

**Ten years of the Barcelona Process:
A Model for Supporting Arab Reform?**

Richard Youngs

January 2005

Richard Youngs is Co-ordinator of the Democratisation and Rule of Law programme at FRIDE, and lecturer at the University of Warwick in the UK. His recent publications include: 'International Democracy and the West: The Role of Governments, NGOs and Multinationals' (Oxford University Press, 2004) and 'Europe's Uncertain Pursuit of Middle East Reform', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace working paper, June 2004.

WORKING PAPER

.....

© Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) 2004.

Felipe IV, 9 1º Dcha. 28014 Madrid - SPAIN
Tel: +34 915 22 25 12 – Fax: +34 915 22 73 01
E-mail: fride@fride.org

The *Policy Papers* are available in print, in both Spanish and English.
All FRIDE publications are available on the FRIDE website: www.fride.org

The views expressed by the author of this document do not necessarily reflect the opinion of FRIDE.

Summary

Ten years on from its creation, the Barcelona process has developed a distinctive but so far ineffectual approach to fostering political change in the authoritarian regimes of the southern Mediterranean. The EU has eschewed direct and critical political engagement to further Arab democratisation, in favour of support for the indirect dynamics conditioning potential reform. Since the attacks of 9/11 this indirect approach has if anything become more marked.

The European Neighbourhood Policy introduces the prospect of a more targeted approach to Arab political reform, but the design of those very aspects that give it this potential so far remain unduly vague. Moreover, some aspects of recent EU approaches towards security sit more uneasily with the declared aim of supporting political liberalisation in the Arab world.

The paper argues that the proclaimed strengths of the Barcelona process's approach have yet to be tangibly demonstrated. With preparations for the partnership's tenth anniversary summit now underway, a more critical reassessment is needed of how far Barcelona's widely presumed successes weather scrutiny. Trends in EU policy point towards quantitative improvements to the Barcelona process; more qualitative change is also warranted if the partnership is to prove relevant to supporting political reform in the Arab world.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Barcelona Model: Democracy by Osmosis	2
Towards a New Neighbourhood	4
Security Imperatives: Democracy Eclipsed?	8
When Gravity Fails: Reassessing Barcelona as a Model for Arab Reform	9

Introduction

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a link between terrorism and Middle Eastern authoritarianism has been frequently espoused. Much official and unofficial debate, particularly that emanating from the US, often appears to posit such a potential link as something of a new discovery. Amidst the current wave of Arab reform initiatives, it is instructive to recall that the Barcelona process – which groups the European Union with twelve southern Mediterranean countries – established a formal commitment to encourage political liberalisation in the Maghreb and Mashreq as far back as 1995.

The connection between internal political conditions and regional instability was eloquently outlined in the 1995 Barcelona declaration. As the question of Western support – or pressure – for Arab reform increasingly dominates the international agenda, a glance at the Barcelona declaration encourages the conclusion that much recent debate has been guilty of reinventing this conceptual wheel.

But, what has the Barcelona process – or Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP) – actually achieved in terms of providing impetus to democratic potential in Arab countries? With the EMP's tenth anniversary in November 2005 due to be marked by a high profile meeting designed to reinvigorate the partnership, it is opportune critically to assess how its democracy promotion efforts can be made more effective.

This paper assesses whether, as other initiatives now take shape, the Barcelona process is indeed in a good position to prosper as a model for fostering Arab reform. The broader context has dramatically changed since 1995. When the EMP was introduced debate on Arab reform was scarcely audible; now the Barcelona process is one framework among many purporting to encourage political modernisation in Arab states. Against this evolving background, it is necessary to ask what is the distinctive contribution that Barcelona can make? Is it in danger of losing its lead role in the southern Mediterranean? Is political reform one of the areas where Barcelona has comparative advantage? Or is the adoption of the Arab reform goal by other initiatives and forums likely to push the EMP into focusing on less political dimensions, as a means to retain its distinctive identity? In the wake of 9/11, is there more or less agreement among EU member states on these questions?

In addressing these questions, the paper questions how far the Barcelona process has met its own declared aim of strengthening the underlying foundations of political change. It is argued that several strands of policy developed in response to 9/11 render the 'Barcelona philosophy' on democratisation more tenuous. Despite significant new European initiatives, in particular under the rubric of the incipient Neighbourhood Policy, the EU's basic model of democracy promotion in the southern Mediterranean requires as much qualitative as quantitative improvement. The paper contends that, in the lead up to Barcelona's tenth anniversary summit, some of the partnership's fundamentals warrant re-examination.

The Barcelona Model: Democracy by Osmosis

If recent US-inspired Arab reform initiatives have been criticised for isolating political reform from broader regional, social and economic challenges, the whole logic of the Barcelona Process was predicated upon situating all areas of change – political, social, cultural, economic, strategic – within a single holistic framework. The aim of encouraging political reform was linked to a prospective Euro-Mediterranean free trade area; to geo-political efforts aimed at embedding a trans-Mediterranean ‘zone of peace and security’; and to an all-encompassing package of (MEDA) financial assistance.

Some analysts have equally criticised post-9/11 US policy for assuming that democratic reform could have a direct, instrumental utility in the ‘war on terrorism’.¹ And yet the Barcelona philosophy was couched in terms of gradual political modernisation contributing to the broadly-defined conditions that would help mitigate a range of ‘soft security’ challenges: rising migratory flows into Europe from North Africa, the impact of the region’s economic weakness, the security of energy supplies, and the build-up of arms in the Maghreb and Mashrek.

In practice, the Barcelona Process’s approach to supporting political reform in the Arab world has been based primarily on the notion of democratic dynamics flowing from Europe to the southern Mediterranean through demonstration and example. Policies aimed directly at identifiable democratic progress have been weaker than those aimed more generally at facilitating the osmotic drift of societal and political values. The development of a wide range of social, cultural and economic cooperation has been deemed to provide for the self-enlightenment of Arab actors exposed to European norms.

The EMP’s general shortcomings are well known and have been exhaustively chronicled: asymmetrical trade liberalization; (until recently) a notoriously poor disbursement of MEDA aid allocations; and the process’s hijacking by the collapse of the Middle East peace process. Political reform policies have been compromised

¹ Carothers T. and Ottoway M. (2004) ‘Middle Eastern Democracy’, *Foreign Policy*, November-December, p. 22-28

by these contextual weaknesses, but more specifically by a hesitancy in the elaboration of policy instruments directly pertinent to democracy promotion.

Prior to 9/11, the EU did not exert significant diplomatic pressure on southern Mediterranean governments for far-reaching democratic reform. Serious consideration was not given to invoking the EU’s sanctions-triggering democracy clause, included in all EMP association agreements. Nor were aid allocations oriented uniformly towards the more reformist Mediterranean states. Notable increases in MEDA aid were granted to states such as Egypt and Tunisia where democratic rights were increasingly restricted. New political dialogue initiated under the EMP did not focus on issues of internal political reforms in any specific or primary fashion; it was acknowledged that these discussions rather concentrated on challenges related to the Middle East peace process. In addition, no systematic dialogue on democracy with Islamist opposition forces was developed, and no common EU line emerged on whether this was desirable.

In terms of funding priorities and levels of diplomatic attention economic reform, mitigating drugs trafficking, environmental protection and population control all assumed higher priority than encouragement for political reform in the Arab partners of the EMP.

The scale of human rights and democracy funding allocated to the Maghreb and Mashrek was limited. The Commission’s democracy and human rights budget line – initially MEDA Democracy, subsequently the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights - allocated 27 million euros to the Mediterranean partners up to the end of 1999. This represented significantly less funding than was provided for Latin America, central and eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, most of these ‘democracy’ funds in practice went to relatively soft projects, supporting NGOs working on developmental or environmental issues, or to run workshops on ‘Islam and democracy’. Other priorities included cooperation with unions on labour rights issues and women’s rights projects typically covering family status issues.

Governance constituted the primary EU focus in terms of broader institutional reforms. This entailed the largest parcels of MEDA aid being channelled through state institutions. To the

extent that such mainstream aid was presented as incorporating a 'governance reform' orientation, the focus was most commonly on issues related to technical and regulatory harmonisation with European single market rules, the transparency of procurement procedures, the design of new fiscal systems to replace revenues lost through tariff removal and micro-credit projects aimed at strengthening local level decision-making capacities.²

In reaction to the attacks of 9/11, official statements have routinely suggested a need for the EU to strengthen its efforts to encourage Arab political reform.³ If the EU appeared to have been ahead of the US in advocating policies aimed at the 'political roots of terrorism', the attacks of 9/11 still exercised a profound impact on European perspectives towards the Middle East. It is acknowledged that efforts to invest EMP democracy policies with greater content have been driven in part by new US activity in this area.

But there has not been the same discernible and qualitative rupture as in US strategic pronouncements. Far from demonstrating far reaching critical reassessment of its approach to Arab reform, the EU has since 9/11 mobilised the Barcelona Process to deepen its partnership-based, indirect strategy.

A number of new tranches of political aid have been allocated from the mainstream MEDA budget, including for large scale judicial reform projects in Morocco and Algeria – amounting to 34 and 50 million euros, respectively. But there has been no major overall increase in democracy assistance funds allocated to the southern Mediterranean. Indeed, the region's share of funds from the European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights has declined since 2001.

Nor has the EU responded in a significantly more critical fashion to clear instances of authoritarian practice: decidedly unfree elections in 2004 in Tunisia; the elaboration of a restrictive new party law in Morocco; pre-poll restrictions and media

manipulation in Algeria's 2004 presidential elections; the Mubarak government's decision to drop consideration of lifting emergency law provisions, and its new restrictions on NGOs and opposition parties in Egypt; the Syrian regime's clampdown against democracy activists and, in spring 2004, against the country's Kurdish minority. In all these cases, European criticism was mute and contemplation of negative conditionality absent. The EU's uncritical response to president Bin Ali's 96 per cent victory in October 2004 came in the same week that it unequivocally condemned the (far freer) elections in Ukraine.⁴

It is in the cultural and social spheres that the Barcelona process has been most active since the attacks of 9/11. A Dialogue on Cultures and Civilizations has been established, along with bilateral socio-cultural programmes with individual Mediterranean partner states. The group of experts convened by then-Commission president Romani Prodi to identify ways of deepening dialogue across civilisations proposed a focus on educational exchanges, higher quality media coverage and civic meeting places across the Mediterranean.⁵ The new Ana Lindh Euromed Foundation, established formally in 2004, now provides the most high-profile avenue for cultural cooperation.

Significant new funding has been directed towards cultural and social exchanges.⁶ A regional programme on justice, drugs and the social integration of migrants was launched in 2003.⁷ Amongst the largest budget increases have gone to EuroMed Heritage, a programme funding the preservation of historical sites and monuments, and Euromed Audiovisual, a programme aimed at 'knowing the other'.

At the same time, the EMP's wide range of social networks has solidified. A new 'extended' format of the Euromed Civil Forum was initiated in January 2004 and is due to be upgraded into a 'Euro-Med Non-Governmental Platform'. The EU's programme of university exchanges has

² Commission of the European Communities (2000) *Implementation of the Democracy and Human Rights Initiative 1996-99* (Brussels, Commission)

³ Notably, Commission to the European Communities (2003) *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Reinvigorating EU actions on human rights and democratisation with Mediterranean partners*, COM(2003) 294 final, see especially pages 11, 13

⁴ EU Weekly Digest 4 November 2004; 'Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Tunisia', 13932/04, 25 October 2004

⁵ Report by the High Level Advisory Group, established at the Initiative of the President of the European Commission (2003) *Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*

⁶ Euromed Synopsis no. 196, 26 September 2002, p.2

⁷ For all this, see Euro-Med Mid-term Meeting of Foreign Ministers, Crete 26-27 May 2003, Presidency Conclusions

been extended to Mediterranean partners.⁸ The Euromed trades union forum has engaged in more regularised dialogue on labour rights. Other forums such as the Euromed economic and social committee, Euromed Youth and a cross-Mediterranean programme of cooperation between municipalities have gathered further momentum.

It is this realm of social, educational and cultural exchange that has so far attracted most new proposals in preparations for Barcelona's tenth anniversary.

Significantly, new engagement with moderate Islamists has taken the form of the latter's inclusion in cultural and religious dialogue forums, not the promotion of these groups' still heavily compromised political rights. European engagement with the Party of Justice and Development in Morocco has been no more than ad hoc and exploratory; and the EU has been silent on the political prohibition of the rival, and more organically rooted Justice and Charity organisation. In Egypt, the EU has been more cautious in engaging with Muslim Brotherhood (apparent) reformists than local secular liberals. Barcelona's focus on seminars and projects examining the situation of Muslims within Europe has been notably stronger than its concern with widening Muslim's democratic freedoms beyond the EU.

In short, initiatives aimed at enhancing democracy and human rights promotion have taken shape; but they have lacked the substance of these more indirect approaches. While the latter are presented as pertinent to shaping a background more conducive to political change, in their most immediate sense they betray a contrasting strategic logic: security through mutual understanding, rather than through democratisation.

Towards a New Neighbourhood

While the EMP *acquis* has deepened in a range of economic, social and cultural areas, at the same time focus has increasingly turned to the drive to complement the Barcelona process with the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This initiative, which purports to foster a 'ring of friends' on the EU's new post-enlargement periphery, has concentrated some of the most interesting new developments in relation to actions aimed at encouraging political reform.

The declared aim of the Neighbourhood Policy is to differentiate more between southern Mediterranean states, to free up the possibilities of cooperating on precise areas of economic and political reform. Under the ENP, bilateral action plans have been agreed with Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as Israel and the Palestinian Authority (and Moldova and Ukraine in the east). These plans include a list of reform priorities seen as more specific to each individual Arab state. Under the rubric of the ENP, moves are afoot to drive political dialogue towards 'single theme' discussions: the first meeting of a reform-oriented EU-Morocco Reinforced Political Dialogue was held in June 2004. Progress on a series of reform benchmarks will be reviewed in 2007, with this conditioning subsequent aid allocations across the southern Mediterranean. A 45 million euro MEDA Neighbourhood Programme has been agreed for 2005-6. From 2007, the range of budgets covering the new neighbours – MEDA, TACIS, EIDHR – will be folded into a single European Neighbourhood and Partnership instrument, so as to streamline funding. Proposals have been forwarded to double funding for the Mediterranean by 2013, under this new instrument. The longer term aim is to move towards a network of new European Neighbourhood Agreements.

Launching the Neighbourhood action plans in December 2004, external relations commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner explained: 'Nothing is imposed in this policy!...The further a partner is ready to go in taking practical steps to implement

⁸ Through an extension of the TEMPUS programme, in April 2004.

common values, the further the EU will be ready to go in strengthening our links with them'.⁹

The Neighbourhood Policy offers Mediterranean states the prospect of deeper involvement in a wide range of EU policies. The menu of possible cooperation has been modeled on the pre-enlargement process of approximation with central and eastern European countries. Mediterranean states, it is said, are to be offered 'everything except the institutions': integration into all major areas of European cooperation, without the formal rights associated with EU membership. Particular importance has been attached to integrating Arab partners more deeply into EU single market rules and regulations.

The nascent Neighbourhood Policy includes key developments for democracy promotion strategy. The promise of more aid being granted in response to reform promises a policy based more systematically on the principle of positive political conditionality. The ENP represents a potentially significant advance in fashioning reform strategies more tailored to individual countries, built around more detailed benchmarks and a firmer set of prospective rewards for southern Mediterranean democratisation efforts. The apparent prospect of Mediterranean states benefiting from single market provisions on the free movement of workers is relevant to the extent that the EU's erstwhile refusal to grant free movement under the EMP has been forcefully deployed by Arab governments to resist cooperation on democratic reform.

However, as plans under the ENP currently stand, limitations remain.

Much discussion has so far focused on the theological subtleties of the precise relationship between the Barcelona process and the Neighbourhood Policy. The line has been agreed that the Neighbourhood Policy will strengthen, not replace the EMP. This represents a compromise between those states – particularly, Spain – wishing to preserve the primacy of the Barcelona process and those member states more frustrated with the paucity of the EMP's impact. Such debates appear to take place in a vacuum, often couched in terms divorced from wider and fast-gathering debates over Arab reform.

⁹ Speech, 9 December 2004, http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/ferrero/2004/sp04_529.htm

EU policy-makers themselves acknowledge that the scale of 'rewards' so far being contemplated is unlikely to provide an incentive for Arab governments to acquiesce to far reaching change. A year and a half after the Commission first raised the prospect of financial rewards in return for cooperation on reform, southern Mediterranean enthusiasm remains negligible for action plans that represent a qualitative leap forward. States such as Tunisia that are most desirous of economic integration with Europe show few signs of being willing to trade this against improvements in democratic rights.

Indeed, the EU has remained deliberately vague on the question of which kinds of reform will be rewarded with what quantities of additional aid. Where earlier action plan drafts talked of firm, objective benchmarks, more discretionary language has gradually crept back in.¹⁰ The Commission's guidelines now suggest only that future proposals will be made 'in light of' a review of progress under action plans, and that some Mediterranean partners 'could' be offered upgraded relations.¹¹

Neither has the prospect of generating competitive peer pressure between Arab states and central European countries been fully developed within the supposedly common 'Neighbourhood' framework. It might be the case that recent events in Ukraine could condition debate in the Arab world. Yet, with a share of EU funds for the moment still ring-fenced for Mediterranean states there is little practical prospect of these regimes losing resources to the Ukraine or Georgia as they slip further behind the democratic advances of the EU's eastern periphery. Forums have not been created grouping reformers from both central Europe and the Mediterranean in a way that might provide for a flow of 'democratic demonstration effects' from places like Ukraine and Georgia to the Arab world. Ambivalent, if not openly sceptical towards the construction of a new Neighbourhood focus grouping them with non-Middle Eastern countries, southern Mediterranean regimes have resorted to familiar claims of Arab specificity. All this would seem to undermine the whole rationale and value of the new 'south plus east' nature of the Neighbourhood framework.

¹⁰ N.Tocci (2004) 'The European Neighbourhood Policy: Responding to the EU's Post-Enlargement Challenges?', forthcoming, p. 10

¹¹ Commission Communication to the Council on Commission Proposals for Action Plans under the European Neighbourhood Policy, COM (2004), 795, 9 December 2004

Like the Barcelona Process, the ENP talks primarily in terms of shared goals and co-ownership, through work plans drawn up in collaboration with governments in the south. It has been pointed out that the Neighbourhood Policy now includes no new operational language on democratic conditionality, and that under bilateral action plans southern Mediterranean governments will sit on the committees charged with monitoring their own performance against political benchmarks.¹²

The claimed specificity of action plans to the challenges of individual states also looks overstated. The new detail on political reform in practice resides in 'democracy' having been broken down into sectoral categories more than previously. But these categories are largely generic; each action plan includes some reference to recent or forthcoming developments in each respective country, but the guiding aims are virtually identical across different states – 'international human rights instruments', 'women's rights', 'freedom of expression and association', 'decentralisation', 'judicial modernisation', 'public administration capacity-building', 'political party reform', 'social rights'.¹³ Consequently, little can be gleaned from the action plans as to where the main blockages to reform really exist in each southern Mediterranean state and what the EU intends to do to address these. The action plans include over 200 stated objectives, with no ordering of priorities.

The logic of 'everything bar the institutions' is bereft precisely of what was arguably the most potent leverage over democratic reform in southern and eastern Europe, namely the prospect of governments gaining voting rights and thus formal influence over EU policies as a quid pro quo for political liberalisation.¹⁴ The prospect of more formal integration into single market regulations does not address the Mediterranean partners' long-standing complaints against EU protectionism in agriculture and textiles. Concessions on these issues were resisted by southern EU member states during Neighbourhood Policy negotiations. Resting

somewhat oddly with the notion of equal partnership of which they are the most rhetorically unrestrained advocates, Spain and France still insist that Arab governments only raise the agriculture issue as a negotiating ploy and 'not because it is really important to them'!

Moreover, at the behest of (some) member states the possibility of Mediterranean states being granted internal market provisions on the free movement of workers has been made increasingly non-committal. Indeed, the inclusion of 'permanent safeguards' on free movement in negotiations with Turkey sets a precedent that renders EU concessions on this issue less likely.

Simultaneously, trends in democracy and human rights assistance appear to be consolidating the focus on relatively soft political aid projects. The areas identified as priority sectors for support continue to be NGOs, women's rights and judicial reform. ENP action plans focus overwhelmingly on very standard human rights legislation, as opposed to the reform of political-level institutions. Most work defined as political aid continues to be structured around an emphasis on economic and social rights or technical-financial governance issues. EU rule of law programmes are now more technical and less ambitious than the efforts of (some elements of) judiciaries themselves pressing for more political autonomy in countries such as Egypt and Jordan.

The agreement to merge EIDHR funds into a single Neighbourhood Policy financial instrument threatens to leave strategy towards the region without a pool of resources ring-fenced specifically for democracy assistance. The emphasis has consequently shifted towards using mainstream MEDA funds, from which each Mediterranean state has been allocated between 2 and 5 million euros for democracy and human rights projects for 2005-6. Unlike under the EIDHR, the use of these funds has to gain the assent of Arab governments, militating against truly critical content.

¹² M. Emerson and G. Noutcheva (2004) 'From Barcelona Process to Neighbourhood Policy – Assessments and Open Issues', p. 11

¹³ For action plan texts, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/action_plans

¹⁴ Tocci, *op. cit.*: 7

THE BARCELONA PROCESS and ARAB DEMOCRATIZATION

	Bertelsmann Transformation Index High: 10 ¹⁵	Some Political Developments since creation of the Barcelona Process *	The Barcelona Response: new MEDA aid (1995-2003)^{16[3]}
Algeria	3.1 Little Progress	Increased centralisation of presidential powers; repression of Kabil revolt	345,8 M€
Morocco	4.5 Moderate Progress	Imprisonment of Islamists and journalists; consolidation of Palace's hold over key policy areas	1181,3 M€
Tunisia	4.3 Moderate Progress	Uncontested Presidential elections; deteriorating human rights situation	734,6 M€
Egypt	3.6 Little Progress	Unchecked presidential powers; civil society and political party restrictions	880,5M€
Jordan	4.2 Moderate Progress	Palestinian subordination; temporary dissolution of parliament; gerrymandering	423,4M€
Lebanon	3.5 Little Progress	Tightened Syrian control over political process	237,7M€
Syria	2.3 No Progress	Non elective succession; repression of Kurds; reversals on civil society freedoms	181,7M€

^{15[1]} Bertelsmann Transformation Index, 2003 (www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de)

* A selection not taken to deny a number of positive steps also taken since 1995. The author is grateful for research assistance from Rafael Bustos in the preparation of this table.

^{16[3]} European Commission, Europe Aid Cooperation Office, Mediterranean Program (statistics),

[Http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/med/financial/1995-2003.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/med/financial/1995-2003.pdf), accessed on December 30th, 2004.

Security Imperatives: Democracy Eclipsed?

Whatever the virtues and shortcomings of the EU's evolving political reform initiatives, the perceived urgency of immediate security imperatives since 9/11 has added a separate layer of new policies whose implications are difficult to ignore. Several strands of policy developed under the Barcelona process in the last three years have sat uneasily with – if not directly undercut – these political reform initiatives.

First, a focus on counter-terrorist cooperation with Middle Eastern regimes has been reflected in much of the most conspicuous new EMP activity since the attacks of 9/11. Since the end of 2001 the EU has insisted that anti-terrorism cooperation clauses be inserted in all new third country agreements, an obligation applied to Algeria and Lebanon in the concluding stages of their association agreement negotiations. After the May 2003 terrorist bombings in Casablanca, several European governments assisted Morocco's introduction of tough anti-terrorist provisions, that had strongly negative human rights repercussions. Counter-terrorist cooperation has been formally included as part of EMP ministerial meetings, with substantive discussions and experience-sharing underway by 2004. An initiative to intensify security cooperation with southern Mediterranean governments under the rubric of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was launched by the Spanish presidency in 2002, and security cooperation with southern Mediterranean states was further intensified under NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative agreed in June 2004. By the autumn of 2004 cooperation on ESDP was regularised, while the EU's new non-proliferation initiative incorporated a regional disarmament and WMD control process to be applied in the Mediterranean.

The EU has presented this increased security cooperation with southern Mediterranean states as being consistent with the governance reform agenda. The MEDA aid programme for 2002-4 framed a range of programmes on migrants, drugs and counter-terrorism as being 'in support of' democracy.¹⁷ The November 2004 meeting of

¹⁷ Commission of the European Communities (2002) MEDA Regional Indicative Programme 2002-2004, p. 10

Euro-Med foreign ministers suggested that counter-terrorist cooperation 'should respect and further the rule of law, human rights and political participation.'¹⁸ However, officials acknowledge that cooperation with southern Mediterranean security forces has in practice struggled to gain any tangible purchase on the stated aim of strengthening civilian oversight of militaries. In the autumn of 2004, an enhanced programme of 'human rights sensitive' training for southern Mediterranean police forces at the EU Police College was presented as aiming to rectify this shortcoming. But overall southern Mediterranean states have been able to use the provision of counter-terrorist cooperation to leverage a diluted focus on political reform conditions.¹⁹

Second, many new resources have been spent not on encouraging political reform within the southern Mediterranean but in boosting controls against migration from the region. In January 2003, the UK, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy participated in Operation Ulysses, aimed at enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of border guards and patrol vessels in the Mediterranean. Such security equipment as been provided in particular under new agreements between Italy and Libya, France and Algeria and Spain and Morocco. Some of the largest new aid projects have gone to projects to reduce migration pressures, with Morocco receiving a 40 million euros allocation for such a programme. A 250 million fund for cooperation of controlling migration was introduced by the EU in February 2004. A 2 million euro MEDA funded project carried out by the European Police College and police forces from five member states commenced in March 2004 with the aim of enhancing cooperation with southern Mediterranean police forces on 'fighting terrorism' and 'human trafficking'.²⁰

Third, in the cases of Syria and Libya engagement and pressure on WMD proliferation have so far taken precedence over any focus on internal reforms. EU officials admit that the tougher US line towards Damascus has made them more determined to deepen engagement with Syria, in particular through expediting the conclusion of

¹⁸ Presidency Conclusions for the Euro-Mediterranean Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, 29-30 November 2004, Council document 14869/04

¹⁹ Middle East International No. 736, 22 October 2004, p. 26

²⁰ Euromed Synopsis 262, 4 March 2004

association agreement negotiations. US pressure on the EU not to sign the association agreement predictably increased most European governments' determination to do just that. The bulk of European political capital was expended on pressing Syria to agree to the new EU WMD clause, this holding up signing of the association agreement for nearly a year prior to November 2004.

The EU argued that the association agreement would provide a tool for reformists within Syria. But it clearly linked security issues – Syria's alleged development of a chemical weapons capacity and Damascus' support for Hizbollah - to 'regime change' in a less direct and instrumental fashion than did the Bush administration. Policy was driven by a logic of, in the words of one policy-maker, 'getting these other things sorted out first'. Sympathy with Syria in relation to the invasion of Iraq for some member states tipped the scales even more towards an alliance-building philosophy. Pressure more recently has been exerted in relation to Syria's new troop deployments and political meddling in Lebanon, throwing the absence of comparative pressure for democratic reform into even starker light.

Even more obvious has been the neglect so far of any EU concern with political change in Libya. Libya's renunciation of its WMD programmes has triggered a European rapprochement with Tripoli that for the moment appears aimed at quickly incorporating Libya into Barcelona process structures – and, of course, at opening up investment opportunities.

As Commission president, Romani Prodi took high profile personal initiatives to entice colonel Qaddafi into the EMP, not without annoying some of the Nordic states who had raised human rights concerns. The procession of visits to Libya – Blair, Berlusconi, Schröder and Chirac all making the trip to Qaddafi's tent during 2004 – failed to generate any discernible focus on Libya's internal political atrophy. The detention of a prominent Libyan human rights activist early in 2004 occasioned some criticism from the US, but not from the EU. When agreement was finally reached in September 2004 formally to lift sanctions, only Denmark and Ireland registered concern over the absence of human rights conditions. In no discussions, strategy documents or dialogue meetings has there been mention of the continuing persecution of the Libyan Islamic

Group. European governments have welcomed very limited changes made – Qaddafi's decision to allow in an Amnesty International mission, talk of repealing emergency law provisions – but have remained silent on subsequent human rights reversals. The US has initiated a dialogue specifically on human rights with Libya, but the EU has not. New European cooperation has been forthcoming for the control of illegal migration from Libya, for Libya's development of a non-nuclear defence profile, and for economic reform.

The prospect of the tenth anniversary meeting of the EMP admitting Libya into the Barcelona process without any critical focus on democracy and human rights has engendered strong criticism from Arab civil society activists.²¹

When Gravity Fails: Reassessing Barcelona as a Model for Arab Reform

Wise counsel that 'the gentlest gamester is the soonest winner' (Henry V, Act 3 Scene 6) might stand as a motto for the EU's partnership-based approach to reform in the southern Mediterranean. The foregoing account of EU policies emphasises the prevalence of initiatives aimed at cooperation on reshaping values and identities, and of efforts to harness the Barcelona framework to immediate security priorities. But, the challenge remains to retain the positive and necessary features this philosophy imbues while proving that the Barcelona process is capable of contributing in tangible fashion to Arab reform.

Striking this balance may require reassessment of some tenets of the basic model pursued so far. The record of the last ten years must be seen to raise serious questions over how effective 'democracy by osmosis' can be in a region beset by such resilient obstacles to political change and where the whole logic of states taking their 'rightful places' in the European order does not apply.

The EU's influence over political change on its previous southern and eastern peripheries has been eloquently and usefully denominated its

²¹ Daily Star, 4 November 2004

'gravity model of democratisation'.²² Implicitly in the original design of the Barcelona process, explicitly in the new Neighbourhood Policy relations towards the Arab states of the southern Mediterranean have indeed been moulded to an 'enlargement-lite' design. But in a region where the forces engendered by Europe are as centrifugal as centripetal, such EU reasoning may be guilty of an error of rational category.

With the EMP's own aims eschewing a focus on tangible institutional change, it is often suggested that the Barcelona process's impact has been to galvanise debate on political change and embed democracy as a shared value, in this way laying the first foundation stones of a political reform strategy. The language of shared norms and consensual change will undoubtedly have operated primarily at this subterranean level of Arab expectation and self-identity. The prospect of a stable partnership constructed around known norms may well have 'lengthened the shadow of the future' for potential Arab reform.²³

But, even at this level, Arab reactions to US policy since 9/11 provide a salutary lesson to the EU. Whatever the more general shortcomings of the Bush administration's strategic vision, the extent to which US policy pronouncements since 9/11 have triggered open debate in the Middle East throws into sharper relief how much less the EMP had previously succeeded in doing this. There has been no step-change in debates on Arab reform linked specifically to the EMP. Barcelona may rather have served as a saving-face cover for Arab elites to claim that their new talk of reform is not a response to US pressure but consistent with a partnership with the EU in existence since 1995. Tellingly, democratic advance has been no greater in the Arab states included in the Barcelona process than in the Gulf states bereft of a similar EU partnership.

The EU must more openly acknowledge how little genuine partnership on political reform the Barcelona process has succeeded in generating during its ten year existence. Despite their signing language on political reform in the Barcelona declaration, Arab governments have not in practice been amenable to many proposed democracy and human rights projects. Arab

governments have often ensured that opposition groups have been excluded from training initiatives and human rights workshops. Partly reflecting political resistance, a lower share of EU aid goes through civil society actors in the Mediterranean than in any other developing region – a telling indictment of a decade of supposedly common partnership.

The account of recent EU policies offered above suggests that purchase on social, cultural, economic and security issues has not demonstrably filtered into any democracy-enhancing dynamic, as often claimed – indeed, many aspects of these areas of policy can be judged to have been inimical to political liberalisation. While the EMP's whole logic is predicated on situating political change within broader development policies, in practice policy-makers acknowledge the persistent disjointedness between the social and political spheres of decision-making.

The Barcelona process has experienced particular difficulty in balancing positive support for genuine moves towards limited political reform, on the one hand, with a degree of critical pressure sufficient to ensure that such steps do not merely protect regimes from more meaningful change, on the other hand. This has been seen in particular in policy towards Morocco, Jordan and Algeria. In this sense, EU policy commonly confuses gradualism with partiality – the former is unquestionably desirable, the latter potentially destabilising in actually stemming the underlying dynamics of gradual change.

The EMP and, even more so, the Neighbourhood Policy have been good at setting the general parameters for political reform; they have so far been poor at engaging to prompt and provide incentives for changes on more detailed issues impacting in significant ways on the political life of southern Mediterranean states. And yet, with debates on Arab reform having moved on so far in the last two years, it is at this latter level where the real challenges now lie.

It is these shortcomings that should provide the focus of preparations for the Barcelona Process's tenth anniversary summit. There is a risk of misidentifying the inefficacies of European policy while debate continues to be couched in terms of 'building on the Barcelona aquis' and 'extending the enlargement model' to the southern

²² M. Emerson and G. Noutcheva (2004) 'Europeanisation as a Gravity Model of Democratisation', CEPS Working Document, no. 214, November 2004

²³ Emerson and Noutcheva, *op.cit.*, p.4

Mediterranean. No doubt much can be achieved by enhancing aspects of existing EMP initiatives and by selectively drawing from concrete interventions elsewhere linked to accession preparations. But, a crucial lesson from Barcelona's decade in existence is that relative to other areas of EU external relations much *difference* abounds in the Arab world: differences in the nature of civil society concepts and relations; in broad security contexts; in the historical role of Europe in the fashioning of citizens' cognitive identities; in the political management of economic reform processes.

The standard range of soft power tools will rightly continue to occupy a prominent place in the EU's arsenal of policy instruments.

But, the need is not only, or even primarily, for the Barcelona Process to do more of the things the EU does well and is naturally drawn to; there must also be a case for re-examining some of the options the EU has hitherto confidently rejected as incompatible with its traditional foreign policy identity. The account given in this paper suggests that there is still an aversion to acknowledging the weaknesses inherent in what are presented as the very strengths of EU approaches. It has frequently been asserted that part of Barcelona's virtue has resided in its constancy, the simple fact of its continued existence against the backdrop of sharpening conflict and tension since 1995. To secure primary relevance to unfolding change in the Arab world it must match durability with an equal propensity critically to revisit some of its own basic premises.

WORKING PAPER

.....

- 1 **A proposal for governance of the Gaza strip in the context of the announced Israeli withdrawal**
Toledo International Centre for Peace, at the initiative of Prof. Shlomo Ben-Ami
November 2004

- 2 **Ten years of the Barcelona Process: A Model for Supporting Arab Reform?**
Richard Youngs
January 2005

POLICY PAPER

.....

- 1 **Europe in Iraq: from standoff to engagement?**
Richard Youngs
November 2004

FRIDE publications are available in print on request, in both Spanish and English.

Individual publications can be ordered from
Felipe IV, 9 1º Dcha. 28014 Madrid - SPAIN
Tel: +34 915 22 25 12 – Fax: +34 915 22 73 01
E-mail: biblioteca@fride.org

All FRIDE publications are available on FRIDE website: www.fride.org

