

Democracy promotion and stability in Egypt and Tunisia
Discursive configurations of the European Neighbourhood Policy after the Arab
uprisings



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Abstract

This thesis seeks to interrogate the response of the European Union to the events known as the Arab uprisings, with a particular focus on the political transitions experienced by Egypt and Tunisia since early 2011. It conducts a thorough textual analysis of major European Neighbourhood Policy documents and ‘speech acts’ related to Egypt and Tunisia, using Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In each instance of ENP discourse, this study sees a *text*, a *discursive practice* and a *social practice*. It identifies the particular discursive configurations of democracy promotion in these text samples, noting a significant change in tone since the launch of the ENP in 2003. More specifically, it points to the new neighbourhood agenda developed by the EU since the wave of protests in the Middle-East and North Africa, characterised by greater *ownership* of ENP policies by EU partners, considerable *differentiation* in their objectives and a heightened concern for the *stabilisation* of the region. Rooted in a critical, constructivist approach to discourse analysis, it eventually contends that the seemingly less voluntarist narrative developed in South Neighbourhood policy documents is the result of higher threat perception in the Union. A threat narrative is indeed highlighted, as a particular instance of a *crisis* rhetoric, resulting in a notable downscaling of EU normative ambitions in the region. Investigation of the Egyptian and Tunisian cases since 2011 provides important information regarding these developments in the ENP. This thesis eventually points to civil society assistance as a narrative of *inclusiveness* which could prove to be a significant addition to ENP democracy promotion agenda, while recognising the limits of this endeavour.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. The European Neighbourhood Policy in context

Under the Treaty on European Union that arose from the 2008 restructuring of the legal framework of the EU, the management of EU external policies went through a rather significant change that altered the nature and spirit of the Union's competence in this domain. Indeed, Article 8 states that it is the Union's endowment to "develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries."¹ As such, the legal basis for the neighbourhood policy is included in the Common Provisions of the TEU, not in Title V TEU and Part V Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, related to external competences, nor in the final provisions (Art. 49 TEU) linked to enlargement policy. Additionally, an explicit reference is made to the "values of the Union"; the European character of the norms meant to be promoted, among which democratic governance and respect for human rights are paramount, is thus emphasised. This development represents a shift away from previous formulas that usually rested on the idea of *shared* or *common* values. This competence, as well as the self-assertion of a certain core of values as constitutive of the identity of the Union itself, echoes the role of its external action toward its neighbourhood, and more particularly across the Mediterranean, as a particular arena for the affirmation of EU normative power.

Thus far, the partnership has revolved around overlapping frameworks, among which the European Neighbourhood Policy, initiated in 2004, appears prominent. Its intrinsically composite nature, combining "overarching foreign policy goals with functional, sectoral cooperation across the spectrum of the EU's *acquis communautaire*", constitutes a broad framework for cooperation.² Its comprehensive character is however not fully explored throughout the following discussion. It focuses predominantly on political and security dialogue, the first of the *three baskets* established within the ENP structure. It may however refer to economic and financial cooperation or social, cultural and human exchange where relevant.

The ENP framework encompasses sixteen recipient countries, located both in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood, hence academic discussions of the ENP as a whole can be rather non-specific. For the sake of clarity, this paper seeks to consider two partner states only, Egypt and Tunisia. By virtue of their particular historical ties with former European colonial powers, as well as the political transition both countries experienced as an outcome of political turmoil in 2011, they constitute an interesting object of study in order to understand the successes and failures of the EU's foreign policy toward its Southern neighbourhood. Moreover, in spite of their numerous differences, they seem to constitute adequate case-studies in order to evaluate the efforts of the Union to promote democratic transitions in the region. This supposedly normative character of the Union's external action in its vicinity gave rise to a great deal of debate and assumptions regarding the type of power exerted by the European union, including the notion of *Normative Power Europe* developed by Ian Manners in the early 2000s.³ It insists on the export of certain core values embedded in a liberal

¹ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. 8, 2008 O.J., C 115/20.

² Freyburg, T., Lavenex, S., Schimmelfennig, F., Skripka, T. and Wetzel, A. (2011) 'Democracy promotion through functional cooperation? The case of the European neighbourhood policy', *Democratization*, 18(4), p.1027.

³ Manners, I. (2002) 'Normative power Europe: A contradiction in terms?', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), pp.235–258.

democratic governance, but the apparent lack of success of the EU in triggering democratic change in its neighbourhood led to growing disaffection for the concept.

Anyhow, scholarly attention to democracy support in EU neighbourhood emphasised some of its distinctive traits. It highlighted its *pluralistic* approach, the *complexity* of its mechanisms, the *diversity* of its instruments as well as the *flexibility* of its objectives.⁴ Conversely, it pointed to the *fuzziness* of its understanding of democracy, unclear normative grounds to justify its democracy promotion abroad, certain *contradictions* in the formulation of the policies associated with it, and finally the relative de-politisation - bureaucratisation - of democracy assistance.⁵ Thorough attention to the discursive mechanisms at play in ENP policy documents evidences most of those elements. However, this paper opposes the idea of a de-politicisation of democracy promotion in the context of European foreign policy-making. More particularly, it identifies a dialectical relationship between normative goals and security interests and argues that changes in the EU neighbourhood in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings re-vitalised and re-politicised security issues, with certain consequences for EU democracy promotion in the region.

1.2. The Arab uprisings: A challenge for the ENP

The following discussion thus attempts to analyse the response of the EU to the 2011 uprisings in the Middle-East and North Africa, events commonly known as the ‘Arab Spring.’ The term Arab Spring itself, though rather popular in the few months following popular unrest in the region, has since then been the target of increasing criticism. The failure of the protests to achieve political transition in Bahrain and Algeria, the breakout of civil war in Yemen, Syria and Libya as well as the limited success of the front-runners Egypt and Tunisia in consolidating democratisation prompted a critique of the use of *spring* to qualify the events. “Relatively optimistic” media comments from the West which embraced “metaphors like ‘Arab Spring’ or ‘Democratic Tsunami’” were quickly superseded by a narrative focused on security concerns, partly motivated by the degradation of the situation in Libya and Syria.⁶ Hence this paper gives preference to the term *Arab uprisings*, which do not present any form of judgment nor anticipation with regard to the events themselves. While both Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak and Tunisia’s autocratic ruler Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali were ousted under the pressure of unprecedented social upheaval, the uprisings challenged considerably the Union’s policies in the region. Indeed, commentators pointed to its external action often characterised by the so-called “democratisation-stability dilemma”, and the prevalence of stabilisation policies over calls for democratic transition.⁷ The instability faced by Southern Mediterranean countries -Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria above all- revived the relevance of this dichotomous interpretation.

As a result, the Arab uprisings constituted a substantial challenge for EU democracy promotion in the MENA region. This specific external policy is indeed present in all ENP documents and publications, and constitutes a pillar of EU involvement in its neighbourhood. One answer to that normative ambition in the exercise of its external power is to be found in the 2003 *European Security Strategy*,

⁴ Kurki, M. (2012). *How the EU can adopt a new type of democracy support*. [online] Madrid: Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), p.3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁶ Seeberg, P. and Shteivi, M. (2014). *European Narratives on the ‘Arab Spring’ – from Democracy to Security*. [online] Odense: Center for Mellelemøststudier, p.1.

⁷ Behr, T. (2012). The European Union's Mediterranean policies after the Arab spring: Can the Leopard change its spots?. *Amsterdam Law Forum*, [online] 4(2), pp.76-88.

where it is stated that “the quality of international society depends on the quality of governments that are at its foundation. The best protection for [EU] security is a world of well-governed democratic states.”⁸ The European Union thus identifies democracy as a prerequisite for a secure international milieu. It has nevertheless shown little response to the Arab uprisings. Scholars have indeed qualified its answer to the 2011 events as “strikingly slow,”⁹ “divided and incoherent,”¹⁰ lacking “democratic substance”¹¹ and its democracy promotion policy in such context as mere “spectatorship.”¹²

Moreover, although the protests in Arab states aimed at the ousting of authoritarian regimes, it has now been established that the European Union perceived them primarily through the lens of its security interests.¹³ In the context of unprecedented social upheaval at its doorstep, the EU was once more forced to cope with a dilemma: support the protests in the name of democratic governance or secure the stability of authoritarian regimes, many of whom with substantial “strategic and geopolitical significance”, particularly for their role in counter-terrorism policies, in the fight against illegal migration and the key position of Northern African countries for EU energy routes.¹⁴ In the light of this dilemma, characteristic of the Union’s foreign policy in the Mediterranean, it can be argued that security concerns have and will continually to shape the EU’s democracy promotion politics in the MENA region.¹⁵

As a result, this paper seeks to further interrogate the relationship between the EU’s normative ambitions and security concerns with its Southern Mediterranean partners, instantiated in the democratisation-stability dilemma. This objective however requires an appropriate definition of key concepts, additional theoretical considerations as well as a methodological framework, all presented in the following sections.

⁸ European External Action Service, (2003). *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*. [online] Brussels.

⁹ Echagüe, A., Michou, H. and Mikail, B. (2011). Europe and the Arab Uprisings: EU Vision versus Member State Action. *Mediterranean Politics*, [online] 16(2), p.329.

¹⁰ Koenig, N. (2011). The EU and the Libyan crisis – in quest of coherence?. *The International Spectator*, [online] 46(4), pp.12-13.

¹¹ Bossuyt, F., Orbie, J. and Wetzel, A. (2015). One of what kind? Comparative perspectives on the substance of EU democracy promotion. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 28(1), pp.21-34.

¹² Schumacher, T. (2011). The EU and the Arab spring: Between Spectatorship and Actorness. *Insight Turkey*, [online] 13(3), pp.107-119.

¹³ Del Sarto, R. (2015). Normative empire Europe: The European Union, its borderlands, and the 'Arab spring'. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54(2), p.225.

¹⁴ Khalifa Isaac, S. (2013). Rethinking the new ENP: A vision for an enhanced European role in the Arab revolutions. *Democracy and Security*, 9(1-2), p.41.

¹⁵ Pace, M. (2007). Norm shifting from EMP to ENP: the EU as a norm entrepreneur in the south?. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, [online] 20(4), pp.659-675.

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework

2.1. The Mediterranean in EU foreign policy

2.1.1. The Mediterranean system of governance

In the aim to interrogate the securitising dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, a number of clarifications appear necessary. First and foremost, this analysis addresses the relationship between the European Union and its Southern Mediterranean partners, specifically Egypt and Tunisia. Though this partnership revolves around overlapping frameworks of cooperation established since the early 1990s (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Union for the Mediterranean among others), the focus will rest primarily on an assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy framework, and more particularly its political and security dialogue dimension (or *first basket*). The broadness of the ENP calls for a specific focus, evidenced here in the choice of two particular partner countries: Egypt and Tunisia. The former's relevance involves its role as a traditional and strategic partner for the EU in the region, not least by virtue of its position as a regional broker, particularly in the context of the Middle-East Peace Process. On the other hand, Tunisia has often been described as the most liberalised Arab partner, while being the only instance of a -relatively- successful democratic transition in the aftermath of the social uprisings. Those characteristics create a particularly strong incentive for the EU to encourage the latest developments in Tunisia as well as further promote democratic change in Egypt.

The specific focus on Egypt and Tunisia should be regarded as an attempt to bypass a methodological problem inscribed in the study of the European foreign policy in the MENA region. Indeed, the numerous frameworks of cooperation do not always involve the same groups of states, which, as P.J. Cardwell has argued, echoes the EU's vision of the *Mediterranean* not as a strictly delimited geographic area, but rather as a variable object for the Union's focus. This relative *flexibility* shown by the EU in its Mediterranean policies mirrors the role of the EU's foreign policy as a mean to assert its central position in the Mediterranean *system of governance*.¹⁶ Furthermore, Cardwell notes the fact that "non-MSs participate in the pursuit of 'internal' EU policy goals whilst remaining 'outsiders'", a direct consequence of the EU's normative agenda as well as of the lack of membership perspective for Southern Mediterranean partner states.¹⁷ This may reinforce the claim that the Union's self-assertion as a normative example participates in an identity-building mechanism.

2.1.2. Foreign policy and identity

This argument, which echoes debates around EU actor-hood on the global stage, is further rooted in David Campbell's two conceptions of *foreign policy*. In his analysis of *United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, he argues that foreign policy not only consists in the external representation of a state, but is also "one of the boundary-producing practices central to the

¹⁶ Cardwell, P. (2010). EuroMed, European neighbourhood policy and the union for the Mediterranean: Overlapping policy frames in the EU's governance of the Mediterranean. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49(2), pp.224.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.220.

production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates.”¹⁸ Following this constructivist approach to the study of foreign policy implies to consider it essentially as a *discursive practice*. It also mirrors Benedict Anderson’s vision of identity as an ongoing process, shaped, constructed and challenged continuously; in other words emphasising the *discursively constructed* nature of identity.¹⁹ The notion of discursive practice in this context thus echoes the idea of *narratives*, described by Ben Tonra as the “articulation of identity that is derived from discourse.”²⁰ The Normative Power Europe concept is a good instance of this phenomenon, for it rests on a projected perception of normative performance, which finds its source in a narrative of EU *exceptionalism*, a projected image of the EU as “acting differently, more correctly, more ethically, or more appropriately than have earlier foreign policy actors or competing foreign policy actors.”²¹ The instantiation of identity through discursive practices may thus participate in the creation of an “imagined community.”²² This interpretation may inform constructivist approaches to international relations: it may in particular contribute to a new vision of European foreign policy in the Mediterranean. Michelle Pace developed this type of interpretation at several occasions: she indeed “presented [European foreign policy] as a discursive activity that constructs the Mediterranean as one of its Other - a necessary process for European self-definition.”²³ As a key instrument for border management, the ENP and its policy documents are the objects of specific narratives, which affect EU vision of the Southern Mediterranean as well as its self-perception. Two narratives are particularly influential in the formulation of EU external relations, while they mirror Huber’s interpretation of EU democracy promotion policies: the *threat/risk security narrative* and the *normative duty narrative*.²⁴

2.2. Theories of democracy promotion

As events unfolded in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, commentators such as Orbie, Bossuyt and Wetzel identified a lack of *democratic substance* behind the EU’s democracy promotion discourse. Significant research has been conducted on the type of democracy that is being promoted by the EU, and this paper seeks to identify *discursive configurations* of democracy promotion in ENP policy papers, more than to investigate actual mechanisms of democracy promotion on the ground.²⁵ It endorses an essentially goal-oriented definition of democracy promotion, resting on Christopher Hill’s description, which describes it as “all foreign policy activities which aim at fostering transition to, consolidation of, or improvement of democracy in other states and their societies.”²⁶ However, this broad definition fails to acknowledge the fairly complex and intricate understanding of democracy revealed by the analysis of European Neighbourhood Policy documents.

¹⁸ Campbell, D. (1992). *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. 1st ed. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, p.75.

¹⁹ Tonra, B. (2011). Democratic foundations of EU foreign policy: narratives and the myth of EU exceptionalism. *Journal of European Public Policy*, [online] 18(8), p.1193.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1194.

²¹ Sjørnsen, H. (2011). The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy: the quest for democracy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, [online] 18(8), p.128.

²² Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. London: Verso.

²³ Pace, M. (2002). The Ugly Duckling of Europe: The Mediterranean in the Foreign Policy of the European Union. *Journal of European Area Studies*, [online] 10(2), pp.189-190.

²⁴ Schumacher, T. (2015). Uncertainty at the EU's borders: narratives of EU external relations in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy towards the southern borderlands. *European Security*, [online] 24(3), p.384.

²⁵ Pace, M. (2010). Interrogating the European Union's Democracy Promotion Agenda: Discursive Configurations of 'Democracy' from the Middle East. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, [online] 15(5), pp.611-628.

²⁶ Hill, C. (2002) *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

2.2.1. *Coercive, utilitarian and identitive* types of democracy promotion

In a comparative analysis of EU and US democracy promotion policies, Daniela Huber developed three axis for research: targets, instruments and content.²⁷ Within the framework of this paper, the targets are clearly identified; it investigates the relationship between the EU on the one hand, Egypt and Tunisia on the other. Secondly, she identified three general types of instruments for democracy promotion: *coercive*, *utilitarian* and finally *identitive*. While military intervention is not discussed throughout this paper, as it is in no way relevant in the case of Egypt and Tunisia, utilitarian and identitive types of democracy promotion find a particular resonance in the argument underlying this thesis. Indeed, the utilitarian type is highly relevant as it revolves around positive and negative conditionality, which play an important role within the context of EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean. Identitive democracy promotion is embedded in the discursive configurations of an actor's policy discourse and 'speech acts', and as such, it may inform this understanding of the EU's foreign policy discourse in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. More particularly, it mirrors the dialectical relationship between democratic role identity and threat perception, apprehended here *via* the securitisation theory of the Copenhagen School.

2.2.2. Democracy promotion and the theories of international relations

A variety of approaches have been used in the study of democracy promotion policies, often with a particular focus on either the United States or the European Union. The following description in no way seeks exhaustivity; it is merely an overview of the field. At the heart of scholarly attention on democracy promotion policies, lies a questioning over the reasons that incite nations - the United States - or international organisations - the European Union - to promote democratic governance abroad. As we have already mentioned earlier, the 2003 European Security Strategy identified democracy as a prerequisite for a secure international milieu. The security dimension in that description resonates with a structural realist view, that tends to present democracy promotion as a "second-order normative concern", with the sole purpose to protect vital security or economic interests. Adrian Hyde-Price, a tenant of neorealist thought, insisted particularly on the dismissal of the Normative Europe concept, and claimed that the EU remains an instrument for the Member States to influence the international milieu, including soft power policies such as democracy promotion.

On the contrary, liberal idealism presents norms, values and knowledge as driving forces for democracy promotion. It emphasises interdependence, and a form of international institutionalisation resting on the shared belief in said norms and values. It assumes that the EU, as an atypical type of international organisation, may wish to push other nations toward a similar form a political construction. In other words, it stresses the normative content of EU foreign policy as an objective in itself, not as a means to achieve other purposes.

Furthermore, democracy promotion policies have been approached through critical theories of international relations; those share a focus on power relations between states. The notion of hegemony, particularly present in marxist theory, has been applied extensively to the realm of international relations; Antonio Gramsci has for instance been keen on showing how hegemony is maintained through the propagation of a common culture. This so-called cultural hegemony may participate in understanding the power mechanisms underlying EU - and US in more acute terms - democracy promotion policies.

²⁷ Huber, D. (2013). US and EU Human Rights and Democracy Promotion since the Arab Spring. Rethinking its Content, Targets and Instruments. *The International Spectator*, [online] 48(3), pp.98-112.

Finally, constructivist approaches - a somewhat vaster ensemble that contains some liberal idealist notions - interrogate the role of identity in foreign policy and international relations as a whole. They find a particular echo in concepts such as Ian Manners' Normative Power Europe. Their emphasis on the endogeneity and socially-constructed nature of identities and interests of political actors may inform understandings of the normative element in EU foreign policy. In her study of the neighbourhood policy, Michelle Pace also interrogated the discursive configurations of 'democracy' in the Middle-East, emphasising the self-construction of the EU as a normative power through its engagement with its Southern neighbourhood.

As a result, this paper draws on critical and constructivist approaches to democracy promotion, using Foucauldian theories of power and discourse as well as Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. It also attempts to test Daniela Huber's theory on the dialectical relationship between normative and strategic aspects in democracy promotion policies against EU foreign policy discourse after the Arab uprisings. It presupposes that Huber's findings will find particular resonance in a critical discourse analysis of the ENP policy documents related to Egypt and Tunisia.

2.3. Democracy promotion in its strategic and normative contexts: threat perception - democratic role identity

2.3.1. Threat perception constrains democracy promotion (Argument 1)

This interpretation of security threat rests on Barry Buzan's definition, who presents it as "when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object."²⁸ The rhetorical dimension inscribed in this description is thus very much in line with Huber's idea of *threat perception*. It assumes that the more insecure an international environment becomes - or is *perceived* as such - the less democracy promotion policies tend to be vigorously pursued. More specifically, threat perception participates in challenging the identitive democracy promotion discourse of the European Union. The threat/risk security narrative locates the EU at the heart of spaces of security and stability, thus participating in the self-centredness of EU security discourse.²⁹ This is a particular instance of a securitisation practice, as it fuels the threat perception at EU level. Moreover, it accentuates the relevance of a *neighbourhood* policy in addressing security threats.

2.3.2. Democratic role identity limits the hindering effect of threat perception on democracy promotion (Argument 2)

According to D. Huber, EU democratic role identity answers to three dynamics: firstly, the norms it attempts to promote are constitutive of its identity, at least on the rhetorical level, since they are specifically referred to as the "values of the Union."³⁰ Secondly, the promotion of those values has been institutionalised through numerous frameworks of cooperation since the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995. It is an important aspect of most key ENP policy documents, speeches as well as a number of more specific instruments such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) European Endowment for Democracy (EED). Finally, it answers to the necessity to engage with a neighbourhood, and can be labelled as a democratic role identity because it is anchored

²⁸ Buzan, B., Waever, O. and de Wilde, J. (1997). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. 1st ed. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.21.

²⁹ Christou, G. (2010). European Union security logics to the east: the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. *European Security*, [online] 19(3), pp.413-430.

³⁰ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. 8, 2008 O.J., C 115/20.

in a process of identification of the Southern partner countries as *other* than the EU.³¹ Narratives of the EU as a democracy promoter, as well as the accent on “*good neighbourliness*” at EU borderlands, refer to the normative character of EU foreign policy. They constitute a “*normative duty narrative*” according to Tobias Schumacher.³² The acknowledgment of particular threats in its vicinity, along with its democratic role identity and confidence in the norms it promote, pushes the EU toward action in the Southern Mediterranean. Eventually, these dynamics appear self-reinforcing: the identification of Egypt and Tunisia in particular as key recipient countries for the EU’s democracy promotion efforts justifies the external action in the region as well as contributes to shape the image of the EU as a normative actor.

2.4. Going a step further: democracy promotion and securitisation theory

2.4.1. Discursive processes and threat perception: towards a securitisation of the partnership

This section relates to the increasingly securitised nature of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership since the start of the Barcelona Process in 1995. Barry Buzan contends that “the exact *definition* and *criteria* of securitisation is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects,” adding that “the issue is securitised if and when the audience accepts it as such.”³³ This constructivist approach to security studies, embedded in the works of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, rests on a process-oriented conception of security. The Copenhagen School, as it was later coined, developed a comprehensive ‘securitisation theory’, resting on the idea that the world is socially constructed, including security threats, through discursive processes, or what Ole Waever described as securitising “speech acts”.³⁴ Therefore, securitisation theory may constitute a valuable framework of analysis in order to understand how political turmoil in the MENA affected the dominant normative narrative of the European neighbourhood policy discourse. Politicised and depicted as security threats, elements of instability - migration, internal upheaval, terrorism, polarisation along a secular/Islamist divide and the deteriorating economic situation to follow a February 2013 European Commission MEMO - have been subject to particular discursive configurations which participated in their securitisation and may motivate extraordinary activities undertaken as a mean to tackle them.³⁵

The *renewed* ENP seemed to increasingly acknowledge the role of socio-economic conditions in Southern Mediterranean as a root cause for upheaval, illegal migration and radicalisation. This approach fits well within the general narrative developed at EU level in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. It resonated particularly with the *state of play* published in 2013 by the European Commission; indeed, the introductory paragraph emphasised “outstanding security challenges” and echoed the securitisation logics employed in neighbourhood policies. It outlined the role of a “deteriorating economic situation” in regional instability.³⁶ The justification for EU action in the

³¹ Stetter, S. (2005). The politics of De-Paradoxification in Euro-Mediterranean relations: Semantics and structures of 'cultural dialogue'. *Mediterranean Politics*, 10(3), p.334.

³² Schumacher, T. (2015). Uncertainty at the EU's borders: narratives of EU external relations in the revised European Neighbourhood Policy towards the southern borderlands. *European Security*, [online] 24(3), p.389.

³³ Buzan, B., Waever, O. and de Wilde, J. (1997). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. 1st ed. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.25.

³⁴ Weaver, O. (1989). *Security, The Speech Act. Analysing the Politics of a Word*. Jerusalem: Training Research Seminar.

³⁵ European Commission, (2013). *EU's response to the Arab Spring: the state-of-play after two years*. Brussels: MEMO/13/81.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

MENA therefore rests upon the depiction of the Southern neighbourhood as an increasingly unstable environment. From the failure of past stabilising policies in the region comes the promise of greater future involvement.

2.4.2. Interrogating the *crisis* rhetoric of the European Union

*“Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted in those crises.”*³⁷

This paper contends that any answer by the EU to a pressing challenge entails a process of self-representation that affects both its internal development and outsiders’ perception of the European project.

For instance, the literature on the 2008 global financial and subsequent Eurozone crises pointed as much to the uncertainty of the situation as to the political opportunity it represented. The phenomenon is evidenced by the etymological root of the term, taking its origin in the Ancient Greek *κρίση* (*krisi*), or ‘decision, choice, judgment.’ Jessica C. Lawrence paid particular attention to the EU crisis rhetoric as a political discourse. She approached the *space of crisis* as a “discursive construction—a narrative that describes a set of facts, ordering them to produce a representation of crisis.”³⁸

As a result, this paper seeks to interrogate EU discursive practices in its key ENP policy documents, as a mean to question the role of crisis rhetoric as a particular instance of a securitising discursive practice. Drawing on Foucauldian conceptions of power and knowledge, it argues that far from being a neutral assessment of a given situation, it is a particular knowledge-producing discursive construction of events. It eventually contends that this articulation of *events* into *crises* fuels emergency and politicisation of particular issues, participating in their securitisation in the form of their depiction as fundamental security threats.

This thesis argues that acute political instability in EU neighbourhood undermined the dominance of narratives of *good neighbourliness* and of the EU as a democracy promoter, captured in the ‘ring of friends’ concept.³⁹ Additionally, the securitisation rhetoric of ENP discourse was predominantly centred around ‘classic’ security threats in the 2003 *Wider Europe* report: “terrorism and transnational organised crime, customs and taxation fraud, nuclear environment hazards and communicable diseases” were indeed established as priorities. Instead, post-2011 documents evidence the fact that ENP securitisation logics spilled-over to new sectors of policy-making, with a particularly strong accent on migration and a greater recognition of the impact of “deteriorating socioeconomic conditions” on human movement and radicalisation. This seemed to constitute a comprehensive *crisis rhetoric*, which located the solution in further stabilising policies in the MENA. This paper discusses recent developments in the formulation of ENP and eventually observes a discrepancy between EU policies in the region, increasingly informed by a threat narrative, and the expectations of local populations, where socio-economic change dominate wishes for democratic transition.

³⁷ Monnet, J. (1978). *Memoirs*. 1st ed. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, p.417.

³⁸ Lawrence, J. (2013). The EU in Crisis: Crisis Discourse as a Technique of Government. *Netherlands Yearbook of International Law* 2013, [online] 44, p.190.

³⁹ Commission of the European Communities, (2003). *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*. Brussels: COM(2003) 104 final, p.4.

2.5. Research question

Accordingly, to what extent does the EU neighbourhood policy discourse in the aftermath of the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings constitute a further challenge to the normative dimension of the Union's external action in the region and an evidence of the increasing securitisation of the partnership between the EU and its Southern neighbours?

Furthermore, has the EU altered its discursive approach to the Southern Mediterranean in the years that followed political transitions in both countries?

What do the discursive configurations of the neighbourhood policy reveal about the way the EU perceives its Southern neighbours and its own external action?

Finally, can the EU hope to maintain a certain influence in the region as a whole, and remain a relevant democracy promotion actor, or the relative failure of its normative influence will bring it back to a more bilateral kind of relationships, captured in the calls for more 'differentiation?'⁴⁰

⁴⁰ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: JOIN(2015) 50 final, p.2.

Chapter Three: Methodological considerations

3.1. Discourse analysis

“We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [...] Discourse is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality.”⁴¹

The elected methodological framework for this research is one that answers to the logic of the discourse analysis. It follows Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse, while drawing on Norman Fairclough’s three dimensional model. Discourse is thereby understood as (1) *language use as a social practice*, (2) *the kind of language used in a specific field* and finally as (3) *a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective*.⁴² Therefore, it encompasses both written and spoken text, as well as visuals and images, though this analysis dealt with an overwhelming majority of written text samples. Among other tools for textual analysis, Fairclough insisted particularly on *ethos* - how identities are constructed through language, metaphors, wording and grammar.⁴³

This approach may provide for a better understanding of the intricate narratives embedded in a political discourse through a study of the lexical fields, themes, keywords and discursive practices used by a policy actor (or set of actors). The textual content of a number of ENP policy documents is analysed using the online software VOYANT Tools, developed by Stéfán Sinclair (McGill University) and Geoffrey Rockwell (University of Alberta). It allows for a simpler analysis of discursive patterns while providing clear, well-designed graphic representations.

Chapter Four analyses the main ENP policy documents published by the European Commission and the European External Action Service since the 2011 Arab uprisings. Meant as a quick response to the turmoil in the neighbourhood, *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: a review of European Neighbourhood Policy* was issued in 2011. Moreover, it examines the 2015 *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. It eventually compares the “renewed” ENP design with the 2003 Communication *Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*.

Chapter Five and Six scrutinise the Action Plans and Progress Reports addressing the relationship with Egypt and Tunisia. Particular attention is paid to newly emphasised ENP concepts - stability, differentiation and ownership - as well as an evident emphasis on civil society assistance. These two sections attempt to take into account specific developments relevant to the Egyptian and Tunisian contexts, and thus follow different structural patterns.

Among the few studies of ENP democracy promotion discourse in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, very few have been the result of thorough textual analysis. This paper, more concerned with

⁴¹ Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 1st ed. New-York: Pantheon Books, p.117.

⁴² Jorgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, p.67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.83.

ENP discursive practices rather than implementation on the ground, is one step toward bridging this gap in the literature on EU external action.

3.2. A Foucauldian approach to power and knowledge

*“What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression”.*⁴⁴

A critical approach to discourse is employed: the analysis of discursive practices within the European Union’s foreign policy narrative aims at underlying power relations and the intricate role that discourse plays in constructing, shaping or challenging them.

Based on Foucault, it can be assumed that power relationships, structured through the discursive practices of multiple actors, continually participate in shaping and transforming the social world. The intrinsically connected nature of power and discourse thus reveals the social world as an intricate network of interconnected, self-produced *representations* that originate from the discursive practices of a multiplicity of actors. At the heart of “Foucault’s coupling of power and knowledge” is a questioning around the issue of *truth*, hereby “understood as a system of procedures for the production, regulation and diffusion of statements.”⁴⁵ This archaeological phase of Foucault’s philosophical thought was later sharpened, and truth was later described as “embedded in, and produced by, systems of power.”⁴⁶ Pulling away from *truthfulness*, the *articulation* of various pictures of the social reality within discursive practices and how these constructions impact on social actors is thus brought to the fore.

Rooted in poststructuralist theory, analytical discourse approaches contend that representations of a given reality are constructed through language, and that these representations participate in constructing social reality itself.⁴⁷ This attention to the institutional context of production and integration of a specific discursive pattern may be very valuable in the context of the EU. Drawing on Foucauldian interpretations, particularly those presented in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, may also help grasp the importance of discourse as an articulation of power and knowledge that manifests institutionalised patterns of knowledge.

At the institutional level, the emphasis on and recurrence of specific themes may reveal the creation of a particular discursive strategy. Such strategy may manifest the articulation of a narrative presenting the EU as a normative actor, emphasising its distinctiveness through its (supposed) capacity to trigger change in other partners. It may also reveal a particular emphasis on specific security issues, echoing a securitising approach to the ENP.

A discourse analysis appears particularly well-suited to understand and apply the theoretical framework inscribed in the dialectical relationship between democratic role identity and threat perception. It also serves the objective to identify particular discursive configurations, central to securitisation theory.

⁴⁴ Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. 1st ed. New-York: Pantheon Books, p.119.

⁴⁵ Jorgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, p.14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.9.

3.3. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis consists in a rather large body of thought, encompassing multiple approaches to language and discourse. Those approaches share a focus on the *linguistic-discursive* dimension of the social world as well as processes of change in the discursive practices of its actors.⁴⁸ Moreover, they contend that discourse is both *constitutive* and *constituted*; in that it recognises the influence of non-discursive societal forces on discourse, CDA differs from other approaches such as Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory.⁴⁹ CDA further establishes that discourse cannot be analysed without paying thorough attention to its social context of production. Finally it points to the role of discourse in creating and reproducing *unequal power relations* within society.

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach is characterised by its three-dimensional framework. It sees a *text* (an instance of discourse), a *discursive practice* and a *social practice*.⁵⁰ As a mean to understand processes of change in discursive practices, Fairclough paid particular attention to *intertextuality*, or the linkages between the discourse studied and elements of prior texts.⁵¹ Following Fairclough's theory, *interdiscursivity*, a subcategory of intertextuality, is characterised by the articulation of diverse types of discourse within a single text; it may thus reveal a process of change in the discursive practices of a given social actor. Fairclough's understanding of the *order of discourse*, which shapes and is shaped by all discursive practices, is central to this analytical approach. As of the third dimension, it consists in Fairclough's terms in the enquiry into the "social matrix of discourse."⁵² It points to the role of a particular discursive sample within a larger web of textual content; it emphasises its effect on the wider power relations it is embedded in. This is a central element of Fairclough's CDA, as it implies the use of other theories of social sciences, as a mean to understand the complex social, economic or institutional non-discursive elements to which discourse is subject. It stresses the importance of multi-perspectival types of studies, and the merits of research across boundaries.

However, it also gives rise to a number of difficulties in the direct implementation of CDA. Fairclough invites the researcher to remain weary of the impact of his/her language in shaping, creating or reproducing existing power relations. He calls for *critical language awareness*, raising important ethical considerations as to the instrumentalisation - *technologisation* - of the researcher's findings.⁵³ Furthermore, CDA appears to rest upon a rather vague distinction between *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements; giving a thorough account of the *social practice* dimension may thus be highly unpractical at best. To this theoretical weakness can be added a relative neglect of social psychological aspects: processes of *group formation*, construction of *social identities* and *social relations* are notably under-researched in Fairclough's approach. Last but not least, CDA approaches, in spite of Fairclough's emphasis on that particular element, seem to share a certain lack of interest for *text production* and *text consumption practices*, however crucial to the general coherence of the theoretical framework he developed.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁵² Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Polity press, p.237.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.239.

This study of ENP discourse after the Arab uprisings is rooted in the methodological considerations presented by Norman Fairclough in his Critical Discourse Analysis. It is inscribed in a multi-perspectival approach to textual analysis. Its focus rests on three particular elements of the discourse: its specific textual content or linguistic devices; its importance as a discursive practice, or the degree of intertextuality it presents with regard to other similar documents; and finally its role as a social practice. Before it turns to documents related specifically to Egypt and Tunisia, it scrutinises key ENP documents published since the 2011 Arab uprisings: *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: a review of European Neighbourhood Policy* (2011) and the *2015 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy* and compares them with the provisions of the 2003 Communication *Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*.

4.1. Deep and sustainable democracy: a new approach to democracy promotion?

“Deep democracy - “the kind that lasts because the right to vote is accompanied by rights to exercise free speech, form competing political parties, receive impartial justice from independent judges, security from accountable police and army forces, access to a competent and non-corrupt civil service-- and other civil and human rights that many Europeans take for granted, such as the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.”⁵⁴

Throughout the new documents issued by the Union, focused on a supposedly innovative vision for the ENP, the External Action Service acknowledged the “limited results” of its foreign policy so far, as well as the fact that a “new approach is needed” as a response to the ongoing “historical challenges.”⁵⁵ High Representative Baroness Catherine Ashton responded in a similar vein in February 2011, as she proclaimed in a Guardian article that “the EU stands ready to help” create “the roots of deep democracy.”⁵⁶

The Communication *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood* (NRCN), as a first comprehensive institutional response to the events of early 2011, laid down the bases for a new democracy promotion approach. It assumed a more repentant tone, and developed a rather fragile normative duty narrative, with only occasional statements such as “the EU needs to rise to the historical challenges in our neighbourhood.”⁵⁷ A sense of voluntarism, sensibly weakened since the *Wider Europe* report, remained discernible. The 2003 document talked about a “new impetus”, “new opportunities”, insisted on the fact that “the EU has a duty, not only towards its citizens and those of the new member states, but also towards its present and future neighbours”, and used a language of necessity, of obligation, such as in “the EU must act” or “will need to rise to meet this challenge.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ European Commission, (2011). *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A Review of European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: COM(2011) 303, p.2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁵⁶ Ashton, C. (2011). The EU wants 'deep democracy' to take root in Egypt and Tunisia. *The Guardian*. [online].

⁵⁷ European Commission, (2011). *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A Review of European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: COM(2011) 303, p.1.

⁵⁸ Commission of the European Communities, (2003). *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for*

The title of the first section, “Wider Europe: Accepting the Challenge,” was an evidence of strong political will and a genuine desire to engage with neighbours.⁵⁹ The NRCN still drew on some of these notions, with a significantly attenuated sense of duty and voluntarism. The document introduced the *deep democracy* concept, articulated around five core elements: free and fair elections, freedom of association, expression and assembly, rule of law, fight against corruption and finally security and law enforcement sector reform. It referred to multiple elements, some of which were not part of the traditional democracy assistance package, particularly when it comes to the reform of security and law enforcement sector. It represented an attempt to construct a comprehensive democracy promotion strategy, with a strong emphasis on civil and political rights.

Nevertheless, it failed to acknowledge the importance of social and economic change in order to achieve what the EU conceives as deep democracy. It argued that “reform based on these elements will not only strengthen democracy but help to create the conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, stimulating trade and investment”, a causal mechanism establishing democracy as an essential step toward social and economic improvement.⁶⁰ On the contrary, this paper contends that social and economic development is a necessary step in the process of democracy-building. It bases its claims on the findings of the Arab Barometer. Indeed, this comprehensive survey regularly conducted in ten countries of the MENA since 2011 indicated that 70% of the respondents in Tunisia and Egypt mentioned better economic governance as one of the three main reasons for the uprisings. A staggering 75% of Tunisians considered the economic situation as the main challenge faced by their countries, while a mere 4% argued the same about democracy in 2016 (Fig. 1).⁶¹ Similarly, 82% of the Egyptian respondents declared that the state of the economy was their main concern, the second most cited concern being security and stability, mentioned by 7% of the people surveyed.⁶² 76% of Egyptians considered socio-economic features as the most important priority for democracy-building - 32% of the respondents emphasised the provision of basic necessities and some 32% more the reduction of inequality. Only 23% of the people surveyed believed civil and political rights to be a priority for democracy-building.⁶³ Those numbers pointed out to the fact that the yearning of Egyptians and Tunisians for democratic governance rests on a singularly more economy-oriented understanding of democracy than that conveyed by the EU’s renewed approach. They underscored the wishes of a majority of respondents: an improvement in the socio-economic conditions of their countries. This paper interprets this data as an evidence that the emphasis on civil and political rights in the deep democracy concept failed to capture the expectations of a majority of Egyptians and Tunisians in 2011.

Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours. Brussels: COM(2003) 104 final, p.3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁶⁰ European Commission, (2011). *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A review of European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: COM(2011) 303, p.4.

⁶¹ Robbins, M. (2016). *Tunisia Five Years after the Revolution: Findings from the Arab Barometer*. [online], p.6.

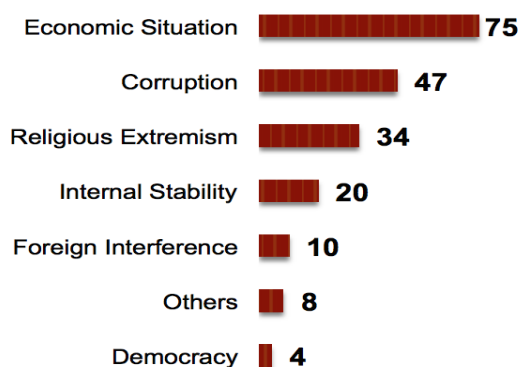
⁶² Asilah, S., Qamha, A. and Soltan, G. (2011). *The Arab Barometer Project: Arab Republic of Egypt*. [online] Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, p.2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.4.

Figure 1.

Biggest Challenges in Tunisia

% who say ... is one of the two biggest problems facing their country



Source: Arab Barometer q206.

While the democracy promotion section in the NRCN was centred around deep democracy, thorough examination of the 2015 ENP *Review* reveals that the concept was abandoned as quickly as it had been introduced. Moreover, whereas democracy-related concerns formed the first section of the NRCN, they were postponed to the fourth section in the 2015 *Review*. An additional semantic change can be noted: after the 2011 deep democracy, the 2015 *Review* chose to emphasise “good governance”, thus showing its acceptance of a *status quo* over calls for further democratisation.⁶⁴ Considered as a social practice, the formulation of the NRCN and 2015 *Review*, as well as the formulation of their specific democracy promotion provisions, revealed an attempt to look afresh at past ENP policies, and to offer an image of the EU as a voluntary foreign policy actor.

However, the new approach strictly maintained a strong emphasis on civil and political rights, while significantly downscaling its objectives in the 2015 *Review*. The disappearance of deep democracy, envisioned as a core principle for future EU action in the NRCN, revealed a significant lack of consistency in the formulation of external policy. The ENP discourse adopted a less decisive tone: its stated objective was to “propose how the EU and its neighbours can build more effective partnerships”, while it recognised that “the EU cannot alone solve the many challenges of the region.”⁶⁵ More importantly, conditional support from the EU, instrumental in both *Wider Europe* and the NRCN, is absent from the 2015 *Review*. As a matter of fact, putting an end to this core element of EU democracy promotion is an evidence of a new consciousness that past schemes, potentially efficient when dealing with seemingly stable authoritarian regimes, could not remain at the heart of EU activities in the region.

In a nutshell, the 2015 *Review* announced a rupture with the normative duty narrative, and presented EU involvement in the neighbourhood as more of a strategic necessity than a normative ambition.

⁶⁴ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: JOIN(2015) 50 final, p.5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2.

4.2. Stabilisation, ownership and differentiation

“Our most pressing challenge is the stabilisation of our neighbourhood. Conflicts, terrorism and radicalisation threaten us all. But poverty, corruption and poor governance are also sources of insecurity. That is why we will refocus relations with our partners where necessary on our genuinely shared common interests.”⁶⁶

A particular ENP *speech act* can be identified in a guest editorial by Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn, published in 2016 in the European Foreign Affairs Review. The Communication on the 2015 ENP *Review* was deemed “strategic”, as well as the “culmination” of an inclusive process.⁶⁷ The publication emphasised the importance of the *Review* to address the “most urgent concerns of the EU and its partners.”⁶⁸ It stated the original purpose of the ENP, stressing the “area of security, stability and prosperity” the EU hoped to establish as well as its belief in the fact that it could “project its values.” As it underlined the changes in the region, it drew on a rather obvious crisis rhetoric: “conflicts”, “political violence”, “transnational terrorism”, “aggressive Russian foreign policy”, “deep migration crisis.”⁶⁹ In one sentence, Commissioner Hahn summed up the issues at EU borders and created a picture of profound instability. He further proclaimed the centrality of *stabilisation* policies in the new ENP.

Furthermore, the introduction of the 2015 *Review* claimed that “differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP.”⁷⁰ These elements pointed to the *stabilisation* policy pursued by the EU in its neighbourhood, to increasing claims of *co-ownership* - meaning greater involvement of partner countries in the formulation of ENP policy documents - as well as greater *differentiation* in the implementation of the models developed. The differentiated approach was not a new concept: indeed, both the *Wider Europe* report and the *NRCN* promoted a “differentiated framework”,⁷¹ or “differentiated approach”,⁷² though they failed to introduce new instruments for its implementation. The 2015 *Review* however, put an end to the system of Progress reports, and claimed to introduce a “new style of assessment.”⁷³ This represented a major change in ENP benchmarking, as it may give increasing space for EU neighbours to set their own objectives. It may also be considered as a statement of weakness on the part of the EU, faced with the failure of its conditionality approach in triggering political change in the region. The address of Commissioner Johannes Hahn during the presentation of the 2015 *Review* of the ENP encapsulated all three elements. It pointed to a strategic approach, where stability and security concerns superseded normative engagements at the rhetorical level. After the rather voluntarist vision proposed by the *NRCN* in 2011, the situation at EU borders prompted decision-makers to adopt a singularly less *regional* policy, favouring instead engagement with specific partners in a framework of *co-ownership*.

⁶⁶ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): stronger partnerships for a stronger neighbourhood*. Brussels, 18 November 2015. Press release.

⁶⁷ Hahn, J. (2016). *Stronger Neighbourhood, Stronger Partnerships: A Revised European Neighbourhood Policy*. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, [online] 21(1), p.1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁷⁰ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: JOIN(2015) 50 final, p.2.

⁷¹ Commission of the European Communities, (2003). *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*. Brussels: COM(2003) 104 final, p.9.

⁷² European Commission, (2011). *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A review of European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: COM(2011) 303, p.3.

⁷³ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: JOIN(2015) 50 final, p.5.

A 2016 College of Europe Policy Brief insisted on the discursive aspects of the EU's response to the changes in its Southern neighbourhood, and highlighted the notion of the *ring of fire* -as a reference to the previously endorsed idea of the "ring of friends."⁷⁴ The significant change in tone, or crisis rhetoric developed by EU policy-makers in the context of the 2015 ENP *Review*, appeared in sharp contrast with the reform enacted in 2011. Schumacher underlined particularly the stabilising agenda of the document – the section *Stabilising the Neighbourhood* follows the introduction – which presented striking differences with the *NRCN*, largely focused on the development of long-term policy objectives. The 2015 document promoted a more careful approach, with stabilisation as its guideline. A stabilising agenda was introduced for new policy areas: it was to preside over future crisis management capacities, economic development cooperation, financial instruments, security programs and migration. This last element, in the context of high migratory pressure at EU borders, represented a very recent addition to the mandate of ENP. The small migration section in *Wider Europe* focused primarily on "lawful migration and the movement of persons", with some five lines of text dedicated to combating illegal migration.⁷⁵ The *NRCN* presented a similar focus, insisting on the negotiation of Mobility Partnerships and Visa liberalisation. The 2015 *Review* represented an important step, as it contained a comprehensive three-pages long framework to deal with "mutually beneficial migration and mobility", "protection for those in need", "tackling irregular migration" and "cooperation on border management."⁷⁶ The EU considerably stepped up its ENP provisions related to migration, with a significant emphasis on the importance of stabilising policies in its neighbourhood and an increasing focus on border management capacities.

This thesis contends that those semantic changes in the formulation of ENP constitute a narrative of threat, in sharp contrast with the voluntarist tone employed in early ENP documents. (Fig. 2). The 2003 *Wider Europe* had been drafted in the context of rising threat perception related to terrorism, but the dynamic of enlargement prompted action in the neighbourhood, and high confidence in the ability of the Union to be an actor of change in the region. This analysis points to a certain crisis rhetoric in ENP policy documents, instantiated in the stabilising agenda of the 2015 *Review*. Nevertheless, along these developments, one area of democracy promotion received increasing attention in ENP: civil society assistance.

⁷⁴ Schumacher, T. (2016). *Back to the Future: The 'New' ENP towards the Southern Neighbourhood and the End of Ambition*. College of Europe Policy Brief. [online] Bruges: CEPOB, p.1.

⁷⁵ Commission of the European Communities, (2003). *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*. Brussels: COM(2003) 104 final, p.10.

⁷⁶ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: JOIN(2015) 50 final, p.15.

Figure 2: Recurrence of selected keywords in the 2011 *New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood* and the 2015 *European Neighbourhood Policy Review*. Table created by the author.

	<i>Democracy</i>	<i>Stability</i>	<i>Security</i>	<i>Civil society</i>	<i>Threat</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>Differentiation</i>
2011 <i>NRCN</i>	24	0	31	15	1	0	4	3
2015 <i>Review</i>	10	9	44	15	4	5	7	2

4.3. Disrupting a securitised agenda: the potential of civil society assistance

“Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purpose and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. (...) Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women’s organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.”

While provisions concerning democracy promotion have been significantly downscaled since the launch of ENP in 2003, and even more so during the 2015 review exercise, civil society assistance became a central instrument in EU democracy promotion rhetoric. Rather non-existent in *Wider Europe*, with only two short remarks about the importance of cooperation with CSOs, civil society support gained importance in the *NRCN*, with a full section dedicated to the “partnership with societies.”⁷⁷ The *NRCN* emphasised support to “political parties, non-registered NGOs and trade unions and other social partners”, a considerable novelty for democracy promotion policies.⁷⁸ Indeed, this implied engagement on the ground, with partners other than those sponsored by the states, in a framework which, to some degree, bypassed traditional cooperation between the EU and state authorities. The numerous references made to civil society in the *NRCN* and the 2015 *Review* answered to the failure of conditional EU-state cooperation in democracy promotion, while fitting the *differentiated* approach desired by the EU and its partners. Its focus is on *inclusiveness*, in the endeavour to open-up neighbouring political scenes to a wider range of political actors. This goal was announced in statements such as “the EU will engage with all partners in an inclusive dialogue”, “sub-national, national and intra-regional civil society should be supported further” or “expand outreach to relevant members of civil society in its broadest sense”.⁷⁹ It fed rather obviously on a narrative of inclusiveness, a seemingly important addition to the democracy assistance agenda of the Union.

Between 1998 and 2008, the number of CSOs in Egypt, including NGOs, advocacy organisations,

⁷⁷ European Commission, (2011). *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A review of European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: COM(2011) 303, p.4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p4.

⁷⁹ European Commission, (2015). *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Brussels: JOIN(2015) 50 final, pp.6-7..

business associations and professional and labour groups -following a general classification derived from the Comparative Non-profit Sector Project of John Hopkins University (1989-2005)- grew from around 10 000 to 30 000.⁸⁰ In Tunisia, the EU documented the creation of some 2 700 new CSOs between early 2011 and the summer 2012.⁸¹ Nonetheless, a number of trends still hinder the capacity of Arab CSOs to yield significant influence: the extant grasp of government-led structures on civil society, the lack of domestic support for Western-inspired CSOs, the lack of transparency and funding as well as its overall fragmented nature participate in explaining the relative slump of civil society actors in the context of the Arab uprisings.⁸² The Tunisian example did however present some striking differences with this assessment.

Under the headlines of “civil society engagement”, “decentralised cooperation”, the new ENP was partly shaped as a channel for support to local CSOs, a strategy that struggled to gain legitimacy since its instigation under the 1995 Barcelona Process.⁸³ Under the 2006 European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the EU freed itself from the consent of local authorities. Dotted with some €24 million over the 2007-2011 period, the platform experienced some transformations in the aftermath of the uprisings.⁸⁴ Indeed, both the *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity* and *Europe’s engagement with civil society in external relations*, adopted respectively in March 2011 and September 2012, emphasised the need for a more “inclusive” and “country-specific” support to CSOs. Two new instruments completed this change: the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility as well as the European Endowment for Democracy. Although their creation is too recent to draw conclusions for their activities, they did mirror a willingness from the EU to adapt its democracy promotion instruments to the changes affecting the region as well as a capacity to take innovative steps in this respect.

The whole range of considerations presented above should push the EU towards a cautious approach in its strategy for engaging with Arab civil society. Nevertheless, the development of a consistent civil society assistance may allow the Union to unlock the situation it finds itself in. The securitisation of the Southern partnership under the form of the development of a comprehensive *stabilising* agenda failed to address the expectations of Arab populations and represented a notable setback for ENP democracy promotion policies. The voluntarist tone of *Wider Europe* and the ‘innovative’ vision for the ENP presented in the *NRCN* shifted toward a dominant stabilisation narrative. In this picture of stalled democracy promotion agenda, rising calls for civil society support did represent an innovative approach to EU external action in the MENA. It remains to be seen whether the EU has been truly consistent in its support to CSOs in Egypt and Tunisia since the 2011 upheavals, and whether such assistance represents an added-value for democracy promotion in the region.

4.4. Preliminary conclusions

While classic EU democracy promotion policies under the ENP have failed to offer adequate and consistent answers to the Arab uprisings, partly due to a growing securitising agenda, civil society assistance has been considerably stepped up. More particularly, the deep democracy concept introduced in 2011 failed to capture the expectations of Arab populations. It also represented one of

⁸⁰ UNDP, (2008). *Egypt's Social Contract: The Role of Civil Society*. Cairo: UNDP.

⁸¹ European Commission, (2012). *Rapport de Diagnostic sur la Société Civile Tunisienne*. Brussels.

⁸² Behr, T. and Siitonen, A. (2007). *Working Paper - Building Bridges or Digging Trenches? Civil Society Engagement after the Arab Spring*. [online] The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, p.13.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.21.

the last instances of EU normative duty narrative and voluntarism, as the following 2015 *Review* of the ENP significantly downscaled the objectives and engagement of democracy promotion policies under the ENP framework. As stabilisation became the apparent hallmark of ENP policies in the MENA, policy documents stood by established paradigms and developed a more cautious tone regarding engagement in Egypt and Tunisia. On the discursive level, stability became associated with most policy issues, from economic cooperation to energy routes, from migration management to political governance. Nevertheless, when it comes to civil society support, it seems that the ENP democracy promotion discourse may free itself from established paradigms as well as broaden its scope of action. Offering assistance to political parties, non-registered NGOs or trade unions is an instance of EU involvement with a growing number of local actors. The seemingly lower levels of intertextuality with regard to civil society assistance may be an evidence of this phenomenon. The EU has remained very cautious in this respect, as engagement with non regime-sponsored local actors may jeopardise its relationship with the state authorities. Among numerous differences between Egyptian and Tunisian politics since the uprisings, the involvement of competing actors in policy-making, as well as CSOs stands out particularly. While scholarship highlighted the role of CSOs in the Tunisian transitional process, in Egypt competing voices have been remarked by their absence. Scrutiny of documents specifically related to Egypt and Tunisia may inform our understanding of ENP democracy promotion agenda and the changes it underwent since 2011.

Chapter Five: Case Study 1 - Egypt

To the general scrutiny of key ENP documents, carried out in the previous chapter, must be added the analysis of text samples related specifically to Egypt and Tunisia. Though they do not presume exhaustivity, chapter five and six share this focus on Action plans, progress reports and other documents dealing with these two countries, with a more particular emphasis on their democracy promotion sections. As discussed above, the contractual obligations contained in the Action Plans were designed to test the commitment of partner countries, and reward them for the progress accomplished. Nevertheless, the 2015 *Review* pulled away from this more-for-more approach, in an attempt to secure the stability of transitional regimes in the region. Two types of support from the EU can be distinguished: a sector-based financial support to state actors on the one hand, and civil society assistance on the other. While the former has failed to bring about significant political change in MENA countries, the latter does appear as a recent added-value to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. As it cannot hope to offer accurate scrutiny of the whole period since the 2011 regime change, the following section emphasises four main elements: the strategic relationship between the EU and Egypt, the response to the 2013 military coup, the 2015 legislative elections and finally the support to civil society actors.

5.1. EU-Egypt: A Strategic Relationship

The relationship between the EU and Egypt is based on a mutual strategic importance. Indeed, on the one hand Egypt is the biggest Arab country, as well as an important regional broker, particularly in the context of the Middle-East peace process. With 3.4 million people leaving the country in 2013, the World Bank Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016 also estimated it to be one of the biggest emigration states in the Middle-East, behind the West Bank and Gaza (4.0) and the Syrian Arab Republic (4.0).⁸⁵ However, it is mainly a transit country, a characteristic explained by its geographic position between North Africa and the Middle-East. As such, it plays a major role in the external migration policies of the European Union. Egypt also is an important partner in counter-terrorism policies. On the other, the EU remains Egypt's first trading partner and second donor after the Gulf states.⁸⁶ After the completion of the Association Agreement in 2004, the volume of bilateral trade more than doubled in 8 years, reaching €23.9 billion in 2012, up from €11.5 billion in 2004.⁸⁷ It can be noted that the framework for this cooperation remains the Association Agreement signed in 2001 and entered into force in 2004. In spite of dramatic changes in the political, social and economic landscape of the country, the terms of the partnership have hence not been re-defined. Furthermore, the EU granted Egypt a one-year Single Support Framework -as opposed to Tunisia's new Action Plan 2013-2017- which reveals a stronger belief in negative conditionality and fails to acknowledge Egypt's "considerably more capital-intensive" need for external assistance.⁸⁸ The EU chose to inscribe the partnership in a short-term perspective through the Single Support Framework, an evidence of difficult negotiations with Egypt's authorities and a lack of vision from the part of the EU.

⁸⁵ World Bank, (2016). *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, 3rd Edition*. Washington, DC: World Bank, p.19.

⁸⁶ Pinfari, M. (2013). The EU, Egypt and Morsi's Rise and Fall: 'Strategic Patience' and Its Discontents. *Mediterranean Politics*, [online] 18(3), p.460.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.460.

⁸⁸ Schumacher, T. (2016). *Back to the Future: The 'New' ENP towards the Southern Neighbourhood and the End of Ambition*. College of Europe Policy Brief. [online] Bruges: CEPOB, p.3.

5.2. The response of the EU to the 2013 military coup

If a short-term perspective prevailed over long-term engagement in the formulation of EU-Egypt partnership under the form of the SSF, it was not the only evidence of a cautious engagement from the EU. After the Islamists obtained an overwhelming majority of seats as a result of the first democratically-held elections in January 2012, with about 70% of the votes, the same year also saw the victory of their candidate Mohamed Morsi at the presidential election in June. Nevertheless, in light of the autocratic direction taken by the regime and its failure to improve socio-economic conditions, the democratically-elected Morsi government was deposed by a military coup in 2013, an evidence of the political turmoil faced by the country.⁹² The chance for EU foreign policy to operate with a government elected by strong popular will - however ideologically problematic its agenda may have been - was ruled over by the 3 July coup from Egyptian security forces. Hence the EU had to re-define its vision of what relations with al-Sisi's new government ought to be, with regard particularly to the drafting of a new Constitution. (Figure 4). The 2013 ENP Progress report, as well as a statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton before the European Parliament, offer an interesting combination of high threat perception and strong normative duty narrative. In spite of relatively strong condemnation of the behaviour of security forces in the ousting of Mohamed Morsi, as well as denunciation of the various human rights violations committed by the interim government led by General al-Sisi, the report did not refer to the situation as a coup, and failed to strongly condemn the decision of the military to take over the government.⁹³ Though the coup represented a major violation of democratic principles, as well as an important set-back only one year after the first democratically-held elections of the country, it was not met by strong political action from the Union.

Insisting on the “real fear”, “genuine fear”, “growing level of violence”, “polarisation”, “alarming” situation, “terrible violence”, “growing worries”, and with a personal engagement, “I could feel the antipathy on the streets”, High Representative Ashton developed a very strong crisis rhetoric in her address to the European Parliament on 11 September 2013.⁹⁴ She added a strong degree of emergency, stating that she “urged them to go forward toward the democratic future”, and that she “told [Mohamed Morsi] that [she] believed that he and his country were running out of time.” Along with this threat/risk narrative, the EEAS spokeswoman presented herself, the new diplomatic service she incarnated, and the EU as a whole as an indispensable mediator. She placed a very strong emphasis on the role of the EU as a broker in achieving dialogue, “inclusive progress” for a “more democratic and more prosperous Egypt.”⁹⁵ This is an interesting example of a narrative of voluntarism from a key EU representative, in a context where the EU, in spite of an image of mediator relayed by official documents and the HR, did not exert sufficient diplomatic pressure to influence the course of events. “Brotherhood” was central to the democracy promotion section of the 2013 Progress report, “ousting”, “trials” or “dispersal” secondary. This revealed a specific discursive strategy of the EU, relaying an image of broker and important mediator in the political crisis faced by Egypt.

⁹² Pinfari, M. (2013). The EU, Egypt and Morsi's Rise and Fall: ‘Strategic Patience’ and Its Discontents. *Mediterranean Politics*, [online] 18(3), p.466.

⁹³ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, (2014). *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Egypt. Progress in 2013 and recommendations for action*. Brussels: SWD(2014) 71 final.

⁹⁴ European External Action Service, (2013). *Catherine Ashton - Statement on Egypt, European Parliament, 11 September 2013*. [video].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Figure 4: Recurrent terms in the 2013 Progress report. Created by the author.



4.3. Exclusionary politics in the 2015 legislative elections

The legislative elections held in 2015 revealed the lack of consistency in EU calls for dialogue and political inclusion. In March 2014, Presidential elections were announced by the interim regime, led by General al-Sisi, designated Field Marshal by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The EU dispatched an Election Observation Mission (EOM), only to witness the large victory of the candidate of the military, with 97% of the votes. The Mission found the elections to be “satisfactory on polling day itself”, noting however the “challenging political context”, “partial media coverage” and a “very limited space for dissent.”⁹⁶ Whereas the EU pointed to that absence of opposition, it was not however vocal about the lack of pluralism in the subsequent December 2015 legislative elections. Indeed, these elections evidenced the particularly exclusionary type of politics practiced by al-Sisi’s regime. Announced as a way to remedy to the absence of a chamber of representatives since the dissolution of the first freely and democratically-elected Parliament in 2012, the victory of the coalition “For the love of Egypt” did not hide its intention to reinforce the Presidency, to the detriment of the legislative assembly.⁹⁷ With 75% abstention, the complete exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood, the boycott of its offspring ‘Strong Egypt’, of the liberal Destour Party and the centrist platform ‘Sahwet Mist’ (Egypt’s Awakening), the elections shattered popular hopes for political representativeness. Loyalists secured tight control over the assembly, excluding all competition from the Parliament, thus preventing the participation of important segments of the opposition as well as reinforcing a Presidency controlled by the military.⁹⁸ The lack of action from the part of the EU in this context amounted to a silent endorsement of President al-Sisi’s regime’s demonisation of political opponents, only tainted by relative indignation after the death sentences pronounced against former President Morsi and a hundred more individuals.⁹⁹ No statements were issued concerning the clear exclusionist political agenda pursued by the state authorities. The flexibility of EU democracy promotion agenda,

⁹⁶ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, (2015). *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Egypt. Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions*. Brussels: SWD(2015) 65 final.

⁹⁷ Mühlberger, W. (2015). *Egypt's democratic window-dressing*. Finnish Institute of International Affairs COMMENT 22. Helsinki: FIIA, p.1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁹⁹ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, (2015). *Statement of the High Representative/Vice president Federica Mogherini on the Court decision against former President Morsi and more than a hundred individuals in Egypt*. [online]. Brussels: 17 May 2015.

been increasingly informed by securitisation logics, focused around a stabilising agenda, growing efforts to promote a lively civil society did represent a step forward.

However, substantial critics have been formulated as to the capacity of the EU to uphold this commitment when it is faced with adversity. For instance, the EU failed to give an adequate response in November 2012, when a number of human rights organisations did not get access to the first Egyptian-European Task Force following an arbitrary decision from the Egyptian Foreign Minister.¹⁰² Additionally, a €5 billion aid package was proposed to the Egyptian authorities during the November 2012 Task Force. Nonetheless, only €90 million, issued through the SPRING program, were made conditional to political reform, while around €500 million were made conditional to the acceptance of an IMF loan programme.¹⁰³ This was an important evidence of the failure of the EU to capture the expectations of local civil society, as it failed to uphold its voluntarist rhetoric through conditionality, while retaining the economic approach that led to a worsening socio-economic environment in the first place.

Furthermore, much has been said about a growing crack-down on civil society since the 2013 military coup: an open letter from 16 CSOs - including the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Euromed Rights, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders - firmly condemned EU passivity in the light of these democracy abuses. It referred specifically to a new bill on civil associations, adopted by the Egyptian parliament and referred to the Presidency on 29 November 2016, which in the words of UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association Maina Kiai would “devastate civil society not only in the short term, but possibly for generations to come.”¹⁰⁴ Notably though, two statements from the EEAS Spokesperson addressed this situation: on 24 March 2016 and 17 September 2016, the EEAS formulated its concerns over the situation of civil society in Egypt, particularly with respect to “travel bans, asset freezes and the summoning of human rights defenders.”¹⁰⁵ Both statements called on the “Egyptian authorities to allow the independent functioning of civil society organisations and human rights defenders.”¹⁰⁶

Political turmoil in Egypt prompted the EU to adopt an increasingly salient threat narrative. It was also associated with a significant downscaling of democracy promotion commitments in official ENP documents. This may corroborate Daniela Huber’s theoretical framework, as a higher threat perception from the part of the EU weakened its democracy promotion rhetoric. Alongside these developments, a lack of consistency in the discursive configurations of EU democracy promotion has been observed: after relaying an image of indispensable mediator in the stalled 2013 political situation, it did not attempt to seriously challenge President al-Sisi’s demonisation of the opposition. As it failed to strongly condemn the 2013 military coup, it endorsed the brutality of the new military regime. Moreover, the non-pluralist 2015 legislative elections were a particular evidence of the flexibility of EU engagement, as well as the stabilising agenda of its external action. Indeed, the meagre criticism formulated against al-Sisi’s crackdown on dissent, revealed a weak commitment to promote democratic pluralism in the context of the 2015 legislative elections. With regard to civil

¹⁰² Paciello, M. (2013). *The Euro Crisis and Euro-Mediterranean Relations*. Euro-Mediterranean Relations Facing New Challenges. [online] Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome University of Rome La Sapienza, p.87.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.87.

¹⁰⁴ Freeassembly.net. (2016). Egypt NGO Bill Threatens To “Devastate” Civil Society, UN Expert Warns. [online].

¹⁰⁵ European External Action Service, (2016). *Statement by the spokesperson on civil society in Egypt*. [online]. Brussels: 24 March 2016.

¹⁰⁶ European External Action Service, (2016). *Statement on the decision of an Egyptian Court to freeze the assets of Human rights defenders*. [online]. Brussels: 17 March 2016.

society assistance, in spite of a lack of action to substantiate its rhetorical engagements, the EU did issue a limited number of statements voicing its concerns over the crack down on CSOs under President al-Sisi. Such inconsistency from the Union to uphold its voluntarist rhetoric can participate in explaining both the lack of influence the EU exerted on its partner countries and the scepticism felt by CSOs in the Southern neighbourhood.

6.1. EU-Tunisia: A privileged partnership

High Representative Federica Mogherini emphasised the “privileged character” of EU-Tunisia partnership.¹⁰⁸ This was concretised through the establishment of a privileged partnership in 2012, a special status only Tunisia benefited from. A strong emphasis was thus put on Tunisia as a role model for the MENA. A financial assistance of €300 million was decided for 2017, whereas support to Egypt through the SSF 2014-2016 amounted to ca. €320 million for the whole period. In financial terms, Tunisia received considerably more support than Egypt in recent years. As a whole, the EU considerably stepped up its support to Tunisia since 2011: it received around €1.2 billion in grants, €800 million in Micro-Financial Assistance as well as a number of loans from the European Investment Bank, which added up to €3.5 billion over a five-year period since the uprising. Among those grants, around €890 million were provided under the ENP.¹⁰⁹ A more vocal insistence on conditionality can be noted: the conclusions of the Council from 1 June 2016, announcing a €500 million loan in cooperation with the IMF, was characterised by the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding, a formal agreement over economic and financial objectives to be monitored.¹¹⁰ It revealed the economic and financial approach, in line with the expectations of the IMF, central to EU support. As shown by Figure 7 below, EU grants overwhelmingly targeted the economic sector: slightly over €510 million, out of €800 million supplied over the 2011-2015 period, were dedicated to the improvement of the Tunisian economy, against €96 million provided for good governance and democracy.

¹⁰⁸ European External Action Service, (2016). *Remarques de la Haute Représentante Mogherini à l'issue de la rencontre avec le Président de la Tunisie, Essebsi*. [online]. Brussels: 1 December 2016.

¹⁰⁹ European External Action Service, (2016). *EU support for transition in Tunisia*. [online]. Brussels: 16 September 2016.

¹¹⁰ European Council and Council of the European Union, (2016). *Tunisia: Council agrees to €500m in loans*. [online]. Brussels: 1 June 2016.

Figure 7: Bilateral cooperation EU-Tunisia 2011-2015 (in millions €).¹¹¹

**Coopération bilatérale UE-Tunisie
2011-2015 (en millions €)**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
INSTRUMENT EUROPÉEN DE VOISINAGE						
BONNE GOUVERNANCE ET DEMOCRATIE						
Programme d'appui à la société civile		7				7
Réforme de la justice		25		15		40
Egalité homme-femme				7		7
Migrations				3		3
Appui à la réforme des médias				10		10
Appui au secteur de la culture					6	6
Réforme du secteur de la sécurité					23	23
RÉFORME ÉCONOMIQUE ET RELANCE						
Programme d'appui à la relance (appui budgétaire)	100	68	110	100	70	448
Compétitivité des services	20			6		20
Appui Accord d'Association, transition et intégration	10	15			12,8	43,8
Appui au secteur privé, formation et emploi						0
SECTEUR SOCIAL, ENVIRONNEMENT, DÉVELOPPEMENT RÉGIONAL						
Appui d'urgence aux zones défavorisées	20					20
Santé		12				12
Réhabilitation quartiers populaires		33		28		61
Initiative régionale d'appui au développement économique durable - IRADA					32	32
Cap vers la décentralisation et le développement intégré des territoires - CAP2D					43	43
Gouvernance environnementale à Gabès			5			5
ENPARD			10			10
Erasmus +			10			10
Total Instrument européen de voisinage	150	160	135	169	186,8	800,8

Unlike Egypt, cooperation with Tunisia was envisioned in more of a long-term perspective: to the two-year Single Support Framework negotiated with the Egyptian authorities, can be opposed the 2013-2017 Action Plan designed to preside over EU-Tunisia relations. A comprehensive, 50 pages long document set out the general principles and more specific objectives of this cooperation. It can be noted that the document contains a 9 pages 'Political cooperation section', and a 25 pages 'Economic and Social Cooperation' section.¹¹² Whereas the documents related to Egypt laid down a

¹¹¹ Délégation de l'Union européenne en Tunisie, (2016). *Rapport 2015: Coopération de l'Union européenne en Tunisie*. Tunis: Délégation de l'Union européenne en Tunisie, p.20.

¹¹² European Commission, (2016). *Plan d'Action UE-Tunisie 2013-2017*. Brussels.

neighbourhood. Indeed, the language used ENP documents related to Tunisia was considerably more optimistic and filled with a narrative of voluntarism. In spite of a number of terrorist attacks - shootings in the Bardo National Museum on 18 March 2015 and near Sousse on 26 June 2015, and a suicide bombing in Tunis later that year - and difficulties in the security sector resulting from the neighbouring Libyan civil war, EU rhetoric remained decidedly supportive.

The democracy promotion agenda of the new Action Plan appeared resolutely specific, listing three main areas of reform, and nine more specific issues to address, such as cooperation with the Council of Europe, consolidation of the rule of law, establishment of an independent electoral Commission and justice sector reform. Though it did not present striking differences with Tunisia's 2007 Action Plan, it did widely differ from the engagements endorsed with Egypt, vague and numerous as showed by the previous section. It thus gave the image of a *focused* sectoral cooperation, prompted by a general satisfaction over the political situation in Tunisia. Additionally, the recurrent themes in the democracy promotion sections of Progress Reports remained sensibly the same, as demonstrated by the figures presented in this section. Unlike Egypt, the Tunisian context did not prompt the EU toward a considerable revision of its democracy promotion agenda; rather it developed a language of consolidation, based on a perspective informed by the deep democracy approach. Through the negotiation of a privileged partnership with Tunisia, and the development of a narrative of voluntarism, the EU seized the opportunity to reaffirm its hopes for the neighbourhood.

Indeed, Tunisia, as the biggest recipient of EU aid and the sole example of successful democratic transition - exempt of a major setback such as the 2013 military coup in Egypt - has been praised by ENP documents and hailed as a model for the region. This answers to two dynamics: on the one hand Tunisia did achieve a relatively open and pluralist democratic system of governance, which did represent a remarkable success in the EU vicinity. This prompted the EU toward increased cooperation and deeper integration of the Tunisian economy in its internal market. This found a particular echo in the 2014 Progress report, which pointed to a "voluntarist democratic dynamic", characterised by the adoption of the Constitution on 26 January 2014, the endorsement of a new electoral law and "free, transparent and inclusive" presidential and legislative elections in 2014.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, it brought about a certain confirmation that political change in the Southern neighbourhood was indeed possible. Even though most commentators agreed that the EU played very little part in that, Tunisia had been EU's closest partner in the MENA, politically, socially and economically, which represented an opportunity for the Union to step up its support, as a demonstration of its commitment to assist political reform in its neighbourhood. The Tunisian model was the closest thing to a Western-styled liberal economy in the region, and as the EU hailed its successes, it prompted other partners to follow to same path, which allowed it to somehow stage the Tunisian Revolution as the model to follow. Strong emphasis on the economic and financial aspects of the partnership, echoed by the fact that they remained the primary recipient sectors for EU aid, as well as on the participation of Tunisian civil society to the success of the transition, became the hallmarks of a new approach in EU neighbourhood policy.

¹¹⁶ Commission Européenne et Haute Représentante de l'Union Européenne pour les Affaires Étrangères et la Politique de Sécurité, (2015). *Mise en oeuvre de la politique européenne de voisinage en Tunisie: Progrès réalisés en 2014 et actions à mettre en oeuvre*. Bruxelles: SWD(2015) 73 final, p.3.

Ki-moon. High Representative Federica Mogherini notably qualified them as the “architects of a unique transition” and a “model for crisis resolution in the region.”¹¹⁹ The statement issued after the National Dialogue Quartet received the Nobel Peace Prize saw in the inclusive Tunisian political dialogue THE answer to the turmoil faced by the region. It identified civil society participation as the most important answer to political instability, in a discursive configuration that favoured the recently upgraded ENP commitment to civil society assistance.

Nevertheless, during negotiations for Tunisia’s advanced status in 2010, the EU ignored the demands of human rights activists who wished to postpone the dialogue because of political repression. These demands were answered to by the Tunisian regime by a constitutional amendment which made it a criminal activity to “incite foreign parties not to grant loans to Tunisia, not to invest in the country, to boycott tourism or to sabotage Tunisia’s efforts to obtain advanced-partner status with the EU.”¹²⁰ The absence of a reaction from the EU to such blatant abuse of freedom of expression and democratic pluralism revealed failure and inconsistency in the implementation of conditionality in its democracy promotion agenda. Moreover, Giselle Bosse argued that ENP Action Plans had been negotiated in a fully intergovernmental setting, with a rare involvement of civil society organisations and the clear dominance of a short-term, stability perspective over concerns over calls for “long-term political reforms.”¹²¹ In spite of the declared commitment of the EU to further engage with civil society actors in the Arab world in the aftermath of the uprisings, it has failed to trigger such dialogue in the context of the EU-Tunisian negotiations on the Privileged Partnership, to which local CSOs and the National Constituent Assembly did not participate.¹²²

Hailing the role of Tunisian civil society in the transitional process was thus accompanied with striking inconsistencies, such as a “closed doors” approach to these important negotiations over the future of EU-Tunisia partnership. One reason for this may be the primacy of an economic and financial vision of cooperation, according to which transition in Tunisia should be accompanied with deeper integration of its economic in the EU internal market. Silencing civil society in that context may amount to the consolidation of this approach, in line with IMF policy. An approach that some have described as potentially problematic for Tunisian agricultural production, which would face higher competition if it were to be fully integrated with the conclusion of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Paciello evoked criticism over the dangers of “deepening economic relations with the EU in the context of the current crisis.”¹²³

¹¹⁹ European External Action Service, (2015). *Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet*. [online]. Brussels: 9 October 2015.

¹²⁰ Huber, D. (2015). *Democracy Promotion and Foreign Policy: Identity and Interests in US, EU and Non-Western Democracies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p.52.

¹²¹ Bosse, G. (2007). Values in the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy: Political Rhetoric or Reflection of a Coherent Policy?. *European Political Economy Review*, [online] 7, p.58.

¹²² Paciello, M. (2013). *The Euro Crisis and Euro-Mediterranean Relations*. Euro-Mediterranean Relations Facing New Challenges. [online] Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome University of Rome La Sapienza, p.87.

¹²³ Paciello, M. (2013). *The Euro Crisis and Euro-Mediterranean Relations*. Euro-Mediterranean Relations Facing New Challenges. [online] Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome University of Rome La Sapienza, p.86.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions. 'Neighbourhood' Policy or traditional foreign policy?

The elected methodological framework for this thesis was inscribed in the three-dimensional framework developed by Norman Fairclough in his Critical Discourse Analysis. This perspective sees, in each instance of discourse, a text, a discursive practice and a social practice. This analysis is concluded following this approach.

Thorough scrutiny of revised ENP documents shows an increasing crisis rhetoric centred around an assessment of instability at EU borders. This prompted the EU to adopt a comprehensive stabilising agenda, associated with a significant downgrading of its democracy promotion provisions. The Egyptian case seems to confirm the idea that higher threat perception hinders the exercise of democracy promotion abroad. Indeed, political turmoil in Egypt propelled the EU to adopt a more cautious rhetoric, characterised by a considerably more fragile narrative of normative duty and voluntarism, and tainted with inconsistencies in the denunciation of anti-democratic developments, particularly with regard to the 2013 military coup or the non-pluralist 2015 legislative elections.

On the other hand, official ENP documents celebrate progress accomplished by Tunisia, hailed as a role model for the MENA region. They demonstrate a more focused democracy promotion agenda, and generally step up support to the transition in Tunisia. They insist particularly on the role of civil society and inclusive dialogue in the success of the transitional process. This remains an isolated element of *inclusive* and *participatory* politics in the MENA, which may however push the EU toward more decisiveness and consistency in its civil society assistance policies. While recognising the limits of this endeavour, in the light of the current crack-down on civil society orchestrated by President al-Sisi's regime, this paper does acknowledge that a new narrative of inclusiveness, centred around greater support to CSOs in the region, is emerging in ENP democracy promotion rhetoric. Although some inconsistencies have been emphasised, EU Spokespersons, including High Representative Federica Mogherini, have been relatively vocal as to the important for local civil society to operate in a safe and inclusive environment. Moreover, a number of instruments have been created as an answer to the changes in the region, and it remains to be seen whether Civil Society Facility and European Endowment for Democracy can take up an innovative role in this context. This new narrative of civil society assistance may represent an added-value to the ENP democracy promotion agenda. Further research on this topic could complement the findings of this study.

Tunisia had been the EU's first partner in the region, notably by being the first neighbour to sign an Association Agreement in 1995. In this context, to celebrate Tunisia, its openness, democracy and pluralism also implies to celebrate its closeness with the Union and claim the fulfilment of EU hopes for its Southern Neighbourhood. As such, the formulation of ENP discourse after the Arab uprisings constitutes as much an assessment of changes in the neighbourhood as the projection by the EU of a particular perspective on these events. The depiction of the Southern Mediterranean as a particular arena for the exercise of EU democracy promotion, point to a region in need of assistance and guidance. This narrative of duty, particularly obvious with Catherine Ashton's emphasis on the EU as an indispensable mediator in the political crisis faced by Egypt in 2013, allows the EU to discursively construct itself as a normative actor. Through the discursive configurations of ENP, which present the Union as a necessary broker in the political turmoil of the region, the EU shapes and constructs power relations with the Southern Mediterranean. To step-up support to Tunisia also allows the EU to depict

itself as an essential support in the Tunisian transition, another instance of ENP discourse relaying a normative image for the EU.

The general direction taken by the partnership with Egypt and Tunisia confirms the impression formulated in Chapter Four that the ENP democracy promotion agenda is informed by a causal mechanism that establishes democratic governance as a prerequisite for socio-economic development. Nevertheless, the 2011 uprisings in Egypt in Tunisia have shown that it is precisely demands for the latter that precipitated both countries toward social upheaval and eventually political transition. This paper eventually contends that promotion of democratic governance in EU vicinity derives from a concern for *stability*, as democracy promotion is identified by the Union as the most stable and secure environment for business. Involvement with neighbouring countries is in that sense more of a strategic necessity than a normative ambition. The case of Egypt is particularly revelatory: after an initially supportive rhetoric, political instability in the country prompted the EU to refocus its ENP discourse on economic stabilisation and the return to a stable business environment. The passivity of the Union with regard to the authoritarian turn taken by Egypt quickly after the revolution revealed the discrepancies of its democracy promotion discourse. On the other hand, the relative successes met by Tunisia stimulated the signature of a Privileged Partnership in 2012, as well as the opening of negotiations around a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, the highest level of cooperation available to a neighbour with no membership perspective. Greater access to the internal market is in that respect conditional to the instauration of relatively stable democratic institutions. This suggests that the democracy promotion agenda of the Union is shaped as an instrument to guarantee a certain stability in neighbouring states, itself necessary in order to conduct comprehensive economic cooperation. In that sense it does not appear to be a normative objective in itself, but rather a necessary step toward further economic integration.

In his address to the Second Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum held on 28-29 May 2015, President of the European Economic and Social Committee Henri Malosse insisted on the importance of a “reinforcement of actions of decentralised cooperation” across the Mediterranean.¹²⁴ This statement echoes the new approach for the ENP formulated in particular in the 2015 *Review*. Under the headlines of *ownership*, *flexibility* and *differentiation*, the 2015 document marks a certain rupture with the perspective endorsed up to that point. Indeed, it puts an end to the uniformity of the neighbourhood framework. It establishes a system of partnerships with various speeds, different objectives and benchmarks, as well as a greater margin of manoeuvre for neighbouring states. Henri Malosse went on to argue that the term ‘neighbourhood policy’ should be reviewed, to which High Representative Federica Mogherini answered was a discernible nod. The term ‘neighbourhood’ gives an impression of EU-centrism: it depicts the Union as the central actor in the region, faced with the duty -or necessity- to engage with its neighbours. The shift from a narrative of normative duty and a very voluntarist tone to a narrative of risk, discussed in previous sections, echoes a fundamental change in the way the EU perceives its own role in the region. From a *willingness* to engage with potential partners, the ENP evolved toward a *necessity* to deal with neighbouring threats.

¹²⁴ European External Action Service, (2015). *Federica Mogherini at the 2nd Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum*. [video].

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