issues, including democratic standards (Kausch & Youngs, 2009, p.964), by way of pragmatism intended to justify persistent regional efforts.

6. Discussion
In this chapter I will synthesize the findings of the analysis with relevant sub-aspects of the new initiative. I will limit myself to only discuss aspects of the new initiative connected to the direct and indirect issues presented in the analysis; hence trying to figure out the validity of the respective hypotheses.

6.1 Direct promotion
The new initiative builds on three elements where the first of these corresponds to direct democracy promotion: ‘democratic transformation and institution-building…’(Com, 2011, p. 3). In short, the directness of democracy promotion in the new initiative builds on the same questionable guidelines as those of the ENP, while continuing to disregard hard conditionality measures. First and foremost, however, it demands free, fair and monitored elections as a prerequisite for entry to the program. While the rhetoric may be stronger than with the ENP’s admission guidelines, however, it seems prudent to point to the hollowness of previous EU rhetoric with regard to minimum demands of democratic nature. Further, clearly inspired by the ENP’s composition the new approach stresses bilateral differentiation although with a sharpening of
incentives: ‘it is an incentive-based approach based on more differentiation (“more for more”)’ (Com, 2011, p. 5). On the one hand, this implies an increase in financial and technical assistance in the short run for reform pushers going beyond the agreed agenda; on the other, reform laggards will not only miss extra benefits; the majority of their support will also be reallocated to ‘good reformers’. However, two problems arise: first, the idea of reallocating has been proclaimed several times under the ENP, but still severe violations in SMCs have not entailed any substantial reduction in funding; second, the most efficient incentive of membership conditionality remains in the desk drawer, thus jeopardizing credibility of EU democracy promotion.

Furthermore, the new initiative intends to incite democratization by waving with Advanced Status in AAs for those ‘...partner countries carrying out the necessary reforms’ (Com, 2011, p. 5). Issues arise here as well, however: first, as we have seen, it remains doubtful what Advanced Status encompasses: it may constitute little but a new name on yet another bilateral agreement, as in Morocco’s case (Kausch & Youngs, 2009, p. 971); second, the AP’s commonly formulated list of priorities, lying at the root of the benchmark evaluation process leading to potential upgraded status in the overarching AAs, has held little ambitiousness due to the co-ownership of APs and the ENP’s weak incentives. In effect, any substantial progress towards democratic progress is easily overlooked; being neglected at the expense of more superficial democratic reforms masking, in fact, still-autocratic regimes (Youngs, 2009, p. 913).

The new initiative makes capital by establishing some minimum benchmarks on which performance allegedly will be based. These minimum benchmarks should apparently reflect the level of progress in advancing higher standards of human rights and governance; in other words: democratization relative to phases one and two of the democratization process\(^\text{11}\). However, these minimum benchmarks imitate the shared values of the ENP framework which have been repeatedly violated, as exemplified with Tunisia\(^\text{12}\), without substantial action being taken on the part of the EU. Indeed, the commitment to the shared values of the ENP revolves around respect for democracy and human rights as well; however, that respect has been broken on several occasions, thus providing no reason for believing that a reformulation of some minimum values to be respected will change the EU’s willingness and ability to reinforce any minimum benchmarks in practice. Similarly, one of the main weaknesses of the initiative remains its grand rhetoric, as the EU’s normative statements of guarding democratic submission end up creating a rhetoric-capabilities

\(^{11}\) Higher human rights standards in phase one and governance ensuring political participation

\(^{12}\) Referring to Ben Ali’s restriction on the freedom of press, associational autonomy and fair elections
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gap. In short, the EU’s has internal difficulties imposing punitive measures on violators of fundamental benchmarks due to both voting procedures and LI notions of diversified state interests which, despite Lady Ashton’s increasing significance, seemingly remain the essential driver of and constraint on EU external action.

In a much related vein, the EU’s potential as an efficient donor of conditionality towards the SMCs is not strengthened with this new approach. Since one of the EU’s major fears has become reality with the instability and power voids in the SMCs, short-term security fixation should be placed on the back burner. Instead, the new initiative ought to adopt a riskier, but also more credible, strategy of parking individual state interests for the sake of actually applying punitive measures, including dissolving AAs and suspending ENPI funding by use of its legal conditional clauses, in cases of severe violation of shared values whether within the EMP, ENP or UfM framework. However, it seems as if this new initiative continues on the course of quiet diplomacy, not because this constitutes the most constructive long-term solution, but because the EU evidently still adheres to short-term neo-realist notions of stability and security, perceptively limiting migration and radical Islamism. In constructivist notions, however, the EU simply relies on the power of discourses with the SMCs. Thus, the recurrent usage of normative rhetoric on the value of democratization and human rights serves to internalize them into social practices and with their repeated application create a dominant discourse able to ‘name and shame’ violators of democratic principles so that the SMCs adopt the logic of appropriateness. Constructivism, however, may be able to explain the EU’s intentions on direct promotion through discourse creation, but it cannot account for its lack of results.

6.2 Indirect promotion

The new initiative stands on two other elements which both correspond to somewhat indirect attempts at promoting democratization by use of bottom-up approaches. First, the EU clearly states commitment to support the rise of a thriving civil society in recognition of its vitality in building sustainable democracies across North Africa. Thus, the EU may be reviving the purpose of the cultural and human basket of the EMP: ‘A thriving civil society can help uphold human rights and contribute to democracy building and good governance...’(Com, 2011, p. 6).

Previous civil society initiatives within the third multilateral basket have, however, yielded varied success, due to EU reluctance to support controversial civil society actors critical of their regimes (Malmvig, 2006, p.346), but the establishment of a Civil Society Neighborhood Facility certainly sounds promising, especially if it manages to bring together the SMCs around such a project, as this potentially makes up a platform, along with the Euro-Mediterranean Social Dialogue Forum, on which actors from both sides may affect
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each other towards commonality. A genuinely increased focus on strengthening civil society may thus provide progress on two fronts connected to democratization, according to constructivists: first, strengthening of transnational exchange between non-governmental actors in the SMCs and the EU will, over the course of time and reiteration, create greater legitimacy of democratic values, as SMC actors will engage and feel approximation with democracy-minded EU actors. In addition, deeper institutionalization of SMCs’ civil societies may lead to increased mutual insight in the practices of neighbors, thus possibly dispersing democratic practices from the most advanced SMCs throughout the region. Second, the direct financial and technical support to civil society, as proposed in the new initiative, may enhance the bottom-up democratization process, as strong political parties and unions may advocate persuasively due to their anchorage in society. While constructivists and LIIs may praise deepening of relations, however, the compelling argument of neo-realism remains that such ‘deepening’ compose nothing more than a strategic charade paving the way for tighter migration cooperation in the manner of: ‘just keep them out’ (Kausch & Youngs, 2009, p.966). Or in other words: the welfare and security of the EU will always take top priority.

Second, the EU underlines the importance of inciting economic growth by stating that especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) should be supported based on the rationale that: ‘The unrest in several southern Mediterranean countries is clearly linked to economic weaknesses’ (Com, 2011, p.7). As argued previously, this logic is reflected in the EU’s twin liberalization approach inherent in the EMP framework. While supporting SMEs may be wise so as to incite future economic growth and subsequently pave the way for political reform, the economic part of the new proposal may fall short. As mentioned, one of the obstacles of indirect and long-term democracy promotion remains EU reluctance to fully include agriculture in its free trade agreements with SMCs. In fact, rural poverty seems to be one of the major hurdles constraining macro-economic and general economic progress in many SMCs (Magnan-Marionnet, 2008, p.17), where agriculture constitutes the major comparative advantage in the wake of being driven out of competition in low cost manufacturing by Asian producers (Joffé, 2008, p.315). The new initiative does not address this issue in a convincing manner: for one thing, it limits itself to conclude already drawn-up preferential agreements on certain agricultural products from Egypt and Morocco; for another, it tries to compensate for its shortcomings by proposing the launch of an agricultural/rural development program aiming at building a neighborhood facility from which investments and best practices from the EU should flow. Despite good intentions, however, this merely exposes the EU as a real political actor concerned with maintaining an asymmetrical dependency relationship to its periphery, relative to neo-realism and neo-Marxism. Alternatively, LI would argue that internal EU asymmetries hamper the ability to settle with
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protectionist agricultural measures as a consequence of internal North-South disputes over the nature of EU interests.

Third, the initiative extends the dominant strategy of the ENP of favoring differentiation on the basis of intense bilateralism. As a matter of fact, the initiative cements the EU’s shift away from inciting region-building based on democratic principles, towards top-down external governance on the basis of bilateralism: ‘the EU will step up bilateral political dialogue at all levels, as soon as local conditions allow, with a strong focus on human rights and political accountability’ (Com, 2011, p. 5). However, several issues arise here in relation to the long-term democracy promotion strategy: for one thing, the discourse of the Euro-Med relation as one of ‘hub and spoke’ (Joffé, 2008, p. 323) seems to be maintained by the intensification of rhetoric on differentiated bilateralism in recent years. Indeed, the new initiative reinforces such a discourse by carrying on bilateralism rhetoric; thus constructing the EU as the sole center of cooperation. Instead, the EU ought to stress the profitability of enhancing multilateral North-South and South-South institutionalization within the EMP, as strengthening the SMCs level of institutionalization with each other may reduce interstate fears and lack of trust related to anarchy. Indeed, more EU attention should be given to promote multilateral depth in cooperation as envisioned in the BD. By inciting growing trust and cooperation between SMCs, the EU may inspire the rise of regional bottom-up democratization.

For another thing, the intensification of bilateralism seems to contribute to increasing confusion over, what the overall vision for the region is (Pace, 2008, p. 49). Thus, the illumination of contradictions between the long-term logic of the BP and short-term approaches of post-ENP initiatives strengthens perceptions of the EU as an overtly self-interested actor adhering to neo-realist notions of security, disregarding any normative identity, straight from the beginning. The limited focus on multilateral regionalism in the initiative may thus draw attention to the clash of the security and democracy discourses. Briefly, the notion of short-term stability and security may clash with the notion of democratization as a vehicle for stability in the longer run. Indeed, the EU has rhetorically praised the latter indirect method, but in practice, and as this new proposal reflects, short-term stability via bilateral cooperation on migration and terrorism diverts attention away from horizontal and genuine democratization through region-building. In constructivist terms, the proposal boosts existing discourses of differentiation and short-term stability, thus hampering indirect democracy promotion.

Finally, and related to the third obstacle of indirect promotion, the initiative does, however, dedicate some attention to the multilateral aspect: ‘…the positive elements of the Barcelona Process together with those
of the Union for Mediterranean be integrated in a new approach’ (Com, 2011, p.11). While it seems indisputable that the discourse of bilateralism by far overtrumps that of regionalism some of the shortcomings of the UfM, however, may be addressed: one of problems with the UfM, namely that of omitting to promote regional economic restructuring, seems to have entered the agenda: ‘Regional economic integration should be encouraged’ (Com, 2011, p.11). Here, the economic path towards democracy is stimulated by use of regional integration reflected by support for economic governance and regional infrastructure. This being true, however, democratic standards are not mentioned in relation to this regional approach, which may give rise to concerns about specificity (depth) of rules and thus ambitiousness of democratic standards. In addition, the regional aspect does not address the depoliticization of the UfM, as no substantial extension of multilateral scope to strengthen institutionalization, relative to LIT, is indicated.

On the basis of the treated sub-aspects in this discussion, it seems incalculable to confirm either of the established hypotheses as too many unknown variables exist; however, the substance of this argumentation favors the negative hypothesis without adopting any self-assuredness.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to assess the clout and effectiveness of the new initiative seeking to address the new developments in North Africa. In so doing, EU direct and indirect attempts at promoting democracy have been trenched to process a foundation for deeming the latest initiative. First, the EMP’s hard conditionality has been unsuccessful due to low credibility, low effectiveness and CFSP constraints on EU decision-making; all of which are connected to lack of EU consistency in imposing punitive measures. ENP conditionality remains incredible, as it denies membership, access to EU agricultural markets and enough financial compensation for reform. Weak incentives and co-ownership of the APs, thus, indirectly lower the standard of political benchmarks; hampering direct democracy promotion. Second, indirect regional promotion, to be realized via the three multilateral baskets of the BP, has been impeded by EU agricultural protectionism; the shadow of differentiated bilateralism; lack of support and regional institutionalization of civil society actors critical of SMC regimes; and the UfM’s short-term pragmatism.

Minding this, I have, with great circumspection, argued that the prospect of the new initiative leans towards the negative hypothesis for several direct reasons: first, the proposal adopts the same flawed logic...

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as the ENP with its direct positive promotion lacking substantial incentives, although increased funding and entry qualifications for participation may enhance conditionality credibility. Further, the ‘more for more’ concept improves the incentives of differentiation; however, reallocation of funds among SMCs has previously not been very pronounced due to short-term neo-realist preferences of stability. Second, Advanced Status may constitute a weak incentive, as with Morocco, while not being a proper indicator for democracy since rewarding it depends on the progress made on non-ambitious AP benchmarks. Third, minimum benchmarks on which to measure performance, reflecting progress on the first two phases, imitate previously violated ‘shared’ ENP values; hence inevitably drawing attention to the EU rhetoric-capabilities gap. Forth, quite diplomacy, rather than credible threat rhetoric, seems to be carried on, thus underlining EU short-term stability focus or, in fact, constructivist notions of the prevalence of the discourse of partnership instead of the discourse of democracy promotion. Constructivists may also contend that the EU relies on a notion of ‘naming and shaming’, but its lack of results is better explained by LIT ideas of weak institutional depth due to limited commonality on appropriate behavior within Euro-Med relations.

Further, the indirect promotion issues within the new initiative shed mixed light on future relations. First, civil society advancement is emphasized, thus perhaps reviving the long-term prospect of the BP’s cultural basket; in LIT and constructivist notions this may fertilize democratic development, while neo-realists contend that deeper cultural institutionalization and bottom-up civil society support merely allow for short-term security cooperation to be realized. Second, LI and neo-Marxist explanations still apply, as restricted agricultural access remains, impeding the realization of the long-term economic basket of the BP due to diverse North-South internal EU preferences of short-term nature and desires to maintain the asymmetrical dependency relationship. Third, the long-term region-building approach to democratization remains starkly subordinate to top-down notions of differentiated bilateralism in the proposal. Indeed, the downgrading of South-South regionalism impedes long-term regional democratization, while upgrading discourses of asymmetry and short-term stability. To be fair, regional economic integration will allegedly be encouraged, but a long-term democratic vision lacks, while the institutional scope is still limited to tangible projects.

Thus, it seems justifiable to answer the research question: to which extent can the new initiative be said to improve the clout and effectiveness of EU democracy promotion? Indeed, some positive elements have been proposed; however, the majority part adheres to familiar flaws and logics of previous initiatives, instead of settling with past shortcomings. While more research is of course needed, the extent to which

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this initiative will substantially improve the capacity of EU democracy promotion in North Africa seems very limited.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Appendix 1 overview of the ENP (Source: Baracani, 2005, p. 18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE (ENP Partners)</th>
<th>Eastern Europe</th>
<th>Ukraine and Moldova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Mediterranean</td>
<td>Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Caucasus</td>
<td>Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Strengthening stability, security and well-being for EU member states and neighbouring countries,
2. Preventing the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours.

**WHAT IS OFFERED**

**Short term:** Reinforced political, security, economic and cultural cooperation (through 11 incentives)
1. Extension of the internal market and regulatory structures;
2. Preferential trading relations and market opening;
3. Perspective for lawful migration and movement of persons;
4. Intensified cooperation to prevent and combat common security threats;
5. Greater EU political involvement in conflict prevention and crisis management;
6. Greater efforts to promote human rights, further cultural cooperation and enhance mutual understanding;
7. Integration into transport, energy and telecommunications networks and the European research area;
8. New instruments for investment promotion and protection;
9. Support for integration into the global trading system;
10. Enhanced assistance, better tailored to needs;

**Long term:** Some economic and political integration

**WHAT IS ASKED**

Commitment to common values in the following fields:
- democracy
- rule of law
- good governance
- respect for human rights (including minority rights)
- promotion of good neighbourly relations
- principles of market economy, free trade, sustainable development and poverty reduction
- essential aspects of the EU’s external action (the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution)

**INSTRUMENTS**

**Short term:** Action Plans
**Long term:** European Neighbourhood Agreements

**ACTION PLANS**

Guiding principles: Joint ownership, Differentiation

Commitments to shared values and to certain objectives of foreign and security policy
- strengthening democracy and the rule of law, the reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption and organised crime;
- respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms (including freedom of media and expression), rights of minorities and children, gender equality, trade union rights and other core labour standards, and fight against the practice of torture and prevention of ill-treatment;
- support for the development of civil society;
- and cooperation with the International Criminal Court;
- the fight against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution.

Two broad priority areas:
- political dialogue and reform;
- trade and economic reform;
- equitable socio-economic development;
- justice and home affairs;
- connecting the neighbourhood (energy, transport, environment, information society, environment, research and development);
- people-to-people contacts

Commitments which will bring partner countries closer to the EU

Progress monitoring
In the bodies established by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements or Association Agreements. The Commission will report periodically on progress accomplished.
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