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The European Union and Morocco: security through authoritarianism?

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Forschungsbericht / research report

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Cavatorta, F., Chari, R., & Kritzinger, S. (2006). *The European Union and Morocco: security through authoritarianism?* (Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Institut für Höhere Studien, Abt. Politikwissenschaft, 110). Wien: Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-245762

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Reihe Politikwissenschaft

Political Science Series

The European Union and Morocco. Security through authoritarianism?

Francesco Cavatorta / Raj Chari / Sylvia Kritzinger

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June 2006

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Founded in 1963 by two prominent Austrians living in exile – the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern – with the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, and the City of Vienna, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) is the first institution for postgraduate education and research in economics and the social sciences in Austria. The **Political Science Series** presents research done at the Department of Political Science and aims to share "work in progress" before formal publication. It includes papers by the Department's teaching and research staff, visiting professors, graduate students, visiting fellows, and invited participants in seminars, workshops, and conferences. As usual, authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

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Abstract

Recent international events sparked renewed academic interest for the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, particularly towards the Arab world. Usually, much is made of the normative power of the Union and of its role in exporting the values of democratic governance and human rights. It follows that the policies of the Union in specific regions are judged according to the parameters of liberal idealism. This paper challenges such an assumption and argues that a structural realist interpretation of the Union's tentative foreign policy makes a decisive contribution to better understand and evaluate what the Union 'does' abroad. The paper is specifically concerned with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and how, contrary to the liberal idealist values of CFSP, it helps securitising the Mediterranean through the promotion and support of political authoritarianism in the partner countries. The case of Morocco is discussed in detail.

Zusammenfassung

Die jüngsten Entwicklungen auf der internationalen Ebene haben das akademische Interesse an der „Gemeinsamen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik" (GASP) der Europäischen Union verstärkt, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die Politik der EU gegenüber der arabischen Welt. In diesem Zusammenhang wird häufig auf die Rolle der EU als normativer Akteur hingewiesen und ihre Bedeutung bei der Verbreitung von Demokratie und Menschenrechten betont. Die Politik der EU gegenüber bestimmten Regionen wird also vor dem Hintergrund des Liberalen Idealismus betrachtet. Der vorliegende Beitrag stellt diese Sichtweise in Frage. Er argumentiert stattdessen, dass eine am strukturellen Realismus orientierte Interpretation der GASP einen wichtigen Beitrag zum besseren Verständnis der EU-Außenbeziehung leisten kann. Anhand der Euro-Mediterranen Partnerschaft, und insbesondere am Beispiel der EU-Politik gegenüber Marokko, zeigen wir, dass die EU – entgegen den liberal-idealistischen Werten der GASP – autoritäre Regime in den Partnerländern unterstützt und fördert, um auf diese Weise den Mittelmeerraum zu sichern.

Keywords

CFSP, Liberal Idealism, Structural Realism, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Morocco

Schlagwörter

GASP, Liberaler Idealismus, Struktureller Realismus, Euro-Mediterrane Partnerschaft, Marokko

General note on content

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the IHS Department of Political Science

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Introduction

The European Union's limited foreign policy activity has usually been linked to the 'soft' issues of international politics such as conducting negotiations on international trade agreements, promoting international legality and human rights and supporting processes of democratisation. In the early 1980s, for instance, the then European Communities exercised an indirect positive influence on regime transformation in countries of Southern Europe by acting as a magnet for democracy (Whitehead, 1996).

More recently however, the role of the EU has changed quite radically and the EU has become a more pro-active entity with a much more coherent and extensive range of foreign policy objectives, including a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The European Union has become a more vocal actor in international affairs as a result of the deepening of integration and the transformations of the global security environment, leading the Union to play a role in the field of international security. This role is based on a conceptualisation of security resting on the theoretical assumption that international stability and security can only be achieved through the promotion of the norms upon which the EU itself is built: legally binding treaties, multilateral institutions, democratic governance and economic interpenetration.

Since the mid-1990s, one of the most important target areas for the Union in terms of foreign and security policy has been the Mediterranean basin and the pillar of this policy has been the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This policy is being carried out under three headings: the first is a *political and security partnership* with an emphasis on the rule of law, respect for human rights and pluralism; the second and most detailed is an *economic and financial partnership*, which attaches importance to "sustainable and balanced economic and social development with a view to achieving the objective of creating an area of shared prosperity" (Barcelona Declaration, 1995); and the third is a *partnership in social, cultural and human affairs* with an emphasis on the rejection of the notion of the clash of civilisations in favour of a dialogue between cultures. At the very core of this initiative is the promotion of all that is associated with western-liberal democracy, from the traditional electoral procedures to the respect for individual rights to the implementation of a market economy. All this combined should lead to the creation of an area of stability profitable to both the EU and the countries on the southern bank of the Mediterranean, where the notion of security seems to be inevitably linked with democracy.

In light of recent international events, it is apparent that “now security in the Mediterranean has attained a higher profile” (Biscop, 2003: vii). Ten years after its launch, a number of academics and EU policy-makers have been rather disappointed with the results achieved through the Barcelona process, which, they claim, has not been very successful in achieving its core objectives (Youngs, 2003). At a recent workshop, attended by policy-makers and scholars, the “Barcelona process has been classified as a diplomatic rather than substantive success” (Echague and Youngs, 2005: 234). This is particularly the case for the very sensitive issues of democracy, human rights and rule of law, which have not made much progress in the Arab partner countries.

A number of reasons have been offered for this, ranging from the internal divisions among member states that impede the formulation of clear policies to the weakness of the institutional set-up to the ability of target countries to devise survival strategy intended to preserve the current elites in power. The starting assumption of all these explanations is that the European Union *per se* is actually genuinely interested in the promotion of democratic governance as a provider of security and that its actions in the region fail because of *realpolitik* factors that somehow ‘get in the way’. In this respect, many display an attitude of faith towards the conflation of democracy and security that the EU declares to uphold.

This research proposes instead to look at the European Union not as the wholly normative actor that many claim it to be, but as an international actor that makes rationalistic assumptions about its material interests as well as its normative ones. In this context the Barcelona process might not be the failure that many highlight, but might be the means through which the European Union and its member states have been able to maintain stability and security in the region while increasing their material benefits. Due to the extensive and, at times, contradictory list of objectives of the Barcelona process, it is possible to hypothesise that the way through which the overall policy is assessed depends on the theoretical approach one adopts for understanding the EU. If one espouses the predominant normative view that the EU has of itself and of its actions, it is true that the EMP did not achieve the lofty objectives of development, democratisation and therefore security. However, if one adopts a different theoretical perspective, the assessment of the overall policy might not be the same. While there is no reason why democracy, stability and security might not be synonymous, the specific measures put in place through EMP seem to make the pursuit of these goals inexorably irreconcilable and, at the same time, indicate that what is believed to be ‘security’ is prioritised over all other objectives.

The first part of the paper builds on Richard Youngs’s work (2004: 415-435) and attempts to challenge the current literature on the normative power of the European Union

and postulates that the EU is a rationalistic actor pursuing both normative and interest-based outcomes. This is so not only because member-states have a very important role in the institutional structure of the EU, but also because the formally independent institutions are forced to operate in a 'realist' international environment. In a recent article, Adrian Hyde-Price (2006) emphasised the importance of "the systemic determinants of EU foreign and security policy". The second part will look at how the EU operates in one particular target country: Morocco. The Kingdom of Morocco is a good case study because it has a very close relationship with and high dependence on the EU and constitutes a privileged partner on a vast range of policy issues. The perceived lack of success of the Barcelona process in this moderately authoritarian country is therefore all the more striking because it is precisely in these 'liberalised autocracies' (Brumberg, 2003) where one would expect to see considerable changes after 10 years of EU engagement.

EMP: the Normative Power of the European Union?

With the end of the Cold War, the European Union deepened its integration and a common external policy was launched to respond to new and expanded security challenges. Amidst the political and strategic uncertainties that the international system presented states with at the time, "one of the most prominent themes of Europe's transformed security situation during this period was the value attached to democracy promotion and human rights" (Rye Olsen, 2002: 132). This strategy of the promotion of democracy through economic development on the part of the European Union has been perceived as both more genuine and more successful than the one other states undertook. For instance, the United States had accorded a high priority to human rights since Carter's presidency and to democracy-promotion since Reagan's presidency (Huntington, 1991), but the very basis upon which they were built and their implementation has been very controversial (Blum, 2000). The main problem the United States seemed to face in this respect was the contradiction that often emerged between pursuing a normative policy of democracy-promotion with the requirements of a realist foreign policy characterised by a narrow concept of security, which almost always won out. This has been particularly evident in the Middle East, where a range of authoritarian regimes continues to this day to receive strong backing from Washington (Hudson, 2005). What is true for the United States is also true for other large European countries when acting unilaterally. Their democracy-promotion strategies often compete with the requirement of pursuing material interests and are therefore undermined and emptied of their significance and impact (Cavatorta, 2001).

The European Union is not perceived as suffering from the same difficulties of reconciling normative and material interests because, as an international actor, it is considered to be and perceives itself as being wholly normative. The Union, it is argued, has a very unique institutional structure, has an approach to international affairs that is firmly rooted in multilateralism and has developed an alternative approach to politics, turning away from old fashioned power politics and instead drawing upon international law, norms, rules, cooperation and integration (Tonra and Cavatorta, 2003). It is this normative power that the Union now exerts (Manners, 2002). In this context, it is only natural that the European Union is a leading actor when it comes to promoting a specific understanding of security, which is unique because it relies solely on notions of economic development and democratisation rather than on necessary alliances with unsavoury authoritarian regimes for the pursuit of more immediate gains. Its own history is about the expansion of the area of democracy through democratic and legitimate international means and this, in theory, sets it apart from all other international actors. According to such a view, it was inevitable that the Union would attempt to export its own model of integration to achieve, through economic development, democratic change in other regions of the globe. The outcome of such a strategy would also be the self-interested achievement of perpetual 'Kantian' security. Thus, when the EU 'does' security, it relies on a 'cooperative approach' with the target countries in the region it operates in.

The Mediterranean basin, in turmoil since the mid 1980s, represented by the mid-1990s a priority area where to act and, through the Barcelona process, the European Union attempted to export its own model without imposing it. As Hollis points out "the focus is on dialogue the EU undertakes to assist with indigenously-generated reform programmes" (2005: 321). According to Biscop "the EMP is an attempt to do away with the idea of the Mediterranean as a frontier and to make it once again a crossroads of ideas" (2003: viii).

Ten years after its launch, the results of EMP have largely been deemed unsatisfactory when it comes to the developmental, democratic and security achievements of the partner countries and this is what leads a number of authors to present the whole process as being a failure. What has occupied both policy-makers and scholars concerned with the state of EMP have been the reasons for this failure. A number of explanations have been suggested. The first type of explanations focuses on the survival strategies of the partner countries, which have largely been able to defuse democratic pressures, while hijacking the benefits of economic reforms. According to Hollis, some Europeans contend that "Arab elites have proved adaptive at maintaining their relatively privileged positions […] and governments have resisted European efforts to support civil society, democracy and human rights movements" (2005: 320). Another explanation concentrates on the inherent

weakness of EU strategies due to the overbearing role of member states in foreign policy matters. Thus, what undermines EMP is the same type of diverging interests that member states pursued during the recent Iraq war (Chari and Cavatorta, 2003) and leads to the pursuit of material interests through the EU structures (Morisse-Schlibach, 1999), undermining its normative spirit. This is further complicated by the divergent interests and preferences that different member states have. This makes EMP structurally weak and quite 'schizophrenic'. A third explanation concentrates on the failure of the Middle East Peace process, whose repercussions in the area impede lasting security arrangements and domestic change in Arab countries (Biscop, 2003). Finally, there are constitutional explanations for the ineffectiveness of the EU in this policy area: the structure of the decision-making process is too complex and the institutional participants too diverse to have a coordinated policy (Philippart, 2003). If we add that the interests of member states also have to be incorporated, the result is a rather incoherent strategy with little chance of being successfully implemented.

These explanations are quite distinct, but have a common premise; they all assume that the Union *per se* has a genuine interest in promoting economic development and democracy in order to achieve security at its borders.

It is at this theoretical juncture that analysts emphasise that the EMP's normative objectives are undermined by the realist imperatives of the member states. This interpretation derives from the fact that many observers seem unable to look at the EU itself through traditional realist concepts of international relations and are satisfied with the definition of the EU as a normative power.

From this, it follows that the rather substantial inconsistencies that exist between the declared end goal of the EU in the Mediterranean (the creation of an area of shared prosperity and democracy) and the policies used to achieve that objective are due to the fact that while the EU is attempting to do the 'right thing' member states and partners go 'behind the back' of the EU and act according to a *realpolitik* logic.

What is left un-explored is the fact that the original assumption may be partially wrong. The EU may well be a normative actor, but rationalistic/realist features can be attributed to the EU as well because they are not the exclusive domain of nation-states. In his recent work on the EU external policies Youngs argues that "greater emphasis and precision are needed to understand the factors that suggest strategic calculation within the broader parameters of value-informed policies" (2004: 421). In his analysis Youngs suggested that three criteria be used to evaluate the degree of realism behind the EU

external policies: strategies employed, degree of instrumental reasoning behind the use of norms and the nature of the policy-making process. Youngs (2004: 421) utilises these criteria to evaluate the human rights policies put in place by the Commission and convincingly demonstrates that the EU is not only about norms, but also about material interests, which are fostered and justified through norms.

Thus, it is possible to hypothesise that the strategies put in place through the Euro-Mediterranean partnership are achieving the results they are meant to achieve if we think of the EU as a traditional international actor desiring regional stability with a traditional concept of security. In this context, the promotion of real economic and democratic changes in the region is perceived as potentially destabilising and threatening for the EU, particularly in the short term. Political and security issues were always the priority for the EU, which was and still is fundamentally unprepared to deal with the consequences of following up on its declarations. Accordingly, the emphasis on the causal mechanism development / democracy / security simply represents an intentional rhetorical device designed to convey a different message from the one conveyed by other actors, but it is not a policy framework the EU truly intends to act upon. Vasconcelos (2005) argues that “it was implicitly understood that the key security problem was political Islam” and this is what is at the core of EU thinking. The conceptualisation of the adversarial nature of the opposition in the Arab members of the Partnership is a fundamental stumbling block in the relationship, which undermines the pro-democracy initiatives of the EU. The low priority that democratic change has in the EU agenda is reflected in the type of policies that are pursued, privileging dialogue and co-operation with the partner regimes, which are under pressure from their own domestic constituencies for being ‘illegitimate’ representatives of their countries’ interests. To a certain extent, the EU can still claim to be a norm-exporting actor while, at the same time, obtaining material benefits and strengthening its security, but the strains are becoming obvious.

The dissatisfaction that exists with EMP among scholars and external observers is due to the fact that through their analyses they correctly point to major inconsistencies within the policy itself. However, such dissatisfaction does not lead to the theoretical questioning of the EU as a normative power and the blame for the shortcomings rests primarily with the member-states. This neglects the fact that EU policy-making areas are not the exclusive hunting ground of members. There is in fact a very complex game, which takes place among the different institutional actors within the EU and the Commission can contribute to shaping it. Some scholars on EU policy-making argue that mostly EU institutions shape and constrain intergovernmental policy-making (Pierson, 1996), while others de-emphasise the importance of EU institutions, and rather argue that the EU represents a system of multi-level governance, in which member governments amongst many sub-national and supranational

actors act in a complex and unique system of governance (Marks *et al.*, 1996). This latter approach would have the Commission occupy a significant position in this multi-level governance, because it has both the expertise and the knowledge to influence the stances of some of the member states with respect to EMP. In addition, it can be hypothesised that the EU bureaucracy dealing with questions of foreign and security policy is very much influenced by the dominant realist conceptualisations of international relations and acts accordingly.

If we then interpret EMP and its launch as the product of both normative and realist thinking, what many believe to be a failed policy in need of substantial revisions and coherence may actually end up looking like a rather cunning and successful plan to achieve stability and security in a volatile region. Frédéric Volpi recently highlighted some of these issues and stated that within a realist framework, "the assessment of the EU would be that stable regimes running their national economy efficiently in the Middle East and North Africa provide the best means of obtaining a well-policed zone of regional security and prosperity" (2004: 151). While a realist interpretation of EMP is certainly restricted and does not capture the complexities of the policy (Attinà, 2003), it should be emphasised that a rationalistic perspective of what the EU does in the Mediterranean through the Barcelona process allows analysts to avoid the trap of reconciling the dichotomy between stated objectives and policies implemented to achieve them. This is becoming particularly evident after the changes in global security perceptions after the September 11th attacks in the US, but more specifically for the EU, in the launch of the European Security Strategy (ESS, 2003) and the European Neighbourhood' policy. The manner with which the ESS identifies and proposes to deal with the key threats to its security makes the Arab partners in EMP the natural and only interlocutors, defeating therefore the stated assumption that the only viable type of security can be achieved through democratising the periphery of Europe. There are for instance no specific references to 'bad governance' regarding any of the partners, criticism being reserved for countries such as Somalia and Liberia. Similarly, the European Neighbourhood Policy is unmistakably framed in terms of interests. There is for instance "close cooperation with the neighbours in order to enable the EU to provide security and welfare to its citizens as well as the effective control of borders" (Del Sarto and Schumacher, 2005: 7).

Thus, once the normative aspect is marginalised, a clearer assessment of the impact on security of the policies pursued through EMP can emerge. The following section will analyse EU policies in Morocco in this specific context. If the assumption that the EU is partially interest-driven is correct, there should be evidence that what the EU 'does' in the partner country strengthens rather than weakens the regime. Effective democracy-promotion is conventionally based on support for the opposition in its demands for political reforms and

on the denial of legitimacy to the current authoritarian ruler. This does not entail a radical confrontational approach, which may be detrimental to change, but does entail that a certain 'distance' be maintained *vis-a-vis* the ruling elites. If our assumption is correct, the expectation is that the European Union considers the current ruler of Morocco as the true partner in the process of democratisation and that the aid given to Morocco is passed through official channels, thereby strengthening the authoritarian regime.

To conclude, there should be evidence of the following: a) EU policy-makers have a very clear understanding of what constitutes a security threat, i.e. political Islam; b) accordingly, the privileged interlocutors of the EU become the authoritarian government and 'secular' opposition parties that have very little independent following; c) in order to strengthen the incumbents, EU funding and aid is given mostly through 'official' governmental channels and; d) hard security concerns take precedence over other forms of interaction.

If such evidence is found as regards EU policy towards Morocco, it could be argued that the EU, far from being the victim of member states, is independently pursuing a policy that is framed through traditional conceptualisations of security, relying, when needed, on authoritarian states to achieve its goals. This would also explain the misplaced focus on economic liberalisation as a launching pad for democratic reforms, in the knowledge that such a causal mechanism is at best tenuous, if not counterproductive (Cameron and Wise, 2004). Therefore EU policies seem to contribute to the survival of the regimes by providing them with the resources necessary to fend off challenges from the opposition. At the same time, the EU obtains its most preferred outcome and can still claim that it is promoting democracy. It is no wonder that "for Arab civil society, this has often been perceived as a cynical pact between Europe and the Arab regimes to consolidate the political status quo" (Danreuther, 2005).

The EU and Morocco: security through stable authoritarianism

Ten years of engagement with the Arab partners have not altered the security dilemma central to the understanding of the Partnership itself and the contradictions that characterise the policy. At the heart of the Partnership there always was 'political Islam' in all its manifestations. Even before EMP was launched, it was argued that "threats to European security [would] arise not from malevolent state power but rather from a complete or partial breakdown of state authority on the other side of the Mediterranean" (Mortimer, 1994: 109).

With this warning in mind, the European institutions came to see the advances made by Islamist movements as destabilising and potentially very dangerous for the entire Mediterranean basin, as their coming to power would have led, according to some scenarios, to the quest for nuclear weapons, the creation of safe havens for terrorists, to mass migration and the undermining of the Middle East Peace Process. These fears have been increased in more recent times by a new brand of transnational terrorism and political violence produced by radical Islamist groups from the Maghreb, which is believed to threaten the domestic stability of the Arab partners.

With this assumption in mind, the inevitable consequence for any European initiative in the area to obtain security ultimately rested in an 'unsavoury' alliance with autocratic and 'illegitimate' rulers in partner countries, limiting the scope for achieving security through democracy. Given that "the possibility of a direct attack on the Union as a whole or on anyone of its member states [could] be practically ruled out" (Algieri in Biscop, 1996), the other security objectives such as avoiding domestic instability on the southern bank, controlling mass migration, ensuring non-proliferation and conducting an effective 'war on terrorism' could be achieved only through strictly cooperating with authoritarian regimes. This overarching policy framework impacted negatively on the declared strategy of achieving security through economic development and democracy. If the European Union were truly attempting to promote a concept of security based on economic development and democratisation, we should see a form of economic cooperation that does not benefit the current governing elites, we should see the use of conditionality when a partner country 'misbehaves', we should see a positive engagement with opposition parties and we should see a freeze on cooperative military and police agreements that only strengthen illegitimate security services.

However, this does not seem to be the case; quite the contrary. The declarations and active policies regarding the promotion of economic and political reforms have, since the beginning of the Partnership, taken place within a very well defined security framework, whereby real democratic legitimacy, which should in theory be at the heart of peaceful relations among states according to the values of the European Union, would not be bestowed upon Islamist movement of any sort. As Holden recently stated, "the latent and actual political crises, economic stagnation and rapid population growth rendered it necessary for the EU to take a leadership role in the region if it wanted to avoid instability (and migration) spreading northwards" (2005: 22). Thus, from the beginning, very real security concerns were at the roots of the policy, leading to a rather clear "hierarchy of objectives" (Schmid, 2004). With this in mind, the EMP can be better understood as a policy attempting to achieve security objectives through supporting authoritarianism. In this respect,

the achievement of security goals is the imperative and this is obtained through a number of specific policies that strengthen the incumbents in the Arab partners, as they are the privileged interlocutors charged with delivering on the security matters of importance to the Union. In turn, such incumbents capitalise on their gate-keeping position to extract resources from the EU.

What does security mean for the European Union? With "no country adjoining the EU territory […] regarded as a military threat today" (Aliboni, 2005: 1), the Union has focused its attention on what can be considered soft security issues such as terrorism, migration, illegal trafficking or organised crime. The necessity to deal with these issues and the fact that they are bound up with the larger problem of political Islam make the Partnership much more security oriented than previously believed. If we take into account that the Union has also "hegemonic tendencies" (Attinà, 2003) when it comes to the pursuit of material economic benefits, the Partnership seems to be much more a realist enterprise than a genuine attempt to create an area of peace, security and stability.

The case of Morocco highlights all the apparent shortcomings of the partnership, but, at the same time, also indicates, if a different framework of understanding is adopted, how successful EMP has been in achieving short-term security through authoritarianism. A useful starting point regarding the relationship between Morocco and the European Union is a short analysis of the nature of the Moroccan regime, which, after ten years of engagement with the EU, is still quite strongly authoritarian, poor and more 'Islamicised' than ever before. In terms of democratic governance, the holding of elections does not *per se* mean that such elections actually matter when it comes to effective policy-making. In a recent interview, Moroccan constitutionalist Omar Bendorou confirmed that in light of the present constitution "all power is really in the hands of the King" (*Le Journal Hebdomadaire* 2005: 28). In addition, the elections, as mentioned earlier, exclude one of the leading opposition movements, while the legal Islamist formation (the PJD) exercises self-restraint and self-censorship on a number of issues and policies. In terms of human rights, Morocco has a very poor record. In a recent report Amnesty International discerned that "the sharp rise in reported cases of torture or ill-treatment in the context of 'counter-terrorism'" (2004). Non-governmental organisations have not been the only ones to publish such damning reports and one of Morocco's closest allies, the United States, felt it necessary to criticise Morocco's record on human rights quite severely (*Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, March 2005: 8). For its part, the European Union has generally preferred to highlight 'positive developments' in the political situation of the country emphasising new legislation aimed at improving individual liberties. According to the strategy document published in December 2001 the EU believed that "significant progress in terms of individual freedoms and fundamental rights" had been made. While this might have been

true following the changes introduced by the late king Hassan II in the course of his last few years in power (Willis, 1999), the report does not take into account the very strong deterioration of the situation since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 and, even more significantly, after the Casablanca bombings of May 2003. To conclude, it is now quite evident that Morocco does not satisfy the criteria of good governance and respect for fundamental human rights and it seems puzzling to the believers in normative Europe as to why the Union does not take more forceful action on these matters. The EU has been for instance notably silent on the issue of thousands of Moroccan Islamists imprisoned, tortured and sent to jail after being convicted in show-trials reminiscent of the ones held in the 1970s by Hassan II.

In fact it can be demonstrated that the EU does not seem to care very much about the absence of democracy and abuses of human rights, as the overarching security framework justifies current policy choices. Given that the EU is the stronger actor in the relationship, it would be expected that its normative values were more forcefully pursued. What we see instead is the marginalisation of issues of democracy and human rights in favour of other policy areas that satisfy the EU's *realpolitik* concerns (Amin and El Kenz, 2005).

This policy of security through authoritarianism rests, in the case of Morocco, on strengthening the regime through two interconnected policy pillars: economic aid/reforms and military/police arrangements.

Economic reforms: strengthening the regime's grip

Despite the clear intention for the three Barcelona baskets to be integrated, each has followed its own independent development (Philippart, 2003), with the economic aspect of the relationship being privileged. The thinking behind the integration of southern Mediterranean economies in the European Union's economic sphere seemed to be that free trade would help these countries out of the poverty trap, reducing therefore the appeal of the Islamist message. At the same time, liberal reforms would be introduced with the help and advice of the European Union, particularly in regard to the legal system of protection and enhancement of human rights. In turn, these reforms would also undermine the Islamist discourse about the absence of democracy and lack of legitimacy of the incumbents. Such thinking, however, was fundamentally flawed because the EU, through its misgivings about fundamental regime change, has only one interlocutor: the incumbent regime. Thus, economic liberalisation has been pursued with some coherence because it strengthens the

current ruling elites around the King, enabling them to survive their domestic challenges. "Concrete daily management of the Partnership is very much focused on the advancement of the Euro-Mediterranean Free trade Area (EMFTA) project, which continues to proceed at quite a steady pace" (Schmid, 2004: 396), to the detriment of the other normative goals. We have today quite ample evidence to demonstrate that economic liberalisation has been successfully hijacked by the ruling elites (Dillman, 2001) and that far from triggering democratic openness, it has led to the creation, at best, of semi-democracies (Brumberg, 2003) where opposition Islamists thrive on exposing the growing inequalities that the new economic order imposed by Europe has generated (Sheikh Yassine, 1999). In turn, this has a profound impact on the political system where both incumbents and European officials cannot easily tolerate such views because they would require a change that they are not yet prepared to make.

This is demonstrated, for instance, by the amount of aid that the EU provides to the authoritarian Moroccan government without activating the clauses that regard human rights and democratic governance. Thus, "in the years 2000-2001, the following programmes were approved: financial sector adjustment (52 million EUR); health sector reform (50 million EUR); justice reform (28 million EUR); rural development in Khenifra (9 million EUR); solid waste management in Essaouira (2 million EUR); water sector adjustment (120 million EUR). Morocco has been the leading recipient among the Mediterranean partners in terms of total funds received from the MEDA programme"[1]. Overall, "under the MEDA programme Morocco has so far received a total of € 1,180.5 million in commitment appropriations: € 656 million under MEDA I (1995 - 1999) and € 524.5 million under MEDA II (2000 – 2003)"[2]. In addition, the European Investment Bank loaned Morocco, "during the period 1995 – 2002, € 1,220 million, intended among others for construction and upgrading of highways and rural roads, improvements to sewerage and water management systems, rehabilitation of the railway network and the development of the banking sector"[3]. Financial aid and loans have been channelled through corrupt[4] and authoritarian government authorities.

Furthermore, the Association Agreement has never been suspended in spite of the clear lack of commitment by the Moroccan authorities to the universal values of democracy and human rights. Even the threat of suspension might have had positive effects on

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[1] See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/morocco/intro/index.htm, accessed on March 29th, 2005.
[2] See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/med/bilateral/morocco_en.htm, accessed on March 27th 2005.
[3] See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/med/bilateral/morocco_en.htm, accessed on March 27th 2005.

Morocco's domestic behaviour, but this never took place. This is particularly disconcerting fact given that the EU itself emphasises the importance of human rights and democracy.

This evidence points to the fact that the European Union does not really seem to be interested in the amount and gravity of human rights abuses in Morocco, nor does it seem to be interested in promoting genuine democratic reforms by activating its 'diplomatic' and economic arsenal to obtain concessions in these areas.

Securitising the relationship

The international events of the last few years have only contributed to the further prominence of security in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Despite recent calls for engaging with sectors the Islamist opposition (Aliboni, 2004), there is still considerable reluctance to choose that path and the securitisation of many issues of concern for both the EU and the Arab partners has increased with the launch of the European Security Strategy and the Neighbourhood Policy. While the lack of democracy and the persistence of poverty are correctly considered to be central to the security challenges facing the Union (ESS, 2003) such as increased migration (with the potential negative repercussion of social unrest) and transnational terrorism, the policies adopted to counter such threats still fall victim of the necessity to have the incumbents as the only possible interlocutors. In this respect the short-term interests are privileged over the long-terms ones of true democratisation, and the increased attention paid to building links with security and police services on the Arab side of the Mediterranean are a testimony to the unwillingness of the EU to stray from the original path followed since 1995.

If the EU were truly a normative actor, we would expect it to be most reluctant to co-ordinate security policies with discredited Moroccan institutional entities, particularly in the realm of police arrangements and military accords. The reality is however quite different. In terms of territorial disputes, Morocco and the Union have been able to settle their differences, particularly in recent times when the 'war on terror', for both actors, has been the real priority. The EU does not seem to take an interest in the issue of Western Sahara, with Spain even recognising products from that region as being, controversially, Moroccan. While it may seems that "relations between Spain and Morocco are negatively influenced by the claims of the former on the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla" (Biscop, 2003: 2) and by disputes

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[4] The issue of widespread corruption is recognised by EU officials as well in their reports. See for instance the Report 'Euro-Med Partnership: Morocco. Strategy Document 2002-2006', December 2001.

over Perejil, these minor disagreements have been overshadowed by the cooperation taking place since the attacks of Casablanca and Madrid. In addition, the EU has financially supported the Kingdom for 'dealing' with illegal immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa on its behalf. Morocco ranks quite highly among the countries receiving military hardware from EU member-states despite the existence of a European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, which would see governments issuing licenses to export weaponry only to countries with solid democratic credentials. This is not really the case of Morocco, which in 2003 has received weapons in 13 different categories of armament under 124 export licenses. The European countries profiting most from such sales have been, unsurprisingly, France, Germany, Italy and Portugal. Morocco still spend over 4 % of its GDP on weapons. It is difficult to reconcile the objective of economic development and democracy with the sale of weapons to armed forces known for their occupation of Western Sahara for a sum of money that would be probably better invested in social projects. At closer inspection, such weaponry is not only instrumental in the upgrading of the Moroccan armed forces in the Western Sahara, but also in carrying out 'duties' whose outcome is crucial to the soft security issues the EU is interested in, such as migration. Thus, material is sold to better patrol the coast and to fortify the Spanish enclaves to stop 'illegal aliens' from reaching the territory of Europe.

In addition, much is made of the new special relationships that the European Union is building with the Arab states to counter terrorism. In a recent speech Mr. Gijs De Vries [2004], the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, argued quite strongly in favour of closer links with the Arab partners on the southern bank of the Mediterranean, particularly through cooperation with intelligence services, even though such security services are quite notorious for their brutal practices.

The European Union: the new realist on the block?

At this point it is interesting to examine the reasons for this behaviour, paying particular attention to the fact that if the EU is looked through 'realist' and rationalistic lenses, the explanation seems rather straightforward.

One popular explanation for the lack of more forceful activism in the realm of democracy promotion and defence of human rights is that it takes time for the 'normative values' of the Union to be transmitted to the partner country. The argument is that the EU, as a normative actor, prefers not to be forceful in promoting its values because this might lead to a backlash in the partner country. Thus, the EU prefers to keep the partner 'engaged' over

a long period of time in order for the 'osmosis' of norms to take place. This explanation, however, is quite weak for two reasons. First of all, the EU has been directly and substantially engaged with Morocco for ten years and during this time very little has been achieved in terms of positive change in the partner country. If anything, the human rights situation seems to have worsened compared to the liberalising trends of the late 1990s and elections have become less 'democratic' in 2002 than in 1997, a year after the Association Agreement had been signed. Secondly, the absence of forceful action during such an extended period of time may signal to the partner country that human rights and democracy concerns are not actually that important.

A second explanation focuses on the weak institutional structure upon which the Euro-Med partnership rests, with a particular focus on the divisions among member states on the most appropriate strategies to follow. While such institutional difficulties may explain failures in other policy areas, this argument is not particularly convincing when it comes to EU-Morocco relations. This is specifically the case because the EU has substantial autonomy and independence in external trade relations and could use this leverage to obtain concessions from Morocco on human rights matters. This is, however, not done, which indicates the unwillingness of the EU to act rather than the impossibility to take action due to the disputes among member states.

A third explanation that is offered by EU officials is that human rights abuses and lack of open democratic governance are much less of a problem in Morocco than in countries such as China and North Korea and therefore the country should be treated differently. This sentiment transpires quite clearly from the examination of official EU documents, which are always quite flattering of Morocco's efforts to improve its situation despite clear evidence pointing in the opposite direction.[5] This explanation seems to suggest that the EU refrains from 'lecturing Morocco' about democracy and human rights because the King is 'not so bad after all' ('relative nice dictator'), and in addition, he is making an effort to bring about real change. However, this explanation fails to be satisfactory on two grounds. First of all, the very core of normative values is that abuses should all be treated and dealt with in the same way. In philosophical terms, an abuse of human rights is an abuse of human rights and the reaction to it should be the same irrespective of the scale of such abuses. When it comes to democracy, Schlumberger (2000: 104-132) convincingly argues that ranking countries according to degrees of democracy weakens the very notion of democracy because at the end of the day you either are or are not a democracy. Secondly,

[5] Authors' interview with EU senior official, Dublin, March 2005.

the EU operates according to a very different logic in similar contexts. Thus, the EU actually lectures countries about human rights abuses and specifically sets out strict criteria for admission into the EU as the cases of Turkey and Croatia have recently shown. The argument that Morocco is not in the same category because it is not a prospective member does not hold much sway given that the EU also lectures countries as different as Cuba and the Ukraine.

Traditional realist explanations seem to be more convincing in explaining the EU's attitudes and policies towards Morocco than the ones examined in the previous paragraphs. In fact a combination of an 'economic' with a 'geo-strategic' explanation provide a much better framework for understanding the EU's policy-making activities *vis-a-vis* Morocco. The argument underpinning the economic explanation is that the EU has material reasons to marginalise issues of democracy and human rights. The main thrust of the Euro-Med Partnership, in spite of its rhetorical commitment to the universal values of the UN Charter, is the economic integration of the countries on the southern bank of the Mediterranean into the European economic sphere of influence. This is of particular value to the EU because of the energy resources and the workforce the region has. Furthermore the area can be a very significant market for European consumer goods. The Euro-Med sets the goal of 2010 for full liberalisation of trade (with the exclusion of agriculture) with the partner countries. Since the launch of the Euro-Med partnership, the EU has increased trade, investment and exports to Morocco. All the relevant figures have been steadily rising and they are all in favour of the EU.

Upsetting such favourable trade benefits does not feature in the EU's agenda. Nevertheless, it acts as a rational actor who pays attention to material benefits and not only to normative values. EU officials involved more directly with democracy-promotion strategies also confirm this. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that the EU emphasises the role of an independent and active civil society to bring about democracy in the region and thus co-finances projects aimed at increasing the level of civil society activism, particularly among the younger generations. This is done through programmes like Euro-Med Youth. In spite of the large number of projects carried out during the last decade (over 800 projects were financed to bring together youths from the two sides of the Mediterranean), the programme only touched 20,000 people (all partner countries included). This indicates that this is a rather low-level priority compared to the much more prominent economic links.[6]

[6] Authors' interview with Commission official, Brussels, March 2005.

The 'economic' interests alone, however, do not tell the whole story and there is the need to include an explanation based on the very 'realist' belief that stability is more important than democracy when it comes to the Mediterranean. In terms of political reforms in Morocco, the best outcome for the European Union would be a process of democratisation that brings to power a popularly elected leadership that is both secular and keen on continuing the same type of political and economic relationships that the current government subscribes to. This would entail the emergence of a very strong, liberal opposition to the King that is able to both marginalise the King politically (forcing him to cede substantial powers) and to outmanoeuvre the very popular Islamic movements, whose democratic credentials are not proven. This outcome is quite unlikely in the current situation. The largest opposition party at the moment in an emasculated parliament is the Islamic Party of Development and Justice. In addition to that, the most popular civil society movement in Morocco is an even more radical Islamic formation led by Sheikh Yassine. The popularity of the secular opposition has been constantly diminishing, as it is perceived by large sectors of the public as being thoroughly compromised. Thus, in these conditions, the EU cannot really attain the outcome it actually favours and it settles for the second best outcome, which is a rather stable and friendly authoritarian regime. It is far better to help Mohammed VI to stay in power than forcing elections that might throw up a leadership that questions many of the policies that the EU seems to be satisfied with when it comes to Morocco. The risk of an Islamist party coming to power through democratic means is not worth taking if it sacrifices the perceived stability of the region.[7] There is substantial evidence to demonstrate that an Islamist party in government may want to adopt policies that may be perceived as being antagonistic to the interests of the EU.

If stability is the name of the game, this proves that the EU is acting rationally rather than normatively, otherwise democracy would be promoted irrespective of the consequences for the EU's interests in the country.

Conclusion

As suggested by Leonard, it is probably true to assert that the European Union is very much a normative entity and that it is, above all, a community of values. But as this article tried to show such values represent only the outer framework of policies that have a very substantial degree of realism and rationalism, where the normative values clash with

[7] Authors' interview with leading member of the European Parliament, Brussels, June 2001.

the imperatives of security, interests and short-terms gains. Thus, a realist conception of European foreign policy and of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership specifically has to be introduced in order to capture the entire essence of EU policy-making with respect to countries and regions that have very little prospects of becoming full members. Only a combination of both theoretical considerations draws a rather complete picture.

Thus, Partnership may be seen as a failure only if the theoretical vantage point is one that understands the EU and its actions as primarily informed by values. If we instead accept that the European Union carries within its internal structure the contradictions derived from the interaction between the realist and the ideational, we can have a much more positive judgement of the results achieved through the Partnership and a much more coherent understanding of the policies implemented.

Security and stability have been achieved if we take into account that no conflicts have occurred in the region, that non-proliferation has been a feature of the relationship despite the deterioration of the Middle East Peace Process and that the domestic stability of the Arab partners has continued. The case of Morocco seems to indicate that stability and security (irrespective of how softly interpreted) are ‘core norms’ for the European Union and the marginalisation of other core norms such as democracy and human rights is a political sacrifice worth paying if the benefits outweigh the costs. This is quite traditional realist thinking and policy-making and seems to confirm the validity of the critique of “normative” Europe that Hyde-Price (2006) recently postulated. In addition, it should be emphasised that such a realist interpretation is not due only to the overbearing influence of member states within EU policy-making in the partnership. While it is beyond doubt that some member states aim at utilising external EU policies to promote and defend their narrow national interests, it should also be highlighted that the Commission and other EU institutions enjoy a wide degree of latitude in making certain decisions due to its expertise, presence on the territory and to the divisions that exist among member states. While the Commission is far from being the rational and unitary actor that realists see as central in the international system, it has a rather important role to play as the process of integration deepens and skills and competencies are transferred to the supranational level.

If and when the European Union truly becomes a single actor in world politics, it will very likely subscribe to the largely ‘realist’ tendencies that permeate and characterise the international system. At any rate, the case of the EMP and Morocco suggests that it behaves just as ‘ruthlessly’ as nation-states do.

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Authors: Francesco Cavatorta / Raj Chari / Sylvia Kritzinger

Title: The European Union and Morocco. Security through authoritarianism?

Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Political Science Series 110

Editor: Oliver Treib
Associate Editor: Inge Korneck

ISSN: 1605-8003
© 2006 by the Department of Political Science, Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS),
Stumpergasse 56, A-1060 Vienna • ☎ +43 1 59991-0 • Fax +43 1 59991-555 • http://www.ihs.ac.at

ISSN: 1605-8003