The EU Democracy Promotion in Tunisia

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Abstract

The European Union not only devote itself in becoming a reference point for the countries in its next proximity, but also reaching out to the most disadvantaged countries in the world. In the light of the Arab Spring, the EU was confronted with an unsecured neighbourhood, but as well with a real possibility of guiding the newly states in their transition towards a democratic system. The paper analyses the extent to which the EU is contributing to anchor the democratic transition in a particular country after the Arab uprisings, namely Tunisia. The Tunisian case provides a unique opportunity to explore the foreign policies of the EU, examine how the Union assessed the uprisings in Tunisia and which goals and instruments EU pursued toward the country. The analysed EU anchors of democracy, specifically democracy assistance and political dialogue, provided support for the main argument that the EU is one of the most important pillars in the Tunisian successful outcome of the transition period. The attention was focused on two relevant domains: the Tunisian security sector reform and the electoral system, both used in the current paper to assess the impact of EU's anchors of democracy. Altogether, the study represents an attempt to bring further understanding of the EU's active engagement after the Arab Spring. The insights obtained regarding the security sector reform and mainly the 2011 and 2014 election, confirmed the EU's positive involvement in the Tunisian democratic process.

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Keywords

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Introduction

The European Union (EU), since 1970 within the European Political Cooperation (EPC) framework tried to be a present actor in the international scene. Not only did the EU devote itself in becoming a reference point for the countries in its next proximity, but also reaching out to the most disadvantaged countries in the world. This is why the Union engaged in programmes reaching the Middle East and North African countries, guided by the agreements of the Barcelona Declaration and later on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Within these frameworks of collaboration, the EU worked with its southern, but also eastern neighbours, to achieve a positive association for both parts.

In the light of the Arab Spring, the EU was confronted with an unsecured southern neighbourhood, but as well with a real possibility of guiding the newly states in their transition to a democratic system. This paper analyses the extent to which the EU is contributing to anchor the democratic transition in a unique country after the Arab uprisings, namely Tunisia. The Tunisian case provides a unique opportunity to explore the foreign policies of the EU, examine how the Union assessed the uprisings in Tunisia, which goals and instruments EU pursued toward the region and particularly toward the country.

The analysed EU anchors of democracy, specifically democracy assistance and political dialogue, provided support for the main argument that the EU is one of the most important pillars in the Tunisian successful outcome of the transition period. The Europeans explicitly tried to ease this transition by employing specific instruments and resources, promoting democratic values while considering at the same time the aspect of security and stability. Since this paper talks about collaboration between the two parts, the EU assistance and dialogue would have been pointless unless Tunisian government and officials' were willing to show enthusiasm and active responsibility.

Democracy promotion often carries a negative association because it is sometimes understood as the external action to control and influence the internal affairs of a country. It will be argued that the EU actively contributed to the democratic transition in Tunisia not by selling the democratic brand, but by explaining democracy promotion as a norm. The theoretical approach under the normative theory takes into account the fact that norms matter for the EU and these guided EU's international policies towards the southern neighbourhood, especially towards Tunisia.

The paper is organised in 3 concrete sections. The first one defines the terms that are going to be used extensively, such as democracy and democracy promotion. In this section, equal interest has been given to the EU's role in the motivation and methods used to promote its values. The European involvement in Tunisia (and by large in the region) in the analysed period, will include the implementation of different EU instruments used in its southern neighbourhood, such as the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument.

The second and third sections represent the practical part in analysing the case study. As for considering the EU contribution to the democratic transition, economic (regarding the assistance offered), political (encouraging the democratic transition by supervising the elections) and security (contributing to this sector reform) aspects will be evaluated. The attention will be on two relevant domains: the Tunisian security sector reform and the electoral system, both used to assess the impact of EU's anchors of democracy.

Altogether, the study finds its place in the highly criticised European foreign policy area, but represents an attempt to bring further understanding of the EU's active involvement after the Arab Spring. It does so by supplementing the desk research and the available information sources with primary research. This involves conducting interviews with individuals who have direct involvement in the Tunisian transition period. While trying to get a clear understanding of the situation, the paper reviewed EU position, but as well the local views coming from the NGO sector, the political arena and as well the academia. The insights obtained regarding the security sector reform and

mainly the 2011 and 2014 election, confirmed the EU's positive involvement in the Tunisian democratic process.

Democracy and Democracy Promotion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the literature on EU democracy promotion and to introduce the reader to the Tunisian study case. Democracy promotion has been a highly debated topic for some time now, and it had taken the central stage in some occasions in the United States foreign policy and more recently in the European Union. The US is one of the key players in promoting democracy internationally, but the EU is regaining momentum after the Arab Spring although before it had been criticised for its 'clear signals of diverting from its democracy agenda' (Huber, 2015, p. 3).

The question that might arise, as Daniela Huber (2015, p. 1) mentions, is what motivates existing democracies to promote democracy. Many scholars have tried to find the answer to this question, and probably the best conclusion is, as Gallie (1955) mentions, that democracy is typically a highly controversial notion, and there are many ways to define it. Keukeleire and Delreux (2014) consider the fact that the aim of democracy promotion is to 'shape the organising principles and rules of the game and to determine how others will play that game' (p. 28).

To promote democracy actors use different actions, and Daniela Huber (2015) divides these into three: coercive, utilitarian and identitive means. The first one, the coercive is a type of democracy promotion in which military intervention is used. It is not considered a peaceful alternative and that is why it is avoided by the EU but often employed by the US. The utilitarian democracy promotion uses the tools at its disposal, such as conditionality and assistance, to have an impact. On the other side, the identitive one does not use financial means, but rather 'seeks to persuade the other of one's values or to change the other's behaviour in accordance with one's values through speech acts' (p. 27). This paper will regard just the utilitarian and identitive democracy promotion being actions taken by the EU when performing assistance and political dialogue- the EU's anchors of democratisation.

Freyburg, Lavenex, Schimmeifennig, Skripja and Wetzel (2015) define democracy promotion 'as comprising non-violent activities by a state or international organisation that have the potential to bring about, strengthen, and support democracy in a third country' (p. 10). Furthermore, Pridham (1991, p. 8) considers that international factors can be regarded as dependent variables which are profoundly influenced by the domestic arena. Although there is a consensus in the literature that yes democracies can anchor democracy, not everybody is convinced by this statement.

Morlino (as cited in Pridham, 1991) recognise the fact that the international actors can influence the transition towards democracy either by the fact that 'the country belongs to a geopolitical area already completely democratised' (p. 7), which is not the case in this study, either in a more direct way by using economic aid or pressuring the state. Whitehead (as cited in Pridham, 1991), on the other side, 'noted that the unpredictability and uncertainty characteristic of regime transition tends to encourage parties engages in it to enlist international support if only for symbolic endorsement' (p. 7).

Although Morlino (as cited in Pridham, 1991, p. 8) indicates that the international actors have the power to make a difference in the democratic process, it is important to keep in mind that the time framework influences the outcome. That is why this paper considers the period after the Arab Spring as essential to EU's influence on Tunisia.

EU and Democracy Promotion

Democracy promotion represents a central goal of the European Union external policy. With the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) in 1993, it confirmed the attachment 'to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law'. The EU created a name on the international arena and within its Common Foreign and Security Policy it manages to support a full spectrum of actions such as the ones involving aid, trade and association policies within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy or the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Freyburg et al. (2015) argued that 'this mosaic of EU external policies opens up a variety of

possibilities for the promotion of democracy outside the EU's borders' (p. 10).

The main EU body for the democracy promotion, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, known from 1995 as the Barcelona Process was renamed in 2008 as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Although its recent policy review states its recent developments have been criticised as having achieved limited results, Simon (2014) considers that 'the EU now emphasises a shift towards a genuine pro-democracy agenda in its relations with the Mediterranean partner countries' (p. 59) admitting the fact that the firm collaboration with the authoritarian rulers, such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, represent mistakes of the past.

Why Does It Do It?

Kotzian, Knodt and Urdze (2011) find the first motivation behind democracy promotion as being normative and intrinsic because EU 'prefers to be surrounded by political systems that are organised along the same principles and cherish the same values' (pp. 996-997). Furthermore, they consider from a more rationalistic point of view, safety, economic exchange and avoiding the spread of instability as reasons in explaining the commitment to fostering democracy.

Manners normative power concept (2002) seems to attract many scholars in considering this as the primary motivation behind the EU democracy promotion. Hullen (2009) illustrates the centrality of the normative discourse in this regard. However, there are opinions like Pace (2009) who believes that the ultimate objective of EU's initiatives in the region is 'securing the EU's own concerns about (in)migration, security, and stability rather than "transformation" in the MENA' (p. 45). Following the same line, Olsen and Youngs (as cited in Mouhib, 2014, p. 35) put security and strategic interests at the core of the explanation of the EU's actions in the region.

Vera van Hullen (2015) raises the problem of the lack of a European membership perspective and further on argues that democracy cooperation slowed down the impact of political protest in the Arab Spring and 'at least in the short run, helped stabilise authoritarian rule'

(p. 16). She also criticises EU efforts compared with the normative power discourse, considering that EU democracy promotion represents, to some extent, 'a truly normative agenda' (p. 22). Additionally, Jonas Wolff (2010, p. 4) enlarges the vision of the normative claim by adding strategic interests in the EU promotion of democracy. He considers that the benefits of security and trade, but also the international peace and cooperation represent the explanation of why democratic states aim at promoting democracy.

Bicchi (2006) explains that behind the normative connotation of the EU foreign policy there are three different arguments: the rationalist approach, the constructivist perspective and sociological institutionalism. For the first one, the EU tries to benefit from the adoption of its norms, whereas from the constructivist perspective the EU 'starts reflexively, but drifts into un-reflexivity through path dependency' (p. 293). As for the last one, the EU relies on promoting its norms 'because institutions promote institutional isomorphism, and this is particularly the case from the West towards the rest of the world' (p. 293). One of these directions is also indicated by Youngs (as cited in Bicchi, 2006, p. 291) which highlights that the EU promotion of democracy is part of a general plan with the aim of strengthening regimes and reassure the right relation with third-party actors.

Despite all these critics, democracy promotion is seen as a 'normative good that is worth pursuing' (Schraeder, 2012, p. 670) and the strong economic and diplomatic relations between the EU and Tunisia created the belief that the EU will support Tunisia in its path towards democracy as it is mentioned in article 10A of the Lisbon Treaty.

How Does It Do It?

The literature shows that the EU created instruments in order to prom ote democracy, and although they do not represent a sufficient condition, they are a necessary one. This paper will look at the way the EU can anchor democracy transition using the resources at its disposal, such as money and assistance, and using dialogue in order to provide expertise. Anchoring refers to 'the emergence, shaping, and adaptation of

anchors that hook and bind, and consequently, may even control civil society in general or specific sectors'(Morlino, 2005, p.745). It will regard, as well, the EU contribution to anchor the democratic transition in Tunisia, regarding specific sectors, such as Security Sector reform and Political liberalisation.

The EU, since putting on the agenda of the promotion of democracy, especially in its Southern Neighbourhood, tried to improve and evolve the institutional framework, a framework which encompasses distinct mechanisms of action. These encompass the 'capacity building through democracy assistance for state and non-state actors and persuasion and socialisation through political dialogue' (Hullen, 2015, p. 57), two important elements in measuring and assessing the Union's involvement.

Starting with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in 1995, which was re-launched as the Union for the Mediterranean, and also with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU worked with its southern neighbours, including Tunisia, in order to create stronger relations. Within these programmes, democracy assistance, 'the first of the EU's instruments for promoting democracy' (Hullen, 2015, p. 58) in the Mediterranean region, was done mainly using the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (former MEDA programme). Democracy assistance, being defined as 'aid explicitly designed to promote democracy abroad' (Carohers, 2000, p. 181) is considered by Bicchi and Voltolini (2013, p. 81) as being constantly increased in funds and it has been promoted 'with a view to encouraging joint actions for democratization and human rights instruments' (Cassarino, 2012, p. 2).

Political dialogue, as the second anchor of democratic transition, is 'incorporated in nearly all EU agreements with third countries, as an essential element' (Pace, 2009, p. 41). However, as Hullen (2009, p. 9) states, the soft instruments of democracy promotion, such as assistance and political dialogue, depend on the partner will of cooperation. As it will be seen later on in this paper, the Tunisian authorities encouraged an effective political dialogue with the Europeans, but this has not been the case for other countries in the region. If Tunisia is analysed as a

successful case, it is exactly because it showed, right after the Jasmine revolution, the willingness to accept and cooperate with the international community.

In addition, is it important to observe what happened after the Arab Spring, this being the period that the paper will analyse the most. After the uprising, Tunisia faced an increase in EU funding, but while the EU maintained a visible presence in the area, at the same time it continues to receive criticisms of its limited actions (Bicchi et al., 2013, p. 82). The EU has developed new initiatives to respond to the Arab Spring and one of them was 'more for more' initiative, which meant that 'the further a country extended political and economic liberalization, the greater the support and cooperation it would receive from the European Union' (Joffe, 2012, p. 321). Even with this new initiative called SRING programme, what the EU has done is basically just reinforcing the EMP principles. The difference lies in the motivation behind its involvement. As this paper will further show, the European Union left aside the criticism and concentrated on promoting its democratic values rather than just aspire for a stable region.

Tunisia: Background

The Republic of Tunisia, as it is formally named, is situated at the top of the African continent, being the smallest country in the North Africa region. Being strategically located at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East, it shares many characteristics with neighboring region, but still maintaining some unique attributes. It is a small territory with 'a relatively homogenous population, a relatively liberalized economy, a large and educated middle class, and a history of encouraging women's socioeconomic freedoms' (Arieff et al. p.4). The population is overwhelming Arabic-speaking and while its culture reflects some European influences and tendencies, religion remains an important element of the society, being predominantly Sunni Muslim.

Prior to the begging of the Arab Spring in 2011, Tunisia represented a stable authoritarian regime, a structure lacking political liberalization, but with a clear focus on economic growth. Since its independence from France in 1956, it had only two leaders: Habib Ben Ali Bourguiba, an

independence activist that first served as the second Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tunisia before proclaiming the Tunisian republic in 1957 and thus becoming the first president; and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who become president after a bloodless coup d'état that ousted President Bourguiba.

The repression felt by the people, along with many other problems such as corruption, nepotism and the socioeconomic divide, 'undermined the regime's popular legitimacy, despite relatively effective state services and economic growth' (Arieff et al. p.5). The conclusion of the dissatisfaction and frustration of people resulted in the 2011 protest movement, moreover, having an influence in the region as a whole, representing the inception of the Arab Spring.

Tunisia: Political Structure

Tunisia's 2011 popular uprising, known as the "Jasmine Revolution," ended the 23-year authoritarian regime of then-President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali and sparked a wave of unrest in much of the Arab world. This moment represented the first step towards democracy, with civil and political liberties being expanded dramatically, and Tunisia experiencing a far less violent transition compared with some other countries in the region.

The first democratic public elections were conducted for the National Constituent Assembly on October 23rd, 2011. Further on, the Assembly was tasked with drafting the country's new constitution and after three years of negotiations, lawmakers ratified a new one in January 2014. The new constitution has been perceived as a model for other Arab countries. It represents a real progress because it bans torture, guarantees equal rights between men and women and the right to due process. While it names Islam as the country's religion, it also guarantees freedom of worship. Religion, meaning Islam remain as a strong element of the Tunisian society but is not the main source of legislation.

The new constitution provided for a semi presidential system along the French model, but with a significantly more powerful Prime Minister. The new format of the legislative process elects the Prime Minister independent of the President and the Prime Minister appoints all

government minsters except those for defence and foreign affairs. The President has exclusive control over these two ministries. From this moment onwards, the President of the Republic is to be elected by general, free, secret and direct elections.

Dozens of parties contested the 2014 elections, but the top two have come to represent the two poles of Tunisian post-revolutionary politics. One is the Islamist party Al Nahda, which won Tunisia's first free and fair elections in October 2011 after being banned under Ben Ali. The other is the ardently secularist Nidaa Tounes, which represents a mix of former regime figures, business interests, trade-unionists, and independents (Arieff et al. p.5). The elected leaders had to tackle all the pressing issues that drove people into the streets in 2011, such as unemployment, insecurity and inequality with massive support coming from International Organisations, such as the EU.

EU-Tunisia Relations

The immediate period after Zine El Abidine Ben Ali came to power, the country hoped a transformation, away from the authoritarian regime that they had to face till then. Although this scenario seems plausible at first, Ben Ali eventually 'set up a facade democracy that has all the institutions and "formalities" of a liberal-democratic state without having any of its content' (Durac & Cavatorta, 2009, pp. 14-15). Durac et al. (2009) raise the question of European support for such an authoritarian regime, but what the European Union was protecting at that time in the region was stability rather than supporting democratic values.

Powel (2009) offers a good summary of the EU- Tunisia relations and emphasises the idea that during the last period this relationship got closer but not without flaws. The partnership started in 1995 with the Barcelona Process, Tunisia being the first country in the region to sign a bilateral Association Agreement with the EU in 1998. Furthermore, Tunisia was included as well in the new platform for cooperation, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and was 'amongst the first to agree on a bilateral Action Plan with the EU as part of the ENP' (p. 194). Compared with the other countries in the Mediterranean, 'the EU does

not have a stand-alone democracy promotion policy in Tunisia' (p. 195) but it sure acts differently after the Arab uprisings.

Being the first spark of the Arab Spring, the Tunisian revolution made the EU Commissioners 'react to developments on the ground rather than impose any form of a democratic conditionality' (Pinfari, 2012, p. 38). Pinfari (2012) considers the fact that the Europeans acted in this way due to the disagreements between the member states in regard to Ben Ali's regime collapsing and all of this shows that the EU was undecided on which way to follow: promoting stability (even while supporting authoritarian regime), or promoting democracy. Today, however, things are becoming clearer due to the fact that Tunisia is taking clear steps in moving towards a democratic path.

There are scholars like Mouhib (2014) that consider the Arab uprisings to represent 'a contextual event that can trigger minor adjustments, but certainly not truly challenge the essence of EU democracy promotion in the region' (p. 351, p. xii). On the other side, Paters (2012) advocates for the events of the Arab Spring as being historic, and that will bring a new approach from the European Union towards the region. In the following section, representing the practical part, some of the findings of the empirical research on the impact of the Arab Spring in the EU democracy promotion towards Tunisia will be presented.

Research Strategy

The methodology used in answering the research question 'To what extent the EU is contributing to anchor the democratic transition in Tunisia?' is ascertained in the passage below.

Six years have passed since the Arab uprisings and it still remains too early to discuss a clear shift of the Tunisian political system and its relation with the EU. This is happening on the ground that there are few records explaining the transformations produced in the last couple of years. Due to this lack of clear information, especially regarding the security sector reform, but as well regarding the Tunisian elections, it was concluded that it would be useful to supplement the data with semi-

structured interviews, that will complement and bring additional added value to the desk research.

The interviews have been conducted during the months of July-August 2016 mostly in Tunisia, but also via Skype. The semi-structured format has been used because of the sensitivity of the topics to be discussed as it aimed to cover topics such as Tunisian security sector reform and the most recent Tunisian elections held in 2014. The intent was to ensure flexibility in the way the interviewees choose to approach the themes. As Mason (2004) argues, the interviewer was seen "to have an active, reflexive, and constitutive role in the process of knowledge construction" (p. 1020) and that is why selecting individuals as varied as possible, from scholars studying up close the Tunisian case, to Tunisian NGOs leaders, but as well as European personnel from the EU delegation in Tunis brough a plus value to the information collected. Reaching different people, from different backgrounds helped in the understanding of the situations from both sides of the problem, the EU as a democracy provider, and Tunisia as a receiver of assistance and guidance. While some interviewees preferred to remain anonymous, others offered the full consent and it is understandable that due to the topic sensitivity each person had a different motivation for her/his preference.

The combination of the use of primary research with secondary analysis approach, using available data forged a clearer image of the current situation in Tunisia regarding the EU democracy promotion. Although many of the materials analysed were collected before the uprisings, their usefulness in order to understand if there is visible transformation remains an active component. Additionally, analysing already collected data has proven to be more accessible, but also an 'efficient and effective way to pose questions that extend beyond the scope of any individual research team' (Thorne, 2004, p. 896). Although the interviews brought with themselves the advantage of discovering a more indepth version of the story, the action of analysing the materials already existent has resulted to be an easier, more accesable and more diverse.

As far as the secondary analysis is concerned, different democracy indexes, as well as websites, articles, press coverage and official records

had been reviewed in order to understand if the EU is promoting democracy in Tunisia using the analysed anchors of democracy (assistance and political dialogue).

Security Sector Reform

Security Sector Reform, it is said to have a direct impact on the state building, further on being an important element of discussion after the Arab uprisings. Chalmers defines the security sector as 'all those organizations which have authority to use, or order the use of, force, or the threat of force, to protect the state and its citizens, as well as those civil structures that are responsible for their management and oversight' (Chalmers, 2000, p. 4). It can be incorporated into this discussion the military, intelligence apparatus, police, as well as the judicial systems. This sector deals with the prevention of violence, in all its forms, as well as with the fight against radicalization and counterterrorism, with the aim of providing 'security as a public good' (Jackson, 2011, p. 1809).

What follows is an analysis of the way the EU anchored a democratic system in Tunisia regarding its security sector reform (SSR). It has been argued and criticised that the EU has rather favoured the strengthening of the authoritarian regime and regarded the creation of a stable environment rather than seeking democratic transition. Democracy assistance and political dialogue are seen as the anchors of democracy, tools that the EU has been used in strengthening the relations with its partners, including Tunisia. Hullen (2012) considers that the Union is sometimes ambiguous in its use of this instrument 'as it is not clear whether they are really intended to transform or rather to sustain the incumbent regime' (p. 119).

After six years from the Arab Spring uprisings, it can be said that the EU is recognising the clear intent of the Tunisian people of moving forward and acknowledging that 'the success or failure of SSR in the coming years will have a critical impact on the political evolution of this region- that is, whether it moves towards new forms of authoritarianism or if it has a chance for a real democratization' (Lecha, 2016, p. 61). Moreover, it can be argued that with the democratic reforms will follow more stability for the country, and even for the region, as Dandashly

(2016) affirms 'supporting democratic reforms goes hand in hand with stability' (p. 144).

Kartas (2014) comparing the Tunisian case with that of Egypt or Algeria, argues on the differences between these, especially with the fact that the Tunisian Armed Forces did not have a direct involvement in the previous regime. Furthermore, during the transition period, the State Security Division was dismantled, this being done 'with the army doggedly remaining on the sidelines, refusing to intervene other than to ensure security for crucial institutional moments' (Murphy, 2012, p. 234). It is considered that a reform in this sector would be easier to achieve in Tunisia, rather than other countries in the region, but at the same time, it faces some challenges. Tanner and Mohamedou (2012) mention some of them, such as aiming too high, or even creating a strategy that might overlap with other policies, but for this specific paper it is important to notice the challenge 'to secure the materialisation of dedicated and constructive engagement on the part of external partners' (pp. 1-2), including the EU.

The international actors have been preoccupied with the security sector reform, especially in a post-conflict situation due to 'relatively cheap investments in civilian security through police, judicial and the rule of law reform'(UN High Level Panel on Threats, 2004, p. 74) that can have a direct impact in the long-term peacebuilding, and furthermore promoting a future democratic system. After the demise of the Ben Ali government, the problem that had arisen is that the state's governmental capacity had weakened, whereas the 'armed and security forces remained institutionally strong, especially compared to other state and societal bodies' (Kartas, 2014, p. 374). The current security challenge that Tunisia is facing is the need for security forces that will actually impose law and order. The efforts of the international community in this regard are limited, but there are voices like Kartas which considers the EU approach to SSR as a valuable case.

However, the report made by the Institute for Integrated Transitions on the international expert assistance in Tunisia shows that not many international organisations pose the expertise in this field. It is considered that many had made promises that could not be kept and

when it comes to Tunisian SSR only 5 institutions matter: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which worked closely with UNESCO in offering police training and the International Francophone Network for Police Training. The raised questions about the role EU is playing in the Tunisian SSR will be discussed in the next section.

Democracy Assistance

After the uprisings, the transition period brought an unstable environment, characterized by a constant change in which the international actors such as the EU needed to affirm their values. The 'Tunisian military overwhelmed by the scope of its responsibilities' (Kartas, 2014, p. 377) needed guidance and assistance, but till 2014 one of the most prominent voices in the SSR program was proposed by the 'UNDP: a community-policing project on six pilot police station' (Kartas, 2014, p. 378).

The EU started to treat the SSR in the democratic process seriously in the last three years. As part of the Annual Action Programme 2015, the Union committed funds amounting to €186.8 million within the EU-Tunisia bilateral cooperation. The first part of this assistance was used in response to the terrorist attacks in Sousse and Bordo National Museum and an important amount is directly targeting the Tunisian SSR, more precisely €23 million, under the Programme to Support the Reform and Modernisation of the Tunisian Security Sector Reform between 2015 and 2019. The programme encompasses three directions of action; the first one is focused on the reform and modernisation of the internal security forces according to the international standards, the second on the border control, especially on the fraud detection of documents and the third one on the fight against terrorism and organised crime (EU Report 2015, p. 105).

The 2015 EU Report on the cooperation between the European Union and Tunisia complement the €23 million with two more programs, each counting €2 million. They are both supposed to run from 2015 till 2017 and focus on the field of integrated management borders and the

prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism. The help offered takes the form of technical assistance, offering training, visits and internships for the Tunisian authorities in charge of these sectors. The same report reveals a series of regional cooperation initiatives, such as the EUROMED Police IV (2016-2020) which is a coordinated police cooperation approach at the regional level with the aim of improving the security of their citizens. Furthermore, the fight against radicalisation and extremism is treated as well at the regional level, including the cooperation with other international organizations such as the United Nations.

On June 2015, the European Council reiterated the importance of EU support in concrete Tunisian security reform projects (EU Report 2015, p. 104). This statement was supported by the EU's collaboration with other western partners in order to provide expertise for the Tunisian officials. Additionally, the Union member states complemented the assistance at the national level. States such as the UK, France and Germany were active actors, moreover it is considered that the Tunisian Police Unions are a copy of that of France (Y. Cherif, personal communication, August 1st, 2016). During the conducted interviews, different statements have been put together and it can finally be posit the fact that the US although was considered as the most significant international actor in influencing the security sector till recently, starting with 2015 the EU augmented its support and took the lead. The different programs elaborated starting with 2015 exemplify the EU commitment, and furthermore, individual action from the member states support this line of action. According to a EU senior official, the UK offered more than 90 experts in order to conduct an investigation after the Sousse attack and together with the French authorities provide expertise in dealing with airport security (EU Senior Official, personal communication, August 2nd, 2016). These actions have proved to be valuable for the results obtained by the national authorities.

The assistance offered was not visible just in the governmental district. It included the non-governmental category as well. Investing money and expertise in this regard aimed to promote security sectors public information programs (President of a leading Tunisian non-

governmental organisation, personal communication, August 1st, 2016). The negative connotations that the police and army used to have, being seen as working for the regime and not for the help of people, made the public perception hard to change. The European involvement in some non-governmental organizations, which are independent of political influence, helped change people's perceptions about the security services in the country and regain confidence in these structures. This trend is confirmed by the 2016 Arab Barometer in which 71% of the Tunisian respondents say their security is insured or fully insured (Arab Barometer, 2016, p. 5).

The key aspects of the EU democracy assistance towards the Tunisian security sector reform have been reviewed in this section. Given these points, it can be concluded that the assistance offered has been intensified in the last couple of years, but it does not yet enjoy the status of a successful initiative. Even though the results are positive so far, the further development depends on the future collaboration between the EU member states, Union as a whole and the Tunisian authorities.

Political Dialogue

Current cooperation agenda, the Action Plan 2013-2017, puts a firm significance on strengthening political dialogue between the two parts, especially on foreign and security policy aspects. This aims to create and maintain multilateral institutions and conventions which will enhance coordination to resist security threats. The article 54 of the Action Plan makes reference to the collaboration between the judicial and police authorities in the EU and Tunisia, affirming a 'strengthen police cooperation by all appropriate and necessary means, including cooperation with EUROPOL' and 'cooperation between Tunisian and EU police training academies and schools and with CEPOL'.

In the ENP Strategy Paper 2007/2013, police cooperation is mentioned as well 'among the strategic priorities objectives for the bilateral relation with the aim to improve security policy in the region' (Longo, 2013, p. 189). Furthermore, under the European Neighbourhood Instrument 2014-2015, it is encouraged to carry out the SSR, as part of a comprehensive approach which will encourage a democratic control over

the security forces. Although this is mentioned some years in advance, its indicative schedule for the start of the support program for the SSR was due in 2015, which will take time to mature and consolidate.

On the other hand, in spite of much new involvement in the security sector from the international arena as well as from the Tunisian authorities, for some, the security sector reform is far from being noteworthy. Kartas (2014) sees it as an aspiration, which still did not concentrate its efforts on the fight against abuse and extremism, comparing it with the Ben's Ali period. Before the security framework was aiming at protecting the regime rather than the population and although Hanlon (2012) epitomizes Tunisia as being the triumphant country in the region after the Arab Uprisings, he underscores that 'substantial challenges remain' (p. 3).

The EU, under the 2015 Report on the cooperation between the two parts, confirms its commitment to forging a stronger partnership using dialogue with the civil society and supporting the public security. Additionally, the political dialogue aims to reach topics such as the fight against terrorism and prevention of radicalization, as confirmed by September 2015 meeting in Tunis between the two delegations (p. 104). The EU self-interest motivation behind encouraging political dialogue, especially regarding terrorism, raised concerns. But, in the long run, democracy is considered the right system and the EU the best option that Tunisia has, especially if we think about the Gulf Countries influence that can be damaging for the democratic transition (Y. Cherif, personal communication, August 1st, 2016).

Right after the Jasmine revolution, there was a call for cooperation from anyone that was ready to support the Tunisian transition, including the security sector, and that is why the EU has shown its availability for political dialogue from the start. The environment is conducive for an EU involvement, especially since there is less suspicion from the Tunisian government towards the European side. On one side, although the European engagement using dialogue in the help towards achieving a security sector reform is seen as positive, it still remains on the sidelines due to being a delicate aria. On the other side, the EU presence is praised as becoming more visible and stronger in the years to come.

The Path Towards Democratic Elections

There is a broad consensus on the fact that neither Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation, nor the Union for the Mediterranean, nor even the European Neighbourhood, managed to prepare the ground for the Arab uprisings. Although they all aimed at democracy promotion, it is considered the fact that the EU actually 'helped authoritarian regimes to remain in power' (Hullen, 2015, p. 45). Although EU's actions regarding the Arab Spring are not seen through a positive perspective, what this paper is studying is the post-revolution situation. EU studies showed that 'some degree of political liberalization is crucial for the success of international efforts at democracy promotion' (Hullen, 2015, p. 7) and that is why measuring the effects that the EU had on the political liberalization after the Arab Uprisings might explain the EU's contribution to anchoring the democratic transition in Tunisia.

Vera van Hullen (2012) posit that if EU democracy promotion 'is effective in bringing about democratic chance, this should be reflected in an increasing degree of political liberalisation' (p. 127). The EU needs to support economic development and free elections and using the tools at its disposal, such as assistance and dialogue; EU can create stability in pursuance of successful democracy promotion.

Tunisia remained one of the main targets in the region for its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership even after the 2011 events and considered 'always ready to cooperate and strengthen relations with Brussels to the extent possible, regardless of the scope or credibility of domestic reforms carried out domestically' (Larramendi & Molina, 2012, p. 261). Paters (2012) recognise the fact that the Europeans believe in an ongoing political dialogue that will eventually lead to a democratic reform. This is why, since the uprisings the EU has tried to be a significant player and help the country achieve the level of political rights comparable to any democratic state. Correspondingly, since 2011, the EU choose to launch the EIDHR project 'as the new Tunisian regime commits itself to a democratic transition, the delegation feels free to undertake democracy promotion in the country' (Mouhib, 2014, p. 360).

An important moment for this relation is the signing of 'Privileged Partnership' in 2012, in which the EU reiterated its commitment to

support the Tunisian democratic transition. This represented a clear sign of supporting the transition by encouraging the development of a strong cooperation and expressing democratic values as main targets to aspire to.

The EU assists the Southern Mediterranean countries in their transition periods, but at the same time realises that democratic actions need to come from inside the country itself. In Tunisia, the EU saw the perspective of becoming a fully democratic country, and on their part 'the new Tunisian leaders were anxious to establish themselves as interlocutors and close partners of the EU and its key member states' (Larramendi et al., p. 261). This accelerates the bilateral talks between the two and led to the creation of an EU Election Observation Mission to the Constituent Assembly elections, ready to act in the first democratic elections organized. After this, the newly elected Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali decided to visit Brussels, a meeting which will grant him besides an increment of financial assistance, a 'political accord on the promised EU-Tunisia Privileged Partnership, reached during the 9th Association Council, and resulting in a new bilateral Action Plan in November 2012' (Larramendi et al., p. 262).

From this moment onwards, the EU delegation and its agents took over the situation and having talked with the civil society in order to understand their needs, it assumed that with an increased budget allocated 'it will only fund activities within the priorities established in the call: democratic and electoral transition process, media and freedom of expression' (Mouhib, 2014, p. 367). Within this, election observation and training are included as central points.

Elections are a central aspect of any democratic transition and in order to be 'meaningful, free, and fair, there must be some degree of civil and political freedom beyond the electoral arena so that citizens can articulate and organise around their political beliefs and interests' (Diamond & Morlino, 2004, p. 21). It had been evaluated that the 2011 but further on the 2014 elections were 'held in secure conditions and according to the parameters of law and freedom' (Mahfoudh, 2014, p. 5) and this paper will analyse the impact of the EU on this democratic outcome.

Democracy Assistance

Having defined what the first reactions of the EU were after the Arab Spring in the Jasmine revolution, the discussion will target now the direct assistance of the Union. In a paper on the Europe and the Arab Uprisings, Federica Bicchi (2013) offers some substantial numbers in terms of the EU financial response in the face of the crisis. Keeping in mind that the first meeting between the EU High Representative and the Tunisian transitional government happened in February 2011, the delegation offered €17 million immediate aid, an amount which seems to be insufficient for the Tunisian real need. The EU continued to supply financial assistance in the immediate period, ending up spending almost €160 million. Financial assistance has been accompanied by humanitarian assistance covering almost €80.5 million and also financial help under soft loans offered by the European Investment Bank, offering a total loan of €1.87 billion at the beginning of March 2011.

The current European Neighbourhood program, established for the 2014-2016, still accounts for the development of a democratic electoral system and under the more-for-more principle, it hopes to still be an attractive option for the transitional governments to come. Under the program Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) the EU offers rewards and greater incentives for countries which promote free and fair elections and this was clearly the case of Tunisia. Being the first country to receive funding from the SPRING program, Tunisia secured €20 million in 2011, €80 million for 2012 and €55 million for 2013. Under the ENPI and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Tunisia received €58.5 million, covering 68 projects. Local and international NGOs are involved in the implementation of these projects which cover domestic observation of elections, but many other proposals can be launched according to a variety of topics.

According to the 2016 Arab Barometer, the biggest challenge in Tunisia remains the economic situation, counting 75 percentages of the respondents. Furthermore, more than 77% believe that economic relations with the EU should be stronger, that means that the European economic presence is regarded in a positive way. With all of this being

said, the EU assistance, when it comes to supporting a democratic electoral process, is perceived advantageous by the Tunisian part. Correspondingly, the interviews provided the possibility of observing different points of view, coming from the EU as well as from Tunisia side. They all agree on the fact that the EU assistance in supervising the 2011 and 2014 elections has been a successful case, a case in which there was not only a big need of resources but also the money have been used accordingly in order to achieve democratic and fair elections.

It is considered that the European delegation was efficient and big enough to guaranty that the elections were free and fair. Moreover, during the first interview, a clearer picture of what constitutes the assistance offered was obtained. Besides aid and financial funding, the help in the election organisation and the European experts sent were a clear indication of the commitment from the international community. According to an EU senior official in Tunis, the expertise offered during the election was really professional and it financed directly not just the national elections, but as well the municipal ones.

The 2015 EU Report on the cooperation between the European Union in Tunisia provides under the section of "Democratic transition and elections" the clear number of assistance offered by the EU. The 6 different funds encompass a total amount of more than €4.5 million, the two largest sectors being "EU support of the constitutional and parliamentary process in Tunisia 2012-2016" and the France and Italy initiative of creating an equal balance between the executive and legislative powers for the 2015-2018. The aim of this assistance is to maintain the success of the Tunisian electoral process and respect and maintain the international norms and practices.

A summary of some of the essential findings and issues which have arisen in this section are a clear indication of the positive influence of the EU assistance in the path towards democratic elections. Moreover, the EU has shown a commitment to deliver assistance even after the 2014 elections by investing in programmes which unfold until 2018. A considerable challenge for the Union will be to maintain itself in the country as a favourable actor- which does not try to impose its own

values hiding behind the assistance programmes, especially taking into account the poor economic situation that Tunisia is still facing.

Political Dialogue

Tunisia represents by far the most successful case in the region after the Arab Spring. The transition period resulted in a series of achievements, especially concerning the national polls. Tucker (2012) highlights the fact that the 'election-related scores improved dramatically' (p. 2) and the international community has been praised as being one of the pillars for this achievement. However, the transitional period is still undergoing and has a number of serious drawbacks. Taking into account that the consolidation of the democratic state is still uncertain, 'threatened not only by uncivil and anti-democratic forces but also by the profound economic turmoil that has accompanied the political uncertainties' (Murphy, 2012, p. 225), it is important that the EU maintains a strong political dialogue.

The EU Election Observation Mission from the two rounds of elections in 2011 and 2014 was clearly one of the most successful actions of the EU in the country and as discussed in the previous section it encompassed assistance, but as well political dialogue between the parts. According to a report of The European Economic and Social Committee, even after the inauguration of a new Tunisian Constitution the EU engaged to support the dialogue, offering expertise, support and experience. The Human Rights, Sustainable Developments and Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Commission, established within the new Constitution, engaged together with the EU in the support of democratic values.

The EU-Tunisia Action Plan underpins the need for exchanges of practices between the Tunisian authorities and the European officials in order to develop a 'structured political dialogue on democracy and the rule of law' (section 2.1) and continuing supporting the development of the political party system. Furthermore, according to the European Neighbourhood Instrument for the 2014-2017, the first priority is the consolidation of a democratic electoral system and support the elected parliament.

The political dialogue has been a priority during the whole transition period till the present days, starting with EU Commissioners, such as Štefan Füle and EU Special Representative Bernardino León, frequently visiting and meeting with political leaders. Moreover, in February 2015, the High Representative Federica Mogherini further intensified the dialogue initiating an official visit to Tunisia. As can be seen, even after the success of the first two rounds of elections, the EU continues to prioritise political dialogue in the maintenance of a democratic electoral system in Tunisia.

The Freedom House report for 2016 reveals the fact that the Tunisian electoral process has achieved the highest score, being seen as successful due to the Independent High Authority for Elections. This neutral commission has benefitted from the EU expertise and experience and has been supervising the electoral process together with the international community. The report offers as well to the Political Pluralism and Participation of the highest grade, 16 points out of 16, praising the international involvement in encouraging the participation of marginalised groups and safeguards their involvement in the elections.

The Economist Democracy Index 2014 reveals as well a positive transition period for Tunisia, moving from the status of "hybrid regime" to one of "flawed democracy". It is considered that the country has been progressing towards intensifying the democratic system with the help of the EU but also other international actors such as the United States. Moreover, the political dialogue between the two has reached many sectors, including the educational one. The first school of Political Studies outside the European continent has been launched in Tunis with the support of the European Commission. This initiative is seen as a way to provide for future generations a solid background in understanding what a democratic electoral system is and how to use the European training provided in the best way.

The European Union delegation in Tunis is constantly collaborating with Union member states Embassies in order to promote its values in the country. This is why the result of the free and fair elections was due to the collaboration between these entities, but as well other international actors such as the US. In the 2016 Arab Barometer we could observe a

clear increase of international involvement popularity, as well for the US, but for the EU even more positively. The report highlights the fact that 43% consider that EU's role in promoting democracy has been very positive, compared with 26% in 2013. This increase of popularity allows the Union 'a renewed opportunity to assist the ongoing transition in Tunisia' (Arab Barometer, 2016, p. 3).

As well as pointed out in the introduction, political dialogue constitutes an important anchor of democracy for the EU. That is why even if it can be concluded that it represents a positive aspect of the collaboration, as it has been proven to be effective in the transitional period so far, it needs to be constantly reinforced and treated carefully for future evaluations. Although Tunisia is part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, it still constitutes a special case due to the fact that it does not hold a perspective of EU membership. Six years is a short period of time to consider the transition from being over and further European help, funding and expertise still need to be granted to the Tunisian state.

Conclusions

The goal of this paper was to evaluate the extent to which the European Union is contributing to anchor the democratic transition in Tunisia. This has been done firstly by explaining the relation between the two parts, Tunisia and the European Union, and further on reviewing two of the EU's anchors of democracy, democratic assistance and political dialogue.

It is by no means arguably that it is a tense and difficult period for the European Union, as well as for the countries which took part in the Arab Spring, in this precise case - Tunisia. The Union has been criticised as supporting the autocratic regime that has been in power till 2011, praising security and stability of the area above its democratic norms and aspirations. After the Jasmine Revolution, a clear shift has been produced, Europeans are able to provide the international support and expertise that Tunisian new political system was willing and eager to accept.

The paper analysed the methods used to anchor EU democratic values in the Tunisian security sector reform and during and after the electoral process. On the one hand, there has been a positive engagement which translated into concrete results, as the Freedom in the World 2016 Report entails. Starting in 2011 from the status of "not free", Tunisia, with the help of the international community, managed to reach a "free" status in 2015. It was shown within this research that the EU offering assistance and facilitating a productive and constructive political dialogue managed to influence the creation of a Tunisian democratic electoral system. On the other side, security sector reform had been reviewed the, a sector in which the Union was not clearly involved till 2014. Given the short duration of the European involvement, the success of this sector cannot be evaluated concretely as the previous one, but it can be praised as being an initiative which enjoys a rise in the number of policies and funds.

All things considered, it is important to mention that there are many ways in which the international community can contribute to the democratic transition of a country. Although this paper regarded the evolution of the Tunisian electoral system and the security sector reform, the cooperation between the EU and Tunisian authorities can be found and analysed in many other sectors. A deeper and more detailed analysis of the EU's contribution to the Tunisian democratic transition can review, among others, the economic reform, the regional and local development, human rights and judiciary sectors.

A succinct review of the preeminent findings, issues and suggestions which have arisen in this paper is that the EU involvements in Tunisia do matter and with the assistance and political dialogue offered it influenced a great deal to the transition process. It is true that in some sectors the presence was more visible than in others but essential for future implication is the EU's willingness to be perceived as an influential actor in the region.

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