

Emulating the Turkish Experience through European Neighborhood Policy—Prospects for Democratization in the Arab and Muslim World Considered*

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A widespread consensus among scholars on the Turkey-EU accession talks in recent years is their overall positive impact on the Turkish democracy. Can the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) have a similar effect on other neighboring target Muslim countries? This paper seeks to answer the question by overviewing some of the main democratization efforts in Turkey since the 1990s. The following section then compares the Turkish experience with other Muslim countries (those with a Muslim-majority population) that are ENP partners, by stressing the differences. The final section concludes by discussing the prospects of democratization in the latter based on these findings, and the potential roles that the ENP can play to further promote the ongoing process. (115 words)

Keywords: Turkey, EU, European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), democratization, Mediterranean politics, Arab countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent studies on Turkish democracy emphasize the positive impact of the EU-Turkey accession talks (Müftüler-Baç 2000; Aydın and Keyman 2004: 11; Phillips 2004). Emerson et al. (2005: 193-94) go a step further and describe this effect as “essentially irreversible.” Can the European Union (EU) and its newly launched European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) help spread democracy¹ in a similar way among the neighboring Arab countries,² which have proven resilient to the democratization waves that have swept the world so far?³ How would such a rapprochement affect the development of political Islam in these countries in general?

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¹ Here, a minimalist definition of democracy is meant, which simply concentrates on the ability of all political groups to participate in pluralist elections that comply with three basic rules defined by Przeworski et al. (2000: 16). Roughly stated, they require that 1) the elections allow incumbents to lose their offices, 2) after losing their seats, incumbents have to yield them to the winner, and 3) the first two points hold under all conditions.

² Based on the current EU borders, they are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. Meanwhile, Albania, Azerbaijan and Turkey are Muslim (in the sense of the faith of their majority populations) but not Arab ‘neighbors’ of the EU.

³ A large literature focuses on democratization (or its lack of) in the Arab or “Muslim world” (see Figure 1 for a definition). Some of them include Karatnycky 1999: 121; Ehteshami 1999; Kubba 2000; Talbi 2000; Sivan 2000; Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004; Ehteshami 2004; Donno and Russett 2004.

From a theoretical framework, the applicability of a certain democratization process across different cases would pose a challenge to the relativity of democracy debate, and forms a strong argument in favor of underlining the universal qualities of democratic regimes and systems against essentialist or culturalist debates.⁴ On a more practical level, a successful democratization process involves the possibility of spreading democracy worldwide, and can contribute to world peace.⁵

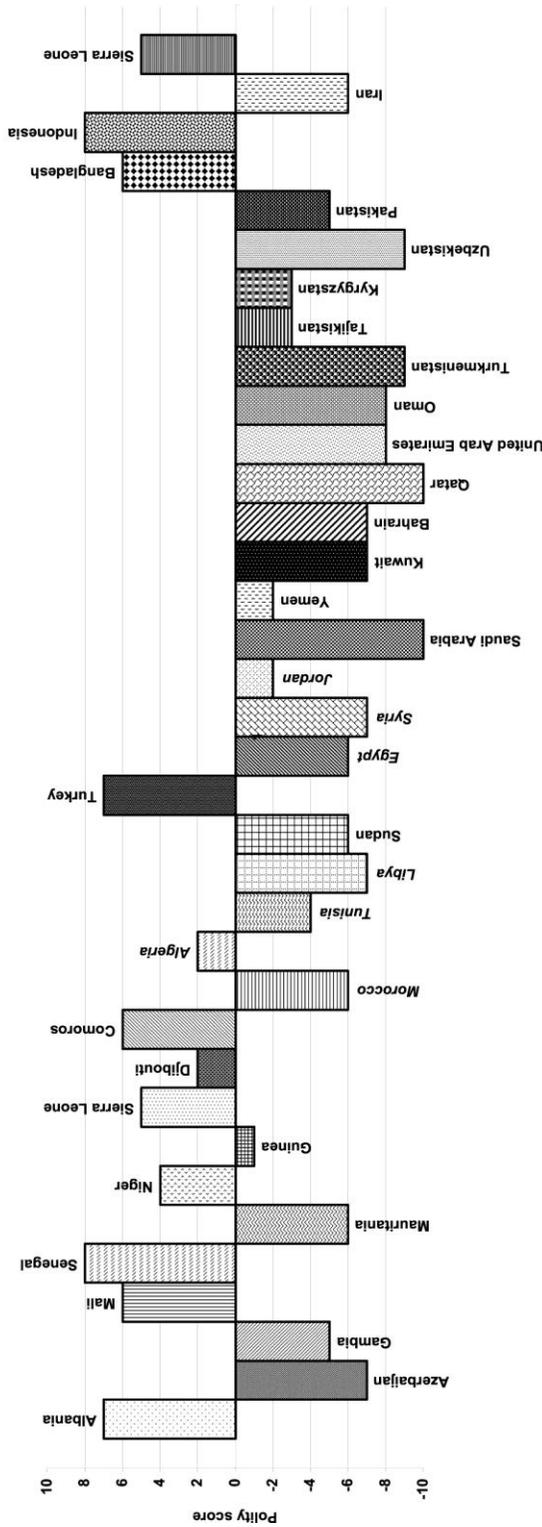
Following this setting, this study overviews some of the implications of the EU talks on Turkish democracy since the 1990s. Its goal is to assess the possible impact of the negotiation process over the Arab/Muslim partners of the ENP. Despite being an EU candidate, Turkey has more similarities with some of the Muslim ENP partners than first meets the eye. Once admitted into candidacy, many current EU members experienced a relatively smooth sailing toward admission (Mungiu-Pippidi 2005). Not so for Turkey, whose eligibility to become a candidate remains contested even to this date. In fact, Phillips (2004) argues that “[a]ccession is an old but still-distant dream” for Turkey, as “[t]o become an EU member, Turkey will have to overcome the reluctance of European states to accept in their midst a country whose majority population is Muslim.” Similarly, Kalaycıoğlu (2003: 1) has pointed out that “Turkey has been the black sheep of the EU candidate countries,” and describes the relations between the two as “oscillating between amity and enmity.” Indeed, as late as 1997, comments from top ranking EU officials, such as “Turkey did not have a serious chance of joining the European Union” were common (Emerson et al 2005: 186). Yet, Turkey remains the most democratic Muslim country in its region and one of the even fewer functional ones in the world.⁶ Thus, everything put aside, its experience with democracy during its efforts to become an EU candidate alone is worth further scrutiny.

⁴ Culturalist debates that attribute inherent and persistent qualities to societies, cultures or actors to account for their behavior are hardly new to social sciences (e.g. Weber 1930; Lipset 1960; Putnam 1994). Extended to the Muslim world in general and Islam in particular, they have also found a wide audience among scholars and non-scholars alike in recent years. While diverging in details, culturalist debates emphasize the incompatibility of Islam with democracy and an increased tendency toward violence (e.g. Jagers and Gurr 1995; Huntington 1996; Ben-Dor 1996; Ben-Dor and Pedahzur 2004; Lewis 1993: 89-90; Kedourie 1994: 5-6; Salman Rushdie, “Yes, this is about Islam,” *New York Times*, 2 November 2001). In response, an even wider literature has developed to refute the claims (e.g. Midlarsky 1998; Tessler 2002; al-Braizat 2002; Fox 2001; Fish 2002).

⁵ Peace here simply denotes the lack of systematic and measurable violence between interacting units, both within and among states. The democratic peace argument in the international relations field rises from the assumption derived an earlier proposition by Kant (1795) that democratic polities are more reluctant to fight with one another than their non-democratic counterparts. It is impossible to list all of the significant works in this fast growing literature. Some of the classic contributions include Doyle 1983a, Doyle 1983b, Gleditsch 1992, Brown et al 1996. For more recent studies, see Kinsella 2005, Kim and Rousseau 2005. For a controversial stance, see Layne 1994, Schwartz and Skinner 2002 and Rosato 2003.

⁶ According to the Polity IVd dataset by Marshall and Jagers (2004), Turkey is one of the twelve Muslim countries with a positive polity score, as opposed to the remaining twenty-four with negative scores. Turkey also has the highest polity score compared to the Muslim ENP partners, which, with the exception of Algeria, have negative scores. (See Figure 1 for further details). Earlier data obtained from the earlier versions of the Polity dataset and Freedom House data with regard to the Muslim world further confirm these findings (see Kurtoglu 2003).

Figure 1. Muslim World* and Polity Scores (2004)



Source: Data taken from Polity Project dataset (version IVd) by Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers available at <http://www.cidem.umd.edu/polity>. The PolityIVd dataset manual describes the polity score as “a single regime score that ranges from +10 [full democracy] to -10 [full autocracy].” It is obtained by subtracting the Autocracy score from the Democracy score of each country. Further information on the used variables, data collection and computation techniques is available on the same website. Data on Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Maldives and Somalia are missing. The Arab partners of the ENP appear in bold italic (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan).

* “Muslim world” refers to the group of countries where Muslims constitute 55% or more of the population. Simple majority (51%) is not adopted as a criterion to ensure data credibility. For a more detailed discussion on the subject see Kurtoglu 2003.

However, significant contrasts also exist. In historical terms, unlike the latter, Turkey does not have a colonial past that colors its interactions with the EU. Many of the Muslim ENP partners still lack free, market-based economies; a condition that is considered as a great facilitator of democratization. Above all, however, is the distinction made by Turkey's overall experience with democracy. Despite numerous problems and drawbacks, even interventions, Turkey has followed the path of democracy for over half a century now—a feat that has remained elusive to many countries worldwide, including the current Muslim ENP partners. While the impact of the coveted prospect of the EU membership over the whole process needs acknowledgment, domestic factors that have contributed to that outcome also require acknowledgement for a fuller picture.

The study is organized as follows: Part I highlights some of the important political changes that Turkey has experienced since the 1990s with an eye on its relations with the EU. Part II broadly outlines the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and its main goals. Part III follows by briefly comparing the Turkish experience with those Muslim countries that are ENP partners. Part IV concludes by discussing the prospects of democratization among the ENP partners, and the potential role that the ENP can play in promoting the process.

2. TURKISH DEMOCRACY AND THE EU: AN OVERVIEW

Turkey's quest for becoming a part of what would eventually become the European Union began in 1959. Although the Turkish application for membership was not adversely met in Europe at the time, the 1960 military coup in Turkey abruptly halted the budding negotiations. Nevertheless, following the resumption of the civilian regime negotiations, the Ankara Treaty was eventually signed by both sides in 1963, where Turkey became an Associate Member. Twenty-four years later, Turkey finally submitted its full membership application in 1987. The application was unanimously rejected, however, due to Turkey's deficiencies on political and economic grounds. Economics was considered as the first step toward remedying the existing shortcomings, and complete the transformation into the Customs Union as originally intended in the Ankara Agreement. Consequently, negotiations began in 1993, and an agreement between both sides became effective in 1996.

Signing the Customs Union Agreement was a significant step on the part of Turkey, as it showed its willingness "to adapt its markets to the EU rules, regulations, and competition. Hence, Turkey became much more intertwined with the EU markets than any other country had ever been before." (Kalaycıoğlu 2003: 5-6). It also "created the illusion that full membership was near since it was the first time in the EU history that a country has realized a customs union prior to membership" (Müftüler-Baç 2000:162). Such hopes were dashed during the Luxembourg Summit in 1997, however, which not only turned down the Turkish demands to become an EU candidate, but accepted the applications of other new applicants, including some with arguable democratic credentials (Kalaycıoğlu 2003: 6). The EU-Turkey relations had reached an all time low: Turkey cut off all political dialogue with the EU.

Relations cooled off to a considerable degree until 1999, when Turkey's long awaited and much debated EU candidacy status was finally granted at the Helsinki Summit. Some of the leading external factors that are quoted as behind this change include the Turkish-Greek rapprochement, the fall of Christian Democrats from power in Germany, who have traditionally opposed Turkey's membership, and the general change in the European attitude regarding Turkey's role in international relations following the Kosovo crisis (Warning 2006: 11; Emerson et al 2005: 12; Kalaycıoğlu 2003: 6-7).

Nevertheless, Turkey's new status also came with new responsibilities. The Commission report which followed in 2000 underlined the democratic deficits of Turkish politics vis-à-vis the Copenhagen criteria, which meant that Turkey had to prove to the European Union that it was a candidate ready to start with the negotiations. Along with numerous economic changes, the report outlined a set of sweeping political changes that demanded Turkey's full cooperation to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria. Some of the outstanding political requests included

the extension of citizenship rights and the elimination of human rights violations . . . freedom of expression and freedom of association in the fullest sense of the term, elimination of torture practices to changing legal practices as a way of combating human rights violations . . . improvements in the functioning and efficiency of the judiciary (including state security courts) as well as the removal of legal provisions forbidding the education of Turkish citizens in their mother tongue or the use of their native language in television and radio broadcasting (Ö niş 2003: 12).

Turkey's response to these expectations was swift. After the adoption of the "National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis" initiated by Turkey in 2001, "a record number of 34 constitutional amendments" followed during the same year, and a new Civil Code came into force in 2002 alongside three "harmonization packages" (Emerson et al 2005: 12). The Copenhagen summit during the same year further strengthened Turkey's resolution to speed up the political reforms to start the accession negotiations with the EU as soon as possible. To this end, the new Turkish government formed by the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or AKP (Justice and Development Party) adopted four new reform packages as well as scores of new constitutional amendments. All of this hard work on Turkey's part finally paid off in 2004 when the European Council finally decided to start the accession talks in 2005.

With the possible prospect of full membership finally looming on the horizon, Turkey's democratization efforts are considered to have gained significant velocity in the past few years. Aydın and Keyman (2004: 11) remark that the most remarkable quality about the whole process is that "as Turkish-EU relations have gained certainty over time, Turkish politics have come to terms with the fact that democracy should be 'the only game in town.'" Ö niş (2003: 9) similarly argues that following the 1999 Helsinki Summit "the incentives to undertake reform have increased considerably" for Turkey (See also Phillips 2004; Warning 2006; Emerson et al. 2005).

While true, it also bears remembering that Turkey had started signaling the EU even earlier that its comments regarding the status of Turkish politics and economics were taken seriously. Following the military coup in 1980, for instance, the Turkish military presented the time framework of the expected transition to the EC, "to demonstrate their commitment to democracy" (Müftüler-Baç 2000: 165). In 1992, the government passed a Common Criminal Procedure Law and later, in 1995, an EU report which criticized the shortcomings of the Turkish democracy was influential in the amendment of the Turkish constitution on a number of topics regarding the freedom of expression and the right to form associations (ibid. p.166). Similarly, a wide set of human rights and other democratic measures were adopted between 1997 and 1999 (ibid. p.176).

The significance of these reforms is better appreciated when the underlying domestic conditions throughout the 1990s are known. Democratization efforts of Turkey during this period intersected with the rising voice of the political Islam in Turkish politics. Although

the representation of political Islam within a party framework in Turkey goes back to early 1970s, it has become a considerable force in Turkish politics only since 1990s. Many scholars regard the rising power of political Islam during this period as the key factor behind the increasing ideological polarization of the Turkish society along the secularist-Islamist lines during those years (Esmer 2002; Güneş-Ayata 2002; Sayarı 2002).

As a consequence of these developments, “[n]ine different coalition governments ruled Turkey in the 1990s alone. According to several polls, by the end of the decade, only 15 percent of Turks “trusted” politicians, and 43 percent called politicians ‘liars’” (Phillips 2004). Turkey entered the 21st century under a coalition government, too. Yet, it was also this “fragile three-party coalition government that included the highly Eurosceptic right-wing nationalist party” that adopted the National Program in 2001, and the following reforms in 2001 and 2002, respectively, which, ultimately, also brought its downfall (Emerson et al 2005: 12).

Fifteen years later, Turkey finally had a single-party government in 2002 when the Islamist-oriented Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP or Justice and Development Party) won the elections, but that, too, has added its own twist of irony to the ongoing process. Led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan — the mayor of Istanbul during the 1990s who was sentenced for his Islamist stance earlier and known for his acerbic remarks against Turkey’s membership to the EU in his speeches — the AKP was expected to slow down, if not completely reverse, the steps that were hitherto taken by its predecessors.

Nevertheless, the AKP managed to take the skeptics and its critics both in Turkey and abroad by surprise with its zeal to follow up on the democratization process. In fact, the reforms undertaken since 2002 are widely acclaimed for their extensive scope and depth. Whether the AKP has ‘truly’ embraced democracy as a legitimate political system, and therefore has pursued the EU membership as a sign of its ideological conversion or not, is a subject that is beyond the scope of this study. Yet, a possible explanation is the increasing belief among the AKP ranks that pursuing EU membership is the surest way of ensuring its existence and increasing its acceptability in a political system which technically denies its existence.⁷ As the leading political party of the Islamist movement in Turkey, the AKP is thus expected to show its commitment to democratic rules and willingness to preserve them once in power, by the secular components of the Turkish state (Emerson 2005: 188-89).

For the overall EU membership process, the AKP experience, combined with the efforts of the earlier coalition governments, further testifies to the willingness of the Turkish parliament to undertake the democratic changes demanded by the EU despite being ruled by completely different political groups with different worldviews.

Finally, independent efforts of the civil groups, which have become more vocal since the 1980s also require acknowledgement in Turkey’s democratization process. The persistence

⁷ The 1982 Turkish constitution explicitly forbids political parties to be based on religion or race, which has led to the closure of two political parties (Refah Partisi — Welfare Party and Fazilet Partisi — Virtue Party) to date. Although the AKP’s stance on some religious matters are milder than its counterpart, Saadet Partisi (Bliss Party), it has also shown some distinct Islamist inclinations on certain matters, such as the so-called ‘headscarf issue’ and the definition of ‘adultery’ in the newly amended Civil Code [e.g. “EU irked by Turkish adultery law” published on 9 September 2004 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/3641026.stm>; “AKP TCK Tasarısı’nı geri çekti” (The AKP Withdrew the Turkish Penal Code draft), *Hürriyet* (A Turkish daily newspaper), 16 September 2004].

of certain movements, such as the “Saturday Mothers” which referred to the group of people protesting the disappearance of their children or relatives while under custody during the 1990s, for instance, was influential in getting themselves ‘heard’ by the authorities, and has contributed to the whole process (Müftüler-Baç 2000: 175-76). Another example is the Turkish feminist movement, as “women associations have contributed to a broad general democratic trend of encouraging public discussion on issues traditionally associated with the private sphere, thus increasing political participation and broadening the political space” (Warning 2006: 17).

3. FROM ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL TO COUTURE: THE ENP IN A NUTSHELL

The EU enlargement process may well be one of the most successful tools to democratization in history (Mungiu-Pippidi 2005: 15-16). Countries with widely ranging political pasts—from dictatorships to communism, and cacophonous, ‘weak’ democracies—have all been a part of this transforming experience. Nevertheless, as various European politicians and EU officials often point out, enlargement is no longer considered as a sustainable policy instrument to promote democratization beyond Europe’s borders. Yet democratization, particularly in the neighboring Arab countries, is also considered as vital to the EU security interests, particularly following the September 11 attacks (Youngs 2005: 3). A similar path without offering the prospect of membership is therefore seen as the best alternative key to help democracy spread beyond the EU borders (Rossi 2004: 8).⁸

The introduction of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is thus the newest attempt of the EU in this regard to promote good relations with its neighbors, and where possible, democratization.⁹ The initial focus of the ENP was the Eastern European countries that would become its neighbors following its enlargement in 2004, but responding to the demands of the Mediterranean countries, they, too, are now included in the project (Warning 2006: 7). After this enlargement, based on their geographic location, the ENP members now fall under three regions, including “[t]he Mediterranean, the Western Balkans, and Russia and Eastern Countries, plus Switzerland” (Rosa Rossi, 2004: 11). The Arab members of the ENP, meanwhile, consist of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia. Although the end results differ, the ENP resembles the EU enlargement process in the sense that the Copenhagen criteria constitute its founding spirit. Due to the nature of the ENP, however, they are not strictly enforced on its partners. Instead, unlike its predecessors, the ENP focuses on “a more differentiated approach to countries and the adoption of techniques use[d] to manage enlargement” (Holden 2005: 462). While

⁸ These studies implicitly assume that the EU accession constitutes an independent variable to democratization, that is, the EU accession (or prospects) propels democratization. Methodologically another equally compelling yet also unproven argument is that such countries attempt to access the EU precisely because they are democratizing in the first place. The second argument also makes sense, given the fact that “[c]ountries are invited to join once they fulfill the above-mentioned Copenhagen political criteria. The process of accession on their side and of EU enlargement on the other only starts after an assessment that certifies the fulfillment of political criteria” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2005: 17).

⁹ The former attempts that the EU made to promote good relations with its Mediterranean neighbors include the Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP), the Renovated Mediterranean Policy (RMP) and the Barcelona Declaration in 1995 with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP).

democracy and the rule of law are emphasized for relations with all neighbors, the need to comply with these rules is expressed differently for each group (Emerson et al 2005: 176). Instead of a ‘one size fits all’ approach that is applied rigorously during accession negotiations, the ENP is based on flexibility, where the amount and nature of partnership can develop on an individual basis. While earlier agreements, such as bilateral trade negotiations will remain intact, the project is tailored to base technical and financial assistance on what each partner most requires at the moment, as decided by them. This is regarded as an improvement from the past, when the EU aids did not necessarily match with the existing agreements between both sides. It also gives partners to decide how much or little they want to get involved with any part of the “existing and evolving EU structures, law and systems on an à la carte basis” (Hoekman 2005: 1-2).

The mechanics of the ENP, simply stated, is based to function through the ENP Action Plans. These are agreements signed between partners and the EU, effective between 3 and 5 years. As in the past, Association Agreements form the framework of each relationship, and their implementation is monitored by the institutions depicted in them, alongside the new institutions specifically created for the process (Hoekman 2005: 14).

Although the overall success or failure of the ENP is currently impossible to predict, several points stand out regarding its future. First, if accession methods without offering the prospect of the EU membership indeed promote democratization beyond Europe, the possibility of their application can go far beyond the immediate borders of the EU. Countries currently addled with confusion and violence, including Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia can benefit from this experience. Such positive effects will also help the EU to promote a safe and peaceful haven beyond its borders — a must, if it hopes to maintain the tranquility within its borders. Finally, from the perspective of the Muslim world, the effectiveness of such methods once again underlines the ineffectiveness of the essentialist claims regarding the incompatibility of Islam with democracy.

4. THE TURKISH EXPERIENCE AND THE ENP COUNTRIES: A COMPARISON

Similar to the EU accession negotiations ongoing with Turkey, the ENP is an open-ended, ongoing process with the Muslim ENP partners. Due to its relatively brief history, however, the ENP’s exact impact on the Arab countries is harder to assess than the impact of the EU over Turkey’s democratization. Nevertheless, a number of points stand out to draw out a general — if temporary — picture.

One of the more obvious advantages of the ENP is its stepped up efforts to genuinely pursue the spread of democracy among its Arab partners. Prior to the initiation of the ENP, the general approach of the EU towards democratization in the Mediterranean barely went beyond lipservice: “In terms of funding priorities and levels of diplomatic attention, economic reform, mitigating drugs trafficking, environmental protection and population control all assumed higher priority than encouragement for political reform in the Arab partners of the EMP” (Youngs 2005: 2). The ENP, however, is better able to divide the political reforms and democratization into several parts than its predecessor, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership — also known as the Barcelona Process, thus easing the overall monitoring process (Menéndez and Youngs 2006). Furthermore, the ENP offers more positive incentives — particularly in the form of aids — in return for reforms, which is

expected to increase through the introduction of what is called the “EU reform bonus” in the forthcoming years (Warning 2006). In that sense, Emerson et al (2005: 216) argues that

The EU is not demanding democracy with a strident voice, armed with massive sticks and carrots. Instead its most important and unique contribution may be in the very subjective quest for some kind of Euro-Mediterranean identity, and for a modern place for Islamic culture inside the democratic EU, which in turn may feed back through diaspora connections to the domestic politics of the Arab world.

However, problems also exist. Agreements signed with the participating ENP partners, for instance, are criticized as too broad to the point of being ineffective (Menéndez and Youngs 2006). Different expectations on both sides from their partnership can be a leading cause here (Attinà 2003: 196). A more potent cause, however, rises from the very nature of the ENP, which severely restricts using ‘conditionality’ as a tool to achieve progress in key issues such as human rights. The problem is,

European speeches, from different national sources and from the Brussels institutions, are littered with similar references to the need for incremental ‘modernisation’; the need not to ‘impose’ democratic change; the need to respect differences; and the need for change to ‘come from within’, to be ‘home grown’ (Emerson et al 2005: 202).

And such cautious attitude has earned the EU harsh remarks for remaining silent during “clear instances of authoritarian practice” among the partners, which has included the “decidedly unfree elections in 2004 in Tunisia” to “the Mubarak government’s decision to drop consideration of lifting emergency law provisions” and “the Syrian regime’s clampdown against democracy activists” (Youngs 2005: 3).

Another related issue consistently brought up by scholars is the overcautious tendencies of the EU when dealing with the Islamist movements in its Muslim ENP partners. Whatever limited contact that has been established to date consist of cultural or religious dialogues, and does not carry the goal of helping these groups ameliorate their political stance vis-à-vis the political regimes they challenge (Youngs 2005: 4). Behind the European hesitancy, a number of factors are traceable, including, but not limited to the internal rifts within the EU itself regarding the development of policy priorities concerning these countries; fear for abetting possible extremist groups that are wearing the mantle of democracy supporters, particularly since September 11, and the simple but addictive comfort of the existing inertia.

In fact, underlining instances of “clear inconsistencies and even retreats,” analysts have blamed the EU officials in particular for sending “mixed and in some cases contradictory signals” to their Arab partners (Shahin 2005: 126). Meanwhile, the same behavior is considered to play into the very hands of those authoritarian regimes reluctant to undertake the political changes desperately needed in the region (ibid).

Adding a further twist to the irony, the EU mechanisms for the ENP that are fashioned after the enlargement process are interpreted as a way of enforced Europeanization of its Arab neighbors and are highly suspected by some conservative-Islamist groups, which also spearhead most of the political reform movements across the Arab/Muslim world. By hesitating to enter into dialogue with these groups through the ENP, the EU thus risks further alienating these movements and the political developments ongoing in these countries.

Vali Nasr (2005: 18) argues that “Muslim Democracy has emerged in societies where the private sector matters. The less state-dependent and more integrated into the world economy a country’s private sector is, the more likely is that country to see Muslim Democracy gain traction as a political force.” Parallel to this view, in addition to setting political goals, the ENP also aims to promote the development of free market economies among its partners.

Yet, the EU aid for the ENP partners has been criticized as too little and too unfocused. The end product of the EU efforts, the argument follows, may well lead to “hybrid states” where “much of the economic environment and in certain respects political governance is akin to a liberal free-market state, but where this coexists with a subtle dirigisme of the economy, older patronage systems and authoritarian political structures” (Holden 2005: 462). Even to those less cynical observers, the net result, it appears, “is that the EU prefers stability over democratization and reform” (Biscop 2004: 28). This criticism is also shared by other observers (Shahin 2005: 126; Youngs 2005: 4).

Carried to another extreme, the EU has been rebuked to give out too little in return for asking too much. Biscop (2004: 28) explains this condition as “[c]urrently it seems as if the Mediterranean partners are suffering all the hardships entailed by economic reforms necessitated by the projected free trade area, but without gaining much in terms of effective benefits in return, or even the near-term prospect of benefits.” According to this view, agricultural quotas, and to a lesser extent the textile sector of the Arab ENP partners have suffered worst under the EU’s ongoing protectionism.

The result is an irony. The goal is to maintain and promote cultural diversity while establishing cultural cooperation, but it has also been pointed out that “a lot of the EMP’s famed cultural cooperation seems aimed more at not prescribing particular cultural or political values.” (Menéndez and Youngs 2006). Some observers go further and imply that even the cultural cooperation dimension of the project is at risk of failure due to inherent differences and expectations of the partners. Attinà (2003: 193), for instance, argues that

apart from some concrete steps made in the fields of common heritage, audiovisual and youth exchange, the cultural dialogue developed so far has not increased mutual understanding much at all. Arab and European views differ sharply on as fundamental issues as the relations between state and religion, religious pluralism and the dialogue between religions, the contrast between individualism and collectivism, the role of civil society, and equal opportunities for women.

Finally, excessive bureaucracy seems to further exacerbate all of these problems. An observer describes the condition as, “European democracy-promotion efforts risk being drowned in a sea of bureaucracy . . . Actors in the region could find themselves trapped in a thicket of reports, regulations, and procedures, with the notion of democratic-reform promotion getting lost along the way” (Yacoubian 2004: 11).¹⁰

The greatest threat blocking the future success of the ENP therefore may well lie in its overall design: although EU officials introduced the ENP as an alternative to the EU membership, and with a very different trajectory, its outline continues to resemble the membership process too closely. The following example is brief but telling:

¹⁰ For a contrasting view, see Emerson et al (2005: 201).

One Commission official noted that in the very early ENP drafts, the name of a recent candidate state sometimes would appear. Since then the language has been modified significantly, but the imitation of enlargement templates is still evident. (Kelley 2005: 5).

Meanwhile, compared with the Muslim ENP partners, two points regarding Turkey's relations with the EU particularly stand out. The first one concerns the EU demands for the improvement of democracy and the general political conditions in Turkey. The EU tendency to provide more sanctions rather than positive reinforcement mechanisms to ensure the compliance of expected political reforms in Turkey is already discussed in other studies (Öniş 2003; Kalaycıoğlu 2003). Such a policy instrument has never been followed between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbors, including the ENP. On the contrary, a reverse trend may well be on the rise: with the implementation of the ENP, which stays clear of quid pro quo policies or sanctions, there is nothing that stops democratization to be completely dropped out of the picture, should the Arab partners opt for it. While not certain, there are signals for the possibility of such an outcome, as during the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership tenth anniversary summit in 2005, "Arab reactions demonstrated that the notion of cooperation with EU states on genuine political opening remains neuralgic for Middle Eastern governments" (Menéndez and Youngs 2006). Islamist terrorist attacks worldwide have not helped things either, as "Arab states have been skillful in deflecting reform pressure by playing the counter-terrorism card" (ibid).

The second outstanding point is Turkey's persistence in trying to fulfill the EU demands for literally decades. As mentioned earlier, even during the military rule and the following transitional period to civilian politics following the 1980 coup, Turkey has shown a willingness to become a part of Europe, to fulfill its political demands, which required further democratization of Turkish politics. Whatever outcome may result from the EU accession negotiations, the net gain for Turkey regarding its efforts so far is the further consolidation of its democratic regime. More importantly for Turkey, while the quality of its democracy may be open to debate, its existence *per se* is no longer debatable.

It is possible to explain Turkey's fervent attempts to democratize with the financial incentives or sanctions hitherto provided by the EU. However, in comparison with the former EU candidates, such as Greece, Portugal or Spain, the extent and frequency of such aids are remarkably small. Similarly,

[w]here countries such as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria received around €470 million, €306 million and €161 million respectively under the PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD programmes between 1990 and 2001, the amount granted to Turkey in the same eleven-year period – a country of a considerably larger size and population – was only €840 million (Aydın and Keyman 2004: 15).

What makes these points further outstanding is that the EU has stayed clear of giving any positive, definite indications that Turkey's actions will ultimately lead to its membership. In fact, some scholars have noted that such an unwillingness on the part of the EU may lead the Turkish society to conclude that its formal claims to subject Turkey to objective criteria, such as the Copenhagen Criteria, are disingenuous, and, whatever Turkey may accomplish, a new loophole will be introduced *ad infinitum* due to its Muslim identity (Emerson et al 2005; Aydın and Keyman, 2004: 15; Kalaycıoğlu 2003; Phillips 2004). This pessimism, while speculative, has legitimate roots: countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal earlier, and

the East European countries later, were admitted into full membership without fully consolidating their democratic regimes (Müftüler-Baç 2000: 166-67; Mungiu-Pippidi 2005).

5. CONCLUSION

From a methodological point of view, experiences of Muslim countries such as Turkey on the path to democratization are still too few to draw statistical inferences and derive general conclusions that are applicable worldwide. Nevertheless, they do provide invaluable insight to researchers in a scientific field where lab experiments are out of the question. The bottom line here is, viewing “the ongoing dynamics of democratic consolidation” is likely to remain a fascinating experience,” since they “are likely to define the terms under which Islam and democracy interact in at least several Muslim-majority lands” (Nasr 2005: 14).

Turkey’s experience with democracy spans over half a century and its encounters with the parliamentary system date back even earlier to its Ottoman roots. Thus, it already enjoys a considerable head start compared to its Mediterranean counterparts. However, the rest of the Muslim world has also been changing. Since the 1990s, political liberalization attempts have been observed with increasing frequency, with multiparty elections taking place in lands ranging from Bangladesh to Indonesia, with the general exception of Arab countries (Nasr 2005: 13).

Yet even the Arab world, which is still trailing far behind its counterparts, seems no longer immune to the winds of change. Diverse events and occurrences, ranging from the recent Muslim Brotherhood victory of an unprecedented number of seats in the 2005 Egyptian general elections in that country’s history to the set of human rights reforms that are introduced in Morocco as well as the political changes which followed the killing of Lebanon’s former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, all testify to the slow yet significant changes that the Arab countries have been undergoing in recent years (Menéndez and Youngs 2006).

In the meantime, the Arab ENP partners have not remained oblivious to the evolution of political Islam in Turkey either (Nasr 2005: 19). An Islamist party along similar lines of the AKP of Turkey has been formed in Morocco, for instance, where it has also managed to gain seats in the parliament (Warnings 2006: 34). Even more importantly, however, “Turkey has once more become an exporter of ideas in the region . . . [d]espite the large weight of ideological, political, and even cultural reservations about Turkey that existed until recently in Arab official circles and among the political elite”(al-Zain quoted in Altunışık 2005). This observation seems to support the theory that “if and when Muslim Democracy gains coherence, it will become readier for export to countries unable to produce it from scratch” (Nasr 2005: 19).

Shortly after the introduction of the democratic political system in 1946, Turkey also began its quest for EU membership, thus, in a way, making it impossible to completely segregate the impact of both processes on each other. Yet, as this study has sought to underline, reducing all democratic developments in the Turkish political system to a single external factor, such as the EU can be misleading, and the role of internal dynamics also need to be scrutinized. Indeed, a closer look at Turkish politics indicates that instead of following a straight, clear path, Turkey’s relations with the EU has experienced many setbacks, and at times, even u-turns. And while its relations with the EU — or the former EEC — has propelled the consolidation of a democratic regime, other external factors, which are left outside the scope of this essay, including its relations with the US, as well as internal

factors, such as the Kemalist tradition and the role of the Turkish military also requires serious reflection for a fuller picture.

In light of the Turkish example, it is safe to assume that the future of democratization in the Mediterranean basin, and in the wider Muslim world will depend just as much on the willingness and efforts of those countries, propelled and maintained by their domestic political dynamics as the proffered EU incentives.

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