

**Michelle Pace and Peter Seeberg (eds.), *The European Union's Democratization Agenda in the Mediterranean* (Routledge: USA and Canada, 2010), pp. 222.**

**Reviewed by Elif Özkaragöz**

*The European Union's Democratization Agenda in the Mediterranean* is a really timely book given the changes and challenges that the Arab world in the Mediterranean region is facing today. Even though this book was written long before the 2011 revolutions in the Mediterranean, it is important to know the history of the democratization attempts in the Mediterranean region both by the internal and external actors (like the EU) to understand the events today.

The European Union (EU) is one of the major external actors influencing the democratization agenda in the Mediterranean countries. In the democratization studies, there has already been a huge literature on the description and analysis of the external democracy promotion in the region. The aim of this book is described as to "move beyond an exclusively normative or exclusively realist approach..." (p.5) and to adopt an "inside-out" approach rather than an "outside-in" approach, meaning that how the domestic actors in the Middle Eastern and North Africa (MENA) region reacted to the democratization efforts in MENA.

In this regard, first three chapters (Chapters 2-4) of the book after the *Preface* chapter is dedicated to the theoretical discussions about the current state of democratization studies and the normative dimension of EU democracy promotion efforts in the region.

The rest of the chapters (Chapters 5-12) are representing the case studies from Mashrek and Maghreb written by different scholars, which exemplify the interaction between the domestic actors and the EU in democracy promotion in the MENA region.

Having given this background information on the book, in Chapter 3, it is argued that the democratization studies on MENA accelerated mainly in the 1980s after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Before that, there was more of an orientalist or traditional approach to the region in the Western world. For most of the Cold War period, there was not much debate on the democratization in the region; rather there was a realist/neo-realist perspective in the Middle Eastern politics. This realist approach continued to a degree with the end of the Cold War as well and after the 9/11 events as securitization concerns gained more importance, although the EU tried to approach to the region with a "soft power" or "institutionalist" perspective.

So it is argued that we need to move beyond functionalist explanations and civil society explanations are criticized because of their weaknesses.

In Chapter 4, the limits of the EU's normative power in the frame of its democracy promotion efforts in the Mediterranean are questioned. The main challenges to liberal democracy in the Mediterranean are outlined as the authoritarian regimes, economic underdevelopment and the nature of rentier states. It is also argued that *the liberal democracy* achieved a normative status as the EU's key foreign policy instrument in its external relations. This normative status is achieved through the EU treaties, declarations, assistance programmes and in the case of the Mediterranean, with the Association Agreements of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) process as well as the Action Plans of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

Another interesting argument is that democracy is not the main goal of the EU in the region, but it is used as a tool for sustaining stability and prosperity there. Also some of the Arab regimes had economic interests in cooperation with the EU in this respect and they invested in the "selective reforms" as exemplified in the case of Egypt.

For instance, in January 2006, Hamas was elected as a result of fair, free and transparent elections in Palestine and the EU was not happy with the results of these elections. This was a contradiction in itself. Therefore it is argued that the "EU likes the ideal of democracy, but they do not like its result" (p.47) by one interviewee in the region. This decreased the credibility of the EU in the Mediterranean.

There are interesting case studies from Mediterranean in the book, which worth reading and give useful insights from the region for the case of democratization. One of them is about the transition in Hamas and Palestine case in Chapter 5. This chapter analyzes the transition within Hamas from 1996, when they boycotted the elections to 2006, when the Hamas came to power as a result of democratic elections. It is argued that the EU failed to respond to these developments within Hamas in a dynamic way and although EU supported the inclusion of Hamas in the political process, it did not accept the outcomes of the elections, which was a contradiction in EU's democracy promotion and resulted in disappointment on the Palestinian side.

Given these contradictions within the EU, it was characterized as "a realist actor in normative clothes" (p.81) also in the case of democracy promotion in Lebanon. In fact, Lebanon is not such an authoritarian regime as in the case of some other Arab regimes, but still the EU's democracy promotion efforts did not prove to be very successful in Lebanon. Two main reasons are outlined for this failure in the Chapter 6, the difficulty in

implementation of the Ta'if agreement and the "dual power" situation in Lebanon, namely between the government and Hezbollah. One of the problems was that EU had chosen low-level contact with organizations like Hezbollah, which are important actors in the domestic politics of Lebanon.

Egypt is another important example in the region in terms of the democratization efforts by the EU. Constraints on the EU's promotion of "rule of law", which is a crucial component of the establishment of democracy, are summarized as the exogenous and endogenous factors in Chapter 7. Exogenous (external) factors are mainly EU's intergovernmental nature as a foreign policy actor; ongoing ENP Action Plan negotiations and US factor. Endogenous (internal) factors are mainly related to the "instrumentalization by the Egyptian regime of external aid funding in the field of human rights and democratization" (p.100).

Of course, there are more case studies from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria in the book. For instance, in the case of Morocco, it is argued that the internal ideological divisions between the secular/liberal and more conservative groupings in the civil society are one of the main obstacles on the way of democratization in the country in Chapter 9. Moreover EU's efforts for democratization are further widening this divide since the pro-democracy strategies are not welcomed and supported at the same level in different segments in the civil society.

It is also argued that in the MENA region, there is not a real unity among the opposition groups and there is more of a competition among them, rather than cooperation, which also hinder the establishment of full democracies and real reform processes in the southern Mediterranean countries.

In the cases of Algeria and Tunisia, again the shortcomings of EU's democracy promotion in these countries are exemplified. In the Algeria case, EU's "re-definition of the security concerns" and "empowerment of the authoritarian elite" in the country are given as the main reasons behind these shortcomings (p.176). Whereas in the case of Tunisia, it is claimed that the EU somehow preferred stability over democracy in the country, which challenged normative power of the EU.

As a result, this book is recommendable; especially those who would like to see an alternative and consistent approach to the EU democratization studies, written by various experts from different countries and backgrounds. It is worth noting that especially the theoretical parts of the book necessitate a prior knowledge and expertise on the democratization studies since this study carries them one step further. Different case studies are interesting, however there are still more countries to be covered, maybe they can be covered if there are new volumes of this study. Moreover given

the latest changes and reforms in the Mediterranean region, it is not only a proposal, but also a necessity to update this important study.

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