

Normative Power Europe: Democracy as a Dismissible Norm

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Abstract

The EU is one of the key actors of the democracy promotion industry and the region of South Mediterranean is an important area for the democracy promotion endeavours of the EU. Yet in this region the EU's ambitious rhetoric about democracy promotion has never translated into concrete action. Particularly two important events, the military coup in Algeria in 1992 and the parliamentary elections in Palestine in 2006, clearly demonstrate that the EU overlooks the violations of democratic principles in her vicinity in order not to risk the stability under the aegis of authoritarian status-quo. Sacrificing the norm of democracy in favour of stability has not just important ramifications for the countries of the South Mediterranean but also for the debates related with the idea of 'normative power Europe'.

Keywords

Algeria, Democracy Promotion, European Union, Normative Power Europe, Palestine.

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) was first defined as a normative power by Ian Manners.¹ By doing so, he seems to be inspired by authors such as François Duchene who were inclined to put the EU well-above the affairs of traditional military powers, thus rendering the EU as a civilian power.² Duchene himself asserts that the EU can be anything but a major military power³, nevertheless it can still be “the first of the world’s civilian centres of power.”⁴

The debate about whether the EU is a civilian power or not has been around ever since 1970s.⁵ This debate spawned a related debate at the beginning of the 21st century, about the normative character of the EU. It all starts with Manners wishing to move beyond the dichotomy of military/civilian power. According to Manners, there is a need to augment the identity of the EU with a normative focus that is based on “common principles and a willingness to disregard Westphalian conventions”.⁶

For the sake of conceptual clarity, we need to explain what being a normative power means and how is that any different from being basically a civilian power. In this case, it is best to appeal to Manners’ very own definition since he is the one that comes up with the idea of normative power Europe (NPE). Manners defines normative power simply as the “ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’”.⁷ Thus the EU is a normative power not because it relies heavily on economic instruments (unlike the United States (US), which resorts to its military might if need be) but because it diffuses its norms to other countries, particularly to countries in its vicinity. Therefore, the emphasis is on ideational factors instead of material ones (whether they be economic or military capabilities).

¹ Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2002).

² *Ibid.* p. 235.

³ François Duchene, “Europe’s Role in World Peace”, *Europe Tomorrow: 16 Europeans Look Ahead*, eds. Richard Mayne, London, Fontana, 1972, p. 37.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁵ One of the most prominent opponents of the concept of civilian power Europe (CPE) is perhaps Hedley Bull. According to Bull, ‘Europe’ is not even an actor in the traditional sense, let alone a civilian power or actor. Hedley Bull, “Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1982), p. 151.

⁶ Manners, “Normative Power Europe...” p. 239.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 240.

This article aims to find out the extent of norms in the foreign policy of the EU. Specifically, an emphasis shall be put on democracy, one of the core norms of the EU.⁸ Obviously, singling out democracy as the choice of core norm provides advantages pertaining to time and space. But the reason for specifically choosing democracy over the other core norms is also related with the impact democracy makes in the foreign policy of the EU. The EU is thoroughly engaged in promoting democracy in other countries, to put it in another way, the EU is one of the key actors of the industry of democracy promotion. Promoting democracy is one of the most important tenets of the EU foreign policy instruments such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

In the following sections, I will attempt to demonstrate the influence of democracy (or to be more specific the commitment to promote democracy) in the foreign policy practices of the EU towards its southern neighbours. The EU's democracy promotion campaign towards southern Mediterranean countries merits greater attention since these countries are constantly being subjected to ambitious democracy promotion policies (at least as far as rhetoric is concerned) yet they remain resilient to any kind of democratic breakthrough (only Tunisia has been able to break the authoritarian curse right after the Arab Spring). It is not my intention to delve into the conceptual foundations of the EU's version of democracy that is being promoted⁹, which has been recently labelled with the buzzword 'deep democracy'.¹⁰ Instead the focus will be on the

⁸ Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that democracy, along with human dignity, freedom, equality and the rule of law and respect for human rights are the values upon which the EU is founded "Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union", EUR-Lex, 26 October 2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF>, (access date: 15 February 2017). In addition to these founding principles, Manners lists four additional minor norms which are the following: Social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance. Manners, "Normative Power Europe..." pp. 241-242.

⁹ For a good discussion about the conceptual underpinnings of democracy in EU's democracy promotion, please see: Milja Kurki, *Democratic Futures: Revisioning Democracy Promotion*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 146-172.

¹⁰ Former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton announced the intention of the EU to upgrade 'regular democracy' to 'deep democracy' in order to move beyond the procedural aspects of democracy, i.e. votes and elections. Catherine Ashton, "The EU Wants 'Deep Democracy' to Take Root in Egypt and Tunisia", *The Guardian*, 04 February 2011, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/04/egypt-tunisia-eu-deep-democracy>>, (access date: 15 February 2017). This move was a pragmatic one that aimed to capture the winds of change emanating from the Arab Spring. Later on, the concept of 'deep democracy' found its way into the official documents of the EU, e.g. "Commission Implementing Decision" European Commission, 20 July 2016,

procedural aspects of democracy, namely free and fair elections. Free and fair elections that provide meaningful political power could be considered as the minimum requirement of a democratic regime¹¹, thus the EU's approach towards free and fair elections in other countries is a good indication of the EU's success in making one of its norms (democracy) 'normal' in the eyes of other actors.

The EU's track record of dealing with the free and fair elections (or the EU's response to the lack of free and fair elections) of its Southern neighbours does not look very promising for the arguments in favour of NPE. Especially two cases stand out: 1991 Algerian legislative elections and 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Both elections were conducted in a free and fair manner¹² yet the EU showed nothing but a meagre response when the Algerian military cancelled the elections after the first round of it ended with the Islamist party Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS) leading and the EU refused to acknowledge the Palestinian elections altogether due to the victory of Islamist Hamas¹³, which the EU currently considers as a terrorist organization.¹⁴ The reason for the EU's reluctance to engage with the Islamists of the region, even at the expense of not respecting the outcome of a democratic process, stems from the belief that incumbent authoritarian regimes are the best providers of stability in a volatile region such as the South Mediterranean. As Francesco Cavatorta succinctly puts it, key interests of the Western actors, including but not limited to migration, access to natural

<<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/pdf/key-documents/palestine/aap-2016-palestine-part-ii-financing-commission-decision-20160720.pdf>>, (access date: 15 February 2017).

¹¹ Austrian economist and political scientist Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as the "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London and New York, Routledge Classics, 2010, p. 241. Schumpeter's conception of democracy is commonly known as the procedural/minimalist democracy.

¹² Francesco Cavatorta, "Alternative Lessons from the 'Algerian Scenario'", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. II, No. 1 (2008), p. 8. "Statement of Preliminary Conclusions and Findings: Open and Well-run Parliamentary Elections Strengthen Palestinian Commitment to Democratic Institutions", United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, 26 January 2006, <<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/236F02CF539AA9418525710600587785>>, (access date: 16 February 2017).

¹³ Michelle Pace, "The Construction of EU Normative Power", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (2007), p. 1044.

¹⁴ "EU Terrorist List" European Council-Council of the European Union, Last reviewed: 06 October 2016, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/terrorist-list/>>, (access date: 16 February 2017).

resources, security of investments and liberal economic reforms are at stake in the region¹⁵, so the EU is leery of a major democratic change that might bring Islamists into power¹⁶, which in return has the potential to upset status-quo and stability.

Jean-Pierre Cassarino was right when he asserted that there was a “hierarchy of priorities” within the context of Euro-Mediterranean relations in which issues such as human rights and democratization are rendered as a “dismissible priority”.¹⁷ The realist critique of the NPE argument seems to be successful in grasping the logic of dismissing norms for securing short term strategic goals. Perhaps the strongest criticism comes from Adrian Hyde-Price. By adopting a neo-realist theoretical approach¹⁸ (in contrast to the liberal/idealist framework of the civilian/normative power arguments) Price claims that while realists do not completely shun the role of liberal ideas (e.g. human rights and democracy promotion) in the formulation of foreign policy, they nevertheless acknowledge that “due to the structural constraints of a self-help system” these ideas are likely to be sidelined when vital economic and security interests are at stake.¹⁹

1991 Algerian legislative elections, the military coup and the EU’s response:

The decision to move towards multiparty politics in Algeria was a calculated and pragmatic one, rather than a genuine step in the path of democratization. Algeria’s then president Chadli Benjedid saw the elections as

¹⁵ Francesco Cavatorta, “Geopolitical Challenges to the Success of Democracy in North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco”, *Democratization*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2001), p. 186.

¹⁶ It is commonly accepted that the Islamists, not the status-quo (also the secularist and liberal opposition) would benefit from free and fair elections taking place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), for instance see: Jennifer L. Windsor, “Promoting Democratization Can Combat Terrorism”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2003), p. 48. Shadi Hamid, “Arab Islamist Parties: Losing on Purpose?”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2011), p. 68. John L. Esposito, Tamara Sonn, and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy After the Arab Spring*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 214. Vincent Durac and Francesco Cavatorta, *Politics and Governance in the Middle East*, London, Palgrave, 2015, p. 122.

¹⁷ Jean-Pierre Cassarino, “Reversing the Hierarchy of Priorities in EU-Mediterranean Relations”, *The European Union and the Arab Spring: Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in the Middle East*, eds. Joel Peters, Lanham/Maryland, Lexington Books, 2012, p. 2.

¹⁸ Adrian Hyde-Price, “A ‘Tragic Actor’? A Realist Perspective on ‘Ethical Power Europe’”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1, (2008), p. 36-37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

an opportunity to wrong-foot his opponents within the National Liberation Front (*Front de Liberation Nationale*, FLN)²⁰, the country's hegemonic party ever since it successfully led the liberation struggle against the French colonial rule (technically, FLN was an instrument through which a military dominated elite asserted its will).²¹ Chadli's plan was to prevent a single party emerging victorious from the elections since a fragmented national assembly meant that he could dominate the Algerian politics as the president. To make sure that FIS did not replicate their success in the local elections that took place a year before the legislative elections, various precautions were introduced that included legalizing new Islamist parties in an attempt to splinter Islamist votes and passing new election laws, although all those efforts turned out to be futile.²²

Another factor that influenced the decision to switch to multiparty politics was to mitigate the social unrest that reached to its zenith towards the end of 1980s. Essentially a centrally planned economy that relied heavily on hydrocarbon rents, the falling oil prices of the 1980s inflicted severe wounds on the Algerian regime's capacity to generate jobs and patronage networks. The bitterness towards regime elites, "who lived in comfortable villas and drove large cars", culminated in a riot in 1988 that shook the very foundations of the single party system.²³

The victory of FIS in the first round of 1991 legislative elections with a significant margin and in a fashion that validated the link between free elections and Islamists²⁴, raised a few eyebrows in Europe, particularly in France.²⁵ It also triggered a swift response from the Algerian military as they moved to cancel the second round of the elections only 16 days after the conclusion of the first round. The military also 'persuaded' Chadli to resign, who was seen responsible by the military for the 'failure' of multiparty experiment.²⁶ When the Algerian military banned and arrested many members of the FIS, Islamist groups took

²⁰ Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*, London, Hurst & Company, 2012, p. 170.

²¹ Michael C. Hudson, "After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 3, (1991), p. 415.

²² Willis, "Politics and Power...", pp. 170-171.

²³ Robert Mortimer, "Islam and Multiparty Politics in Algeria", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4, (1991), pp. 575-577.

²⁴ As mentioned before, it is commonly accepted that free and fair elections in the Middle East (in case they take place) would benefit Islamists than any other political group.

²⁵ Hudson, "After the Gulf War...", p. 414.

²⁶ Willis, "Politics and Power...", pp. 170-171.

arms against the military regime, which resulted in a decade long civil war that claimed the lives of more than 100,000 individuals.²⁷

The EU's dealing with the whole Algerian drama following the cancellation of the elections ranges from apathy to noxiousness. The initial response from the European Communities (EC, the legal predecessor of the EU) could be symbolized by timidity. While an EC Council declaration on 24 January 1992 expressed 'a strong hope' for a return to 'normal institutional life' and it also declared a commitment for 'respect of human rights fundamental freedoms', it stopped short of condemning the coup d'état and the cancellation of elections.²⁸ Unlike the EC Council, the European Parliament was more vocal in its criticism. Thanks to the initiative of the European Parliament, the release of the upcoming fourth financial protocol, covering the years 1992-1996, became conditional upon the progress towards democracy.²⁹

Nevertheless, the European Parliament's rhetorical support towards the norm of democracy has never translated into concrete action. The EC/EU aid kept flowing to Algeria, despite the lack of genuine progress towards a democratic system. A multi candidate presidential election took place in 1995, however the candidates other than Liamine Zeroual were merely participating in the elections for the sake of making elections multi-candidate. In other words, "in 1995, the voters did not really elect the president; they either expressed their ideological allegiances, or ratified the army's choice of president."³⁰ Not surprisingly, Zeroual won the elections by a landslide, getting 61 percent of overall votes. An Islamist party called Movement of Society for Peace participated in the elections with their candidate Mahfoud Nahnah receiving the 25.6 percent of overall votes. Despite the call of boycott by opposition parties, including the banned FIS, a turnout rate of 75 percent was achieved.

²⁷ Michael J. Willis, "Containing Radicalism through the Political Process in North Africa", *Transnational Islam and Regional Security: Cooperation and Diversity between Europe and North Africa*, eds. Frederic Volpi, Abingdon and New York City/New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 6.

²⁸ "Algeria", *European Foreign Policy: Key Documents*, eds. Christopher Hill and Karen E. Smith, London and New York City/New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 343.

²⁹ Hugh Roberts, "Dancing in the Dark: The European Union and the Algerian Drama", *Democratization*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (2002), p. 109.

³⁰ Hugh Roberts, "Algeria's Contested Elections", *Middle East Report*, No. 209, (1998), p. 22.

Even if we accept the turnout rate at face value and ignore all the claims of vote rigging³¹, and instead assume that elections in Algeria in 1995 were a democratic breakthrough for Algerian politics, we still cannot claim that the EU's policies towards Algeria were shaped by the democratic qualities of the Algerian regime. The EU had already been tolerant towards the military regime well before the 1995 elections. Despite the procrastination of the fourth financial protocol, the EU's financial support to Algeria actually increased after the coup, in 1994, a year before the elections, Algeria received \$40 million development aid, four times higher than the amount they received in 1990.³² In fact, the EU's aid to Algeria was subject to certain conditions. However, those conditions were not related with democracy and human rights. Instead, the release of the aid was conditional upon the conclusion on an agreement with the IMF. Only when Algeria relented and accepted the terms of the IMF agreement, the EU agreed to release the second instalment of a balance of payments loan that was originally granted in 1991.³³

Surely, the legal basis of pressing for norms such as democracy and human rights had been present for the EU. In accordance with a Council of the European Union resolution on November 28th, 1991, human rights and democracy became part of EC's relations with developing countries and accordingly said norms started entering to cooperation agreements that the EC/EU signs with other countries.³⁴ However, only a month after the resolution, the EC failed to uphold the principle of democracy in Algeria and instead aligned its strategy with the French position.³⁵ Clearly, the military regime in Algeria is seen as the lesser of two evils, despite its shortcomings in the areas of democracy and human rights, Algerian military regime seems like the better choice for providing stability in a volatile region such as South Mediterranean. This logic of valuing stability over democracy is well-documented in EU's foreign policy towards Southern Mediterranean in

³¹ The FIS claimed that the turnout rate was 37 percent at best. Youcef Bouandel, "Algeria's First Free Presidential Election, November 1995", *Representation*, Vol. 34, No. 3-4, (1997), p. 177.

³² Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl "Algeria (1992-present)", *Civil Wars of the World: Major Conflicts since World War II*, eds. Christopher Hill and Karen E. Smith, Santa Barbara/California, ABC-Clio, 2007, p. 117.

³³ Hakim Darbouche and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Algerian Crisis in European and US Foreign Policies: A Hindsight Analysis", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (2009), pp. 39-40.

³⁴ The said resolution can be seen from: "Resolution on Human Rights, Democracy and Development" International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, <http://archive.idea.int/lome/bgr_docs/resolution.html>, (access date: 13 July 2017).

³⁵ Roberts, "Dancing in the Dark...", p. 126.

general³⁶, and French influenced EC/EU policy towards Algeria is by no means an exception.

2006 Palestinian Elections, Hamas victory, and the EU's response:

Post-Cold War era has been very busy for the EU, both in terms of foreign policy initiatives towards the South Mediterranean and democracy promotion. The EU started the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 in Barcelona (hence the oft-used name 'Barcelona Process'). The Barcelona Process was followed by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004. Participation in the ENP is not exclusive to the southern neighbours of the EU, EU's Eastern neighbours and three South Caucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) also participate in the ENP. Still, all the southern neighbours of the EU (with the exception of Syria) are actively involved in the ENP. The ENP is not a direct successor to the Barcelona Process³⁷, nevertheless it was in a way designed to reinvigorate the moribund Barcelona Process. For instance, the financial instrument of the Barcelona Process, *Mesures D'accompagnement* (MEDA) was replaced by the financial instrument of the ENP called European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument in 2007 (ENPI has been known as European Neighbourhood Instrument ever since 2014).

Both the Barcelona Process and its non-official successor ENP are important policy initiatives in the area of democracy promotion. All the association agreements that the EU conducts with the South Mediterranean countries have a clause (article 2) in which 'respect for human rights and democracy' is deemed as an 'essential element' of the agreement. The financial

³⁶ For example, Brieg Tomos Powel, "The Stability Syndrome: US and EU Democracy Promotion in Tunisia", *The Foreign Policies of the European Union and the United States in North Africa: Diverging or Converging Dynamics*, eds. Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, Abingdon and New York City/New York, Routledge, 2010, p. 67. Richard Youngs, "Introduction: Idealism at Bay", *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: A Critical Global Assessment*, eds. Richard Youngs, Baltimore/Maryland, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, p. 6. Amichai Magen and Michael A. McFaul, "Introduction: American and European Strategies to Promote Democracy – Shared Values, Common Challenges, Divergent Tools?", *Promoting Democracy and Rule of Law: American and European Strategies*, eds. Amichai Magen, Thomas Risse and Michael A. McFaul, Basingstoke and New York City/New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 2. Marco Pinfari, "The EU, Egypt and Morsi's Rise and Fall", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (2013), pp. 466.

³⁷ The Barcelona Process continues under the structure of 'Union for the Mediterranean' (UfM) However, the UfM is not as ambitious as the Barcelona Process used to be, and the cooperation is confined to few technical areas such as energy and water.

instrument of the Barcelona Process, the ENPI, financed various projects related with the advancement of democracy during its lifetime. For instance, between 2005-2006, a project in Morocco was conducted with the budget of 2 million Euros, to promote democracy and human rights.³⁸ Likewise, the ENP is also another instrument for the promotion of democracy as its financial instrument ENPI (and its successor ENI) has financed projects of democracy and human rights.

It is beyond dispute that by the year 2006, the EU had been one of the most prominent actors of the democracy promotion industry, along with the US. Thus, the Palestinian elections of the 2006 was an important test for the EU's democracy promotion agenda. The elections, which took place on the 25th of January was a race between two political groups: Hamas and Fatah. Hamas scored a resounding victory as they secured 76 of the 132 parliamentary seats.³⁹ While many people portray this election as the victory of Islamists over seculars, for the sake of this article, we should state that the election was about the victory of radical Hamas over moderate Fatah, pertaining to the issue of Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). Notwithstanding the recent signs of softening its stance⁴⁰, Hamas refuses to recognize Israel while on the other Fatah's position towards Israel is more moderate as they accept Israel's right of existence. Moreover, in its 1988 Covenant, Hamas vows to 'obliterate' Israel.⁴¹

The ongoing MEPP between Israel and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is an important consideration for the EU's foreign policy towards South Mediterranean. MEPP is seen as a 'prerequisite for peace and stability in the Mediterranean'⁴² and the EU is willing to tolerate any regime,

³⁸ For that specific project, and for other projects conducted in Morocco during the same time span, please refer to the National Indicative Programme of Morocco for the years 2005-2006, available from: "Euro-Med Partnership Morocco: National Indicative Programme 2005-2006" European Commission, <http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-ma/gdex/04/nip_05_12_en.pdf>, (access date: 19 July 2017).

³⁹ "Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace", Washington Post, 27 January 2006, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012600372.html>>, (access date: 19 July 2017).

⁴⁰ Patrick Wintour "Hamas Presents New Charter Accepting a Palestine Based on 1967 Borders", The Guardian, 01 May 2017, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/01/hamas-new-charter-palestine-israel-1967-borders>>, (access date: 20 July 2017).

⁴¹ "Hamas Covenant 1988", Hamas, 18 August 1988, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp>, (access date: 20 July 2017).

⁴² Stefania Panabianco, "Introduction: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Perspective: The Political and Institutional Context", *A New Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Identity*, eds. Stefania Panabianco, London and Portland/Oregon, Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, p. 19.

whether they be authoritarian or not, as long as they support or do not interfere with MEPP.⁴³ Radical groups like Hamas on the other hand are seen as a challenge that need to be dealt with, since they are regarded as a threat to the MEPP and accordingly stability.

After the elections, the EU, along with the US went on to boycott the Hamas government after Hamas failed to fulfil three conditions: 1) Announcing the prevention of armed struggle against Israeli occupation, 2) Accepting Israel's legitimate right to exist, 3) Accepting the previous agreement the PLO signed with Israel.⁴⁴ While these conditions may be noble goals in themselves, they are no way related with democracy or democratic conditionality. As reported by the international observers, including the EU's own Election Observation Mission (EOM), the elections that took place in 2006 were conducted in a free and fair manner, albeit with few irregularities.⁴⁵ By setting conditions⁴⁶ other than democratic principles, the EU disregarded the democratic choice of the Palestinian people and instead focused on other priorities such as the stability of the region, continuation of the MEPP and security of Israel, all of which are linked to each other. As Michelle Pace concurs, "through its boycott of Hamas the EU has refused to recognise the popular will, attempted to mask Fatah's loss of popular legitimacy, infringed the autonomy of the Palestinian people and undermined Palestinian national unity efforts."⁴⁷

2006 Palestinian elections demonstrate that concerning democracy and human rights, there is a clear gap between EU's lofty rhetoric and the actual foreign policy that the EU conducts. This gap is much more evident in EU's democracy promotion agenda in the South Mediterranean. While some may suggest that the EU pursues democratization processes vigorously within the enlargement context by sticking to the use of political conditionality, this is

⁴³ Cavatorta, "Geopolitical Challenges...", p. 181.

⁴⁴ Michael Schulz, "Palestine", *The European Union and the Arab Spring: Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in the Middle East*, eds. Joel Peters, Lanham/Maryland, Lexington Books, 2012, p. 66.

⁴⁵ Tim Youngs, "The Palestinian Parliamentary Election and the Rise of Hamas", House of Commons Library Research Paper 06/17, (2006), p. 12.

⁴⁶ Karen E. Smith notes that the several of the EU's partners do not recognize Israel and also do not accept the existing peace agreements, yet no conditions have been set for them. Karen E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, Cambridge and Malden/Massachusetts, Polity, 2012, p. 170.

⁴⁷ Michelle Pace, "Liberal or Social Democracy? Aspect Dawning in the EU's Democracy Promotion Agenda in the Middle East", *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 16, No. 6, (2011), p. 807.

definitely not the case for the countries of South Mediterranean. Instead, the EU has historically favoured status-quo in the South Mediterranean⁴⁸, in other words, the whole EU democracy promotion agenda is based on cooperating with the authoritarian regimes of the region, for the sake of stability. Free and fair elections of 2006 produced results that had the potential to upset status-quo, so the EU put the outcome of that election on the back burner. This decision was not based on the democratic qualities of the Fatah party as Palestine before 2006 had never been a democracy. This is also not to suggest that Hamas is a democratizing force in Palestine, but they nevertheless got the majority through the means of free and fair elections, which is the backbone of a democracy, at least from a Schumpeterian point of view. To sum up, when the elections in a South Mediterranean country produce results that the EU does not like, normative commitment to democracy becomes a dismissible priority as suggested by Cassarino before.

Conclusion

This article aimed to test the assertion about the normative character of the EU, by examining two different cases which involved EU's reaction to the free and fair elections that took place in its southern neighbourhood: The first case is EC's reaction Algerian coup the d'état that cancelled the elections in 1992 and the second case is EU's reaction to the free and fair elections that took place in Palestine in 2006. Since free and fair elections are a fundamental aspect of a democratic political system, no matter which definition of democracy we adopt, e.g. minimalist democracy (also known as Schumpeterian democracy) or substantive democracy, we should expect a normative power EU to respect or even support the results of a free and fair election process, regardless of the outcome. Yet in both cases, the EU failed to practice what they preach, and in fact in both cases, the EU's strategy worked against the democratic process, in the case of Algeria by supporting the military regime, and in the case of Palestine by boycotting and subsequently suspending the aid that the Hamas led government was supposed to receive.

⁴⁸ Federica Bicchì, "Avrupa ve Arap Ayaklanmaları: Anlamsız Bir Güç mü?", *Yeni Ortadoğu: Arap Dünyasına Protesto ve Devrim*, eds. Fawaz A. Gerges, İstanbul, İyidüşün Yayınları, 2014, p. 492.

The Algerian and the Palestinian cases support the realist propositions about the normative character of the EU since in both cases strategic considerations, not the norms such as democracy or human rights, have been the main determinant of the EU policy. In the case of Algeria, the EU position, which was mostly shaped by the French influence, was to condone and even tacitly support (through financial aid) the Algerian military regime that reversed the outcome of a democratic process. This is not necessarily to suggest that FIS was on the course to democratize the Algerian political system, yet the opportunity had never been presented due to the coup d'état. And in the case of Palestine, being afraid of further destabilizing a volatile region that is more or less dependent on an already perfunctory peace process, the EU opted to disregard the outcome of a democratic election and set ultimatum like conditions for Hamas, which had never been set for another country or political party. When Hamas failed to meet those conditions, only 2 months later the EU suspended aid towards the Palestinian government.

Favouring stability over norms such as democracy in the South Mediterranean has been a norm for the EU, even during the active years of democracy promotion. In fact, after the Arab Spring, then European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Stefan Füle admitted that the EU had not been vocal enough in defending democracy and human rights in the Arab World since they had all been tempted by the idea that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability.⁴⁹ While this sobering realization may signal the end of 'short-termism'⁵⁰ for the EU, thus the beginning of a more consistent democracy promotion campaign for the spread of 'deep democracy', the actual EU policy still faltered in the face of a crisis in Egypt after the Arab Spring. In 2013, Commander in Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces Abdel Fattah el-Sisi staged a coup d'état against Mohamed Morsi, who had been the president of Egypt for over a year. Morsi secured the office as a result of the first free and fair presidential elections in Egypt that took place on 23-24 May 2012. Notwithstanding all the controversial moves made by Morsi during his tenure, particularly the notorious presidential decree which aimed to shield all of Morsi's decisions from legal challenge,⁵¹ he was still

⁴⁹ Stefan Füle "Speech on the Recent Events in North Africa", European Commission, 28 February 2011, < http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-11-130_en.htm >, (access date: 06 August 2017).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ This decree has been labelled as a 'constitutional coup' by anti-Morsi demonstrators. Peter Beaumont "Protests Erupt Across Egypt after Presidential Decree", *The Guardian*, 23

the democratically elected president of Egypt. Nevertheless, when Morsi was removed from the office by the military, the EU's reaction was 'mixed' to say the least.⁵² Rather than standing firmly with the democratically elected government of Egypt (and also by not critically engaging the democratic shortfalls of it) the EU fell back to its old habit: being wishy-washy about committing to the democratization of its Southern neighbours, not wanting to risk the stability of an already volatile region such as the South Mediterranean.

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⁵² Michelle Pace "Mixed Messages from the EU won't Help Solve Egypt's Crisis", *The Conversation*, 06 August 2013, < <http://theconversation.com/mixed-messages-from-the-eu-wont-help-solve-egypts-crisis-16595> >, (access date: 01 September 2017).

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