MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

"EU democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa: Conceptual breaks and continuities since the Arab Spring"

Verfasserin

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Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2015

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my parents for their continuous support throughout my years at university – this thesis is the result of it. I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Cengiz Günay for giving me the freedom and time to write and let the topic evolve as it has, as well as for his constructive input when I needed it. On this note, I also owe my gratitude to my friends Katharina and Sissy for challenging and enriching my ideas. Furthermore, I would like to thank Peter Sondergaard, Head of Programmes at the European Endowment for Democracy, for taking the time to answer my questions and contributing to my conclusions. Lastly, I am very grateful for my dear friend´s support throughout the ups and downs I had while writing this thesis.

Content

Abbreviations

AB   Arab Barometer

CSO   Civil Society Organisation

EC   European Commission

ECC   Essentially Contested Concept

EEAS   European External Action Service

EED   European Endowment for Democracy

EIDHR European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

EMP   Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

ENP   European Neighbourhood Policy

EP   European Parliament

EU   European Union

MENA   Middle East and North Africa

MEP   Member of the European Parliament

NGO   Non-Governmental Organisation

QCA   Qualitative Content Analysis

UfM   Union for the Mediterranean

UN   United Nations

1. Introduction

1.1 Initial Problem

"Why on earth should all the world convert to Western norms? Would it not be better to pre-serve a fruitful pluralism in the world, by which nations can express themselves in different ways, while respecting the basic values that are essential for all human beings?"[1]

Having raised these questions in the 1990s, contemporary political practice reveals how the conflictual relationship between Western norms and normative pluralism is of high relevance today. There are prevailing tendencies in the West (encompassing Western/Central Europe and North America) to engage with `the rest´ in a spirit of superiority and a practice of di-chotomies. Accordingly, the Western world can be criticised for the theoretical promotion of the universality of norms and ideas while not holding up to them in practice. More specifi-cally, critique can be directed at the dominance of Western scholarship and policy makers in defining these universal norms. The latter can be seen as the initial problem for this thesis, and narrowed down the following research interest evolved: the EU has officially supported the spread of democracy and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since the 1990s, while at the same time financing authoritarian regimes to uphold stability.[2] Whereas this failure is by now, especially after the revolutions of the so-called `Arab Spring´, widely accepted,[3] so is a general critique of tools, methods and EU engagement in democracy promotion. However, a question often sidelined by both policy makers and scholars concerns the idea and understanding of democracy the EU promotes – or differently put, their concept of democracy. Exporting European models of democracy is highly questionable in a non-European context,[4] but there are tendencies among democracy supporting nations to try and implement democratic features and institutions common to their own states in third countries.[5] Normatively and practically this has often implied the promotion of a liberal model of democ-

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[1] Mohamed Elhachmi Hamdi, `The Limits Of The Western Model´, *Journal of Democracy*, 7, 2, 1996, p. 84.
[2] Timo Behr, `The European Union´s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring: Can the Leopard Change its Spots´, *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 4, 2, 2012, pp. 78-80.
[3] see for instance Timo Behr, `EU Foreign Policy and Political Islam: Towards a New Entente in the Post-Arab Spring Era?´, *International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 48, 1, 2013, pp. 24-6; Cengiz Günay, `Troubled Neighbourhood: The EU and the Transformations in the Arab World´, in Cengiz Günay and Jan Pospisil, eds., *Add – On 13/14: Global Shifts and Europe*, Wien: Facultas, 2014, pp. 78-9; Daniela Huber, `US and EU Human Rights and Democracy Promotion since the Arab Spring. Rethinking its Content, Targets and Instruments´, *International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 48, 3, 2013, pp. 104-5.
[4] Milja Kurki, *Democratic Futures: Revisioning democracy promotion*, Oxon: Routledge, 2013, pp. 1-10.
[5] Laurence Whitehead, `On ´cultivating` democracy: Enlivening the imagery for democracy promotion´, in Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, eds., *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion*, Oxon: Routledge, vol. 20, pp. 24-5.

racy rather than a pluralist and context-sensitive approach.[6] While the Arab Spring and wide criticism contributed to a renewal of EU policy instruments and treaties with the MENA region since the beginning of the uprisings in 2010,[7] it is yet unclear what these developments mean for the concept of democracy promoted in the long term. Democracy promotion (interchangeably used with support and assistance) itself is understood as "all direct, non-violent activities by a state or international organization that are intended to bring about, strengthen, and support democracy in a third country."[8]

General EU engagement with the MENA can be divided into regional and thematic programs – the major regional programs encompass the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its redefinition, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).[9] As this thesis is addressing the concept of democracy, the two thematic programs of the EU are of relevance, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). The EIDHR is the EU´s main instrument of its external democracy support and was formerly known as the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (2000-2006). The programme ran from 2007-2013[10] and was re-launched for the following seven years in 2014. Its aim is to support democracy, human rights and civil society engaged in these fields outside of the EU.[11] A new private foundation dedicated to democracy support, which was set up in reaction to the Arab Spring, is the European Endowment for Democracy. An idea firstly formulated by Poland, the Council of the EU announced its foundation in 2011. With funding of the European Commission (EC) and EU member states, and largely consisting of members of the European Parliament (MEPs), it started to operate in 2013. Based on European values, it seeks to support prodemocratic actors in a more effective way than the EIDHR has so far, in order to add value to existing EU instruments.[12] The aim of this thesis is to assess whether the European Endowment for Democracy adds value in terms of the concept of democracy promoted and allows for local demands to be integrated. Accordingly, there are two research questions:

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[6] Kurki, *Democratic Futures,* p. 4.

[7] Behr, `European Union´s Mediterranean Policies´, pp. 80-4.

[8] Sandra Lavanex and Frank Schimmelfennig, `EU democracy promotion in the neighbourhood: from leverage to governance?´, *Democratization*, 18, 4, p. 888.

[9] Günay, `Troubled Neighbourhood´, 78-9.

[10] European Commission, `EIDHR´, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/subsites/european-instrument-democracy-and-human-rights-eidhr_en (consulted 18 December 2014).

[11] Europa Media, `EIDHR´, https://www.eutrainingsite.com/2014-2020.php?id=147, (consulted 18 December 2014).

[12] Alexander Graff Lambsdorff, `The European Endowment: a New Approach for Democracy Support´, 2012, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/oppd/Page_1/newsletterDEc2012_WEB.pdf (consulted 30 March 2015) pp. 1-3.

1. The first one is, whether the EU has recently started or is showing willingness to change its narrow (mainly liberal) concept of democracy in democracy promotion. This will be evaluated on basis of the European Endowment for Democracy. Does the EED´s approach constitute a break with past EU democracy promotion in terms of the concept of democracy promoted or is it old policy with a new name?

2. The second question is directed at the responsiveness of the EED to local discourses and the relevance of context-bound democracy promotion. It will be assessed based on democracy discourses in the MENA, with a more detailed evaluation of the Tunisian example. Which features are considered central for a democratic system by Tunisians and is the Endowment´s concept of democracy open and flexible enough to support these?

Based on seeing democracy as an essentially contested concept (ECC), characterised by a plurality of context-bound understandings, the focus is not on criticising methods and tools of EU democracy promotion but on the underlying concepts of democracy in order to shed light on future prospects for democracy support. This is highly relevant because conflicts and ambiguities on a normative level can lead to strategic and operative ones on a practical level, within the democracy promotion community but also with the target populations.[13] Furthermore, the EU itself has emphasised the renewal of their democracy promotion activities and a more differentiated approach.[14] Examining whether this extends to a conceptual, normative level, will be evaluated throughout the following pages.

1.2 Structure and scope

After defining the theoretical and methodological approach as well as the state of the art, this thesis will give a brief introduction into the EU-MENA relationship and the EU´s reaction to the Arab Spring in order to contextualise the topic (chapter two). It is further divided into two main parts: the first one (chapter three and four) is literature based and lines out the relevant scientific debate on the topic; the second one (chapter five) is empirical and encompasses a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA).

Chapter three will illustrate the scholarly debate on the understanding of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa. Western theories and prejudices seeking to explain the absence

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[13] Sonja Grimm and Julia Leininger, `Not all good things go together: conflicting objectives in democracy promotion´, *Democratization*, 19, 3, 2012, p. 402.
[14] see for instance Council of the European Union, `Council conclusions on the EU response to the developments in the Southern neighbourhood: 3130th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting´, 01.12.2011, Brussels,; European Commission, `Democracy & human rights – policy´, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-rights-and-governance/democracy-and-human-rights/policy_en (consulted 19 December 2014).

of democracy in the region will be critically assessed, before public opinions on democracy are briefly portrayed. To specify political attitudes towards democracy, Tunisian democracy discourses will be highlighted as an example. This will not only contribute to drawing a more differentiated and less Eurocentric picture, but also constitutes a basis to evaluate how responsive EU democracy promotion is and can be to local demands in the second part of the thesis. Furthermore, an assessment of local and regional democracy discourses will counter prevailing dichotomies and prejudices towards the Middle East inherent to Western scholarship and policy making (e.g. the assumed incompatibility of Islam and democracy, the incapability of non-European populations in defining their own models of democracy, etc.). The choice for Tunisia is based on the availability of sources as well as the relative political stability compared to other post-Arab-Spring countries, which allows for a better assessment of democracy demands. Furthermore, Tunisia is thus far the only example of the Arab Spring that seems to be moving towards a successful democratic transition[15] and it is assumed that if the EED was not open for Tunisian ideas, it would lead to a negative conclusion for the possibility of local ownership in other Arab countries.

After having discussed the democracy discourses and concepts in the MENA, chapter four will illustrate the scientific debate on the concepts of democracy in EU democracy promotion in the region. It will first line out the scholarly debate on EU democracy *rhetoric*, before the scientific discourse on EU *practice* is evaluated in order to illustrate differences between EU wording in policy papers and the reality of their democracy support on the ground. As chapter five focuses on EU rhetoric since the Arab Spring, chapter four is focused on the decades before the Arab Spring, but also gives insights into the scientific debate in reaction to it. This will contribute to building a coding guideline for the empirical part of this thesis, following in the next section. Furthermore, it constitutes a basis on which to assess conceptual developments by the EED and the recent EIDHR programme.

The second part of this thesis (chapter five) is dedicated to assessing these conceptual breaks and continuities in EU democracy promotion *rhetoric* since the Arab Spring. Therefore, a Qualitative Content Analysis is used to line out democracy concepts in the new programme of the EIDHR (of 2014) in comparison with documents surrounding the set-up and evaluation of the EED (from 2011 until 2015). Additionally, an interview with Peter Sondergaard, Head of Programmes of the EED, and a non-official questionnaire answered by EED employees is analysed with the same method. Thereby, the added value of the EED compared to the

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[15] Larbi Sadiki, `Tunisia´s democratisation taking off´, 17.05.2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/tunisia-constitution-democracy-2014516161024354720.html (consulted 19 December 2014).

EIDHR, their understanding of democracy (narrow or broad, universal or pluralistic) and its capability of integrating local and alternative ideas of democracy will be assessed.

All in all, this thesis will underline the problematic relationship of universal values, as being equated with Western values, with non-Western demands.

1.3 Methodology and sources

The first part of this thesis is based on critical reading of secondary literature and focused on contemporary sources, mainly from the last two decades, due to the time frame and scope of the topic. EU documents and policy papers, journal and newspaper articles as well as further secondary literature will serve to line out the scientific debate on democracy discourses in EU democracy promotion in the MENA. The evaluation of Arab democracy demands in general and Tunisian ideas of democracy in particular will mainly be based on public opinion surveys. These were conducted in the last decade and first and foremost since the Arab Spring. The results of the surveys are not being understood as fully reliable and representative, but rather as examples for discourses. One of the main sources for exemplifying democracy discourses of the Arab public in the last decade is the result of the Arab Barometer (AB) surveys, which were conducted in three waves – before, during and after the Arab Spring – encompassing ABI (2006-2008), ABII (2010-2011) and ABIII (2012-2014). The goal was to "produce scientifically reliable data on the politically-relevant attitudes of ordinary citizens, to disseminate and apply survey findings in order to contribute to political reform, and to strengthen institutional capacity for public opinion research."[16] The literature based part constitutes the basis for the category system of the QCA.

1.3.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

For the empirical part (chapter five) a Qualitative Content Analysis after Philipp Mayring is used to assess the developments in democracy discourses and the underlying concepts of democracy inherent to EU democracy promotion since the Arab Spring.

A QCA seeks to systematically interpret a text and make the findings verifiable by a clear set of rules.[17] While the *quantitative* analysis builds up categories, structures the text according to these and then searches for information in the text to be categorised, the *qualitative* analysis

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[16] Arab Barometer, `Introduction´, http://www.arabbarometer.org/ (consulted 17 December 2014).
[17] Philipp Mayring: *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution*, Klagenfurt, 2014, p. 39.

helps to understand elements of the text within their context.[18] It is based on quantitative steps as it analyses frequencies of the categories, but the categories themselves constitute a qualitative approach. Furthermore, it requires a clear research question and is theory guided,[19] it identifies clear research steps and every analysis is designed individually according to the research object.[20] These facts make the method well applicable for this thesis, as it has two research questions based on a theory and a scientific discourse, both of which serve as basis for the categories the empirical part builds upon.

Mayring´s research steps encompass the definition of the material, including the analysis of the situation of origin [author(s), target group(s), background], the formal characteristics of the material and the direction of analysis (which has already been explained in the introductory part), as well as the choice for a concrete procedural model of interpretation. He differentiates between the following procedures of interpretation: a summary aiming at reducing the material that is worked with, an explication seeking to do the opposite, and structuring that aims to line out specific parts of the material and assess it according to clear criteria.[21] As the research questions are concerned with changes in the EU concept of democracy in their external democracy support, a structuring analysis delivers the necessary tools to answer them. Structuring is based on a pre-defined and theory-guided category system stemming from the research question to extract a certain structure from the material.[22] As the categories depend on the content of the following chapters, the exact procedure of structuring will be explained in chapter five, while the general research steps identified by Mayring find their place here.

1.3.1.1 Definition of the material

Mayring defines either numerical data or texts as materials for a QCA. The texts encompass protocols, secondary texts, field notes, interview transcripts, questionnaires as well as documents,[23] and the latter three are going to be of relevance for this thesis.

1.3.1.1.1 EIDHR

The first document that will be structured is the most recent regulation for a financing instrument of the EIDHR,[24] as the EIDHR represents conventional EU democracy promotion. It

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[18] Jochen Gläser and Grit Laudel, *Experteninterview und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, 3rd edition, Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009, p. 197-8.
[19] Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, pp. 9-10.
[20] Ibid., p. 39.
[21] Ibid., pp. 55-64.
[22] Ibid., p. 95.
[23] Ibid., p. 43.

illustrates recent EU democracy discourses and constitutes the normative background to thematic EU democracy support. The EIDHR´s budget is set for a seven years period and the new financing instrument was concluded on 11 March 2014 in a regulation by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The document encompasses 10 pages, consisting of 12 articles and an Annex. A regulation of the EU is directly applicable and binding for all member states, and completes the ordinary legislative procedures of the EU. These procedures start with a proposal of the European Commission and end with the passing of a law by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The 751 members of the EP are directly elected by EU citizens, while the Council represents the opinion of one minister of every member state.[25] Hence, the authors of the EIDHR and the circumstances of origin are part of complex EU legislation, which is not of further relevance for this analysis.

1.3.1.1.2 EED

To assess whether the EED offers a new conceptual approach to democracy promotion, four policy documents (surrounding the set-up and evaluation of the EED), one interview transcript and an answered questionnaire are analysed.

Based on previous reading, the research questions and the theoretical approach, the author of this thesis constructed a questionnaire encompassing 32 mainly open and partly closed questions to be answered by the EED. Additionally, a ~30 minute interview via Skype with Peter Sondergaard, Head of Programmes at the EED, was conducted on 05 June 2015. The aim was to gather an understanding of the concept(s) of democracy the EED promotes, differences and overlaps with conventional EU democracy promotion, the EED´s position on democracy discourses in the MENA region and on local ownership. The questionnaire was used as a guideline for the interview, which thus falls into the category of a guided interview. This is part of a qualitative approach in social sciences and constitutes a middle course between a fully structured and a non-structured interview.[26] Accordingly, the questions were used as a guideline but adapted to the course of the interview. As a QCA requires written texts as a basis of

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[24] European Parliament and Council of the European Union, `Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014: establishing a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide´, 15.03.2014, Official Journal of the European Union.
[25] European Commission, `The European Union explained: How the EU works´, 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/singapore/documents/more_info/eu_publications/how_the_european_union_works_en.pdf (consulted 09 June 2015) pp. 5-14.
[26] Ulrike Froschauer und Manfred Lueger, *Das qualitative Interview: Zur Praxis interpretativer Analyse sozialer Systeme*, Wien: Facultas Verlags- und Buchhandels AG, 2003, pp. 33-5.

analysis, the interview was transcribed according to a simple transcription system.[27] Minor amendments to simplify the system further were taken by the author with regards to the relevance for the research questions (concerning articles 8-12). The introductory and closing parts are not transcribed as they are not relevant for the latter. The transcript itself and the answered questionnaire are attached in the appendix. They are a highly valuable addition to the four policy documents surrounding the EED, as the documents lack an extensive normative dimension.

The first two EED policy documents for the QCA are drawn from the homepage of the EED, one is its Declaration of Establishment and the other one is the Statutes guiding the EED´s work. The draft declaration was elaborated by the Polish EU Presidency and the European External Action Service (EEAS), member states revised it and the Council of the European Union published the Declaration of Establishment on 11 December 2011.[28] According to Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, the initiative from the Polish EU Presidency and Poland´s strong involvement in the EED´s set-up stems from Poland´s own history – its democratic opposition movement and its own democratic transition.[29] The declaration encompasses five pages, of which page two and three will be used for the structuring, as they hold information on the EED´s understanding of democracy.

The second document guiding the EED´s work is its Statutes, which were formulated by EU members and institutions in the aftermath of the Declaration of Establishment.[30] It encompasses 15 articles but only article two and three, which briefly address the EED´s objectives and activities, will be structured. The other ones surround the EED´s legal basis, its structure, functioning and budget,[31] which is not of relevance for the understanding of democracy. As these two documents the EED is based on are not extensive as to the concept of democracy (but, nevertheless, relevant as they are the legal basis of the EED), two further documents are added to the analysis:

First, a 16 pages EP report dating back to 14 March 2012 and encompassing a proposal for a European Parliament recommendation from 2011; a proposal for a recommendation by Alexander Grad Lambsdorff on behalf of the ALDE Group (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats

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[27] Thorsten Dresing and Thorsten Pehl, `Praxisbuch Interview, Transkription & Analyse: Anleitungen und Regelsysteme für qualitativ Forschende´, 2013, www.audiotranskription.de/praxisbuch (consulted 06 June 2015) pp. 20-3.
[28] Council of the European Union, `Declaration on the Establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy´ (18764/11), 20.12.2011, Brussels, p. 1.
[29] Lambsdorff, `The European Endowment´, p. 1.
[30] Ibid., pp. 1-3.
[31] European Endowment for Democracy, `Statutes: European Endowment for democracy´, https://www.democracyendowment.eu/about-eed/ (consulted 30 March 2015).

for Europe) from July 2011; and the opinion of the Committee on Development for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, reported by Alf Svensson on 01 February 2012.[32] Draft reports are presented by the EP to the relevant committee (in this case the Committee on Foreign Affairs), whose members then vote on it. After the final vote they become reports, which are presented in a plenary sitting (in this case on 14 March 2012).[33] The same procedure is applicable for EP opinions, which are then submitted to the committee responsible for the report.[34] They have no binding force.[35] The reporter, Alf Svensson, is a Swedish MEP and member of Christian democratic European People´s Party.[36] German MEP Alexander Graf Lambsdorff is the EP´s Vice-President, member of the ALDE party[37] and holds a seat on the EED´s Board of Governors.[38] The proposal led to an EP recommendation on 29 March 2012, which holds the same wording as the proposal and is thus not of further relevance here.[39] The report was chosen for the QCA as it represents the normative discussion of EU institutions in setting up the EED and illustrates the background for the EED Statutes and Declaration of Establishment.

The last document is an EU evaluation of the EED´s activities since it started to operate, an EP draft report by Andrzej Grzyb dating back to 25 February 2015 and encompassing nine pages. It also entails a Motion for a European Parliament Resolution from 2014.[40] Andrzej Grzyb is a Polish MEP, member of the Christian Democrats[41] and holds a seat on the EED Board of Governors.[42]

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[32] European Parliament, `Report with a proposal for a European Parliament recommendation to the Council on the modalities for the possible establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (2011/2245(INI))´, 14.03.2012, A7-0061/2012.

[33] European Parliament Committees, `Reports´, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/reports.html (consulted 08 June 2015).

[34] European Parliament Committees, `Opinions´, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/opinions.html (consulted 08 June 2015).

[35] European Commission, `European Union explained´, p. 5.

[36] European Parliament MEPS, `Alf Svensson´, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96678/ALF_ SVENSSON_history.html (consulted 08 June 2015).

[37] European Parliament MEPS, `Alexander Graf Lambsdorff´, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/de/28242/ ALEXANDER+GRAF_LAMBSDORFF_home.html (consulted 08 June 2015).

[38] European Endowment for Democracy, `About EED´, https://www.democracyendowment.eu/about-eed/ (consulted 08 June 2015).

[39] European Parliament, `European Endowment for Democracy: European Parliament recommendation of 29 March to the Council on the modalities for the possible establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (2011/2245(INI)´, 29.03.2012, P7_TA(2012)0113.

[40] European Parliament, `Draft Report on the EU´s new approach to human rights and democracy – evaluating the activities of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) since its establishment (2014/2231(INI)´, 25.02.2015, 2014/2231(INI).

[41] European Parliament MEPS, `Andrzej Grzyb´, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/23785/ANDRZEJ_ GRZYB_cv.html (consulted 08 June 2015).

[42] European Endowment for Democracy, `About EED´.

As the complex legislative procedures of the EU require, the documents for the QCA involve a range of EU institutions and members, and are thus being regarded by the author as representative for the EU´s approach to the EED and its democracy support. All parts of the text corpus that refer to the concept and idea of democracy and thus to the categories and variables are included in the structuring.

1.4 Theoretical framework: essentially contested concepts

Within this thesis democracy is understood as an idea and an essentially contested concept,[43] characterised by a plurality of meanings, evolving differently depending on the context – encompassing time, place and societies involved. By viewing democracy as ECC, the universality idea of democracy held by the West and their export of this universal model can be criticised and different notions of democracy addressed. As Milja Kurki illuminates, this universal (mostly liberal) democratic model is hardly ever questioned by scholars and policy makers alike.[44] With the concept´s essential contestability in mind, it becomes evident how there is a variety of ideas of how societies are structured and power relations are built, with consequences for different notions of institutions and values within a democratic order.[45]

1.4.1 Origins and critique

The idea of essentially contested concepts has originally been formulated by Walter Bryce Gallie in 1956, who broadly characterised them as concepts that lack both a standard definition and agreement on their essence. The fact that many actors accept a particular meaning or interpretation and defend it leads to disagreement and makes a concept a contested one. Gallie defined seven criteria of essential contestability – criteria I to IV being seen as obligatory, while V to VII were considered additional. Therefore, criteria I concerns the appraisiveness of the concept; criteria II its internally complex character; criteria III the variety of possible descriptions; criteria IV the openness of the concept; criteria V the aggressive and defensive use

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[43] see for instance Kurki, `Democracy and Conceptual Contestability´, pp. 362-4; Gavin Williams, `Democracy as Idea and Democracy as Process in Africa´, *Journal of African American History*, 88, 4, 2003, pp. 339-40; Oliver Hidalgo, `Conceptual History and Politics: Is the Concept of Democracy Essentially Contested?´, *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 4, 2008, pp. 176-78; Peter Burnell, `Perspectives´, in Peter Burnell, ed., *Democratization through the looking-glass*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 1-8; Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 1-7; Albert Weale, *Democracy*, 2nd edition, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 25; Hubertus Buchstein, *Demokratietheorie in der Kontroverse*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2009, pp. 16-19; Piki Ish-Shalom, `Conceptualizing democratization and democratizing conceptualization: A virtuous circle´, Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, eds., *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion*, Oxon: Routledge, vol. 20, pp. 40-2.
[44] Kurki, `Democracy and Conceptual Contestability´, pp. 362-5.
[45] Ibid., pp. 373-5.

of the concept by different parties; criteria VI the existence of one example accepted by all; and finally, criteria VII a continuous competition leading to concept optimisation.[46]

However, as David Collier, Fernando Daniel Hidalgo and Andra Olivia Maciuceanu illustrate, requiring all the criteria for a concept to be defined as a contested one is problematic – concepts can be essentially contested even if they do not fulfil them all.[47] Similarly, John Gray believes that ECCs cannot be defined along fixed criteria. For him, the concepts are characterised by their own reflexivity, their internal relation to the form of life they promote and by a diverse usage due to the diversity of life styles the parties involved are part of.[48] Within this thesis, the seven criteria are not being regarded as prerequisites for democracy to be understood as ECC. For evaluating the EU´s concept(s) of democracy three characteristics, the internal complexity, the plurality of understandings and the context-boundedness of democracy, are of particular importance.

As Gallie formulated, democracy is "internally complex in such a way that any democratic achievement (or programme) admits of a variety of descriptions in which its different aspects are graded in different orders of importance."[49] This is reinforced by William Connolly, who labels this feature a cluster concept: not only are the constituting elements of ECCs considered with different importance by different actors, but the elements themselves are open and complex and often need an explanation on their own.[50]

Accordingly, there are two levels of contestability inherent to the concept of democracy: 1. a contestability between democratic models (say between liberal democracy, social democratic democracy or participatory democracy), and 2. an internal contestability between the elements within each model (between different understandings of elements within one model, say between liberty, individualism and equality in the liberal democratic model).

1.4.2 The contestability of democracy models

Democracy reveals a contest between different systems of thought and for an application an understanding of the concept itself and the interlinked concepts or theories is necessary.[51] The decision for the exclusion and inclusion, as well as for the weighing of certain elements has to

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[46] Walter Bryce Gallie, `Essentially Contested Concepts´, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56, 1955-56, p. 168-9.

[47] David Collier and Fernando Daniel Hidalgo and Andra Olivia Maciuceanu, `Essentially contested concepts: Debates and applications´, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11, 3, 2006, p. 236.

[48] John Gray, `On Liberty, Liberalism and Essential Contestability´, *British Journal of Political Science*, 8, 4, 1978, pp. 389-95.

[49] Gallie, `Essentially Contested Concepts´, pp. 171-184.

[50] William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983, pp 10-11.

[51] Kurki, `Democracy and Conceptual Contestability´, p. 371.

be seen interlinked with a specific theory and central claims to that theory. Changing the elements of concepts is likely to affect the theory it is based on.[52]

The contestability of democracy is well illustrated by empirical research on political attitudes: Howard A. Doughty found that politicians and citizens find it hard to define democracy, but perceive some aspects more important than others. While what he labels `procedural democrats´ focus on free and fair elections as well as fair trials, `value democrats´ place emphasis on morally correct social behaviour. Consequently, someone understanding democracy in a procedural way would give priority to a target getting a fair trial, while a value democrat would emphasise a just punishment.[53] Differing underlying value systems and interpretations of a democratic order thus have consequences for how democracy itself is understood. While, ideal-typically, social democrats focus on economic equality and justice, a liberal democrat emphasises political equality and an Islamic model focusses on communal values – accordingly, the contexts and associated theories always have to be considered and the co-existence of several democratic concepts be recognised. Problematically, scholars of democratisation tend to promote one particular idea of democracy,[54] sometimes even despite recognising its contestability. Guillermo O´Donnell for example supports the notion of essential contestability, but still defines free elections and basic political freedoms as the main pillars of a democratic order,[55] which makes him a proponent of a liberal model.

As Milja Kurki illustrates, the liberal democratic model which dominates political practice and its attached values have to be regarded as contested and ideological,[56] as liberalism itself is contested and reveals different characterisations depending on the tradition and scholar it is associated with.[57] Hence, there is a contest between different theories associated with democracy and the intensions, the choice of actors to include and exclude certain elements and give some priority over others is an ideological one. Furthermore, many of the elements themselves are indeterminate, which leads to a variety of characterisations of the overall concept and `conceptual disputes´,[58] often between scholars that assume their characterisation to be the only accurate one.[59]

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[52] Connolly, *Terms of Political Discourse*, p. 21.
[53] Howard A. Doughty, `Democracy as Essentially Contested Concept´, *Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, 19, 1, 2014, pp. 14-15.
[54] Kurki, `Conceptions of Democracy´, pp. 272-8.
[55] Guillermo O´Donnell, `The Perpetual Crises of Democracy´, *Journal of Democracy*,18, 1, 2007, pp. 6-7.
[56] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, p. 4.
[57] David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, p. 222.
[58] Connolly, *Terms of Political Discourse*, pp. 14-16.
[59] David Collier and Robert Adcock, `Democracy and Dichotomies: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts´, *Annual Review of Political Science,* 2, 1999, p. 545.

1.4.3 The internal contestability of the elements of democracy

The internal contestability of the elements considered features of a democracy can be exemplified on several characteristics, such as equality, liberty or accountability. The meaning of equality can range from political to social or economic equality, with different consequences for the concept it is associated with.[60] While political equality refers to the equal opportunity of being involved in politics and equal access to political decision-making – characteristic for a liberal democratic model[61] – socio-economic equality emphasises equal access to a basic standard of living and a narrow gap between rich and poor, characteristic for a social democratic model.[62] As Vicky Reynaert delineates, not only equality but also liberty is defined differently depending on the contexts associated with and can be interpreted as equal individual liberty in a liberal model, but as a minimalist state in a neoliberal one.[63]

The concept of accountability, which is popularly cited as a main characteristic of democracy, is another example, where a formalist approach would characterise it as the possibility of electing and removing politicians from office but a more substantive approach would emphasise that citizens need to be able to influence what government officials do and do not do.[64] Another differentiation is possible along a vertical-horizontal line: both the formalist and substantive approach could be subsumed under vertical accountability, which exists between citizens, representatives and the governing elite, while horizontal accountability, emphasised by liberal democrats, mainly exists between regime institutions rather than towards the people.[65]

Not only is there a contestability inherent to many elements considered characteristic of the concept of democracy, but there are also several examples for conflicting relationships between features within one model, such as liberty and equality, individualism and collectivism or participation and leadership. Inequality for instance constitutes an aspect of a free society that necessarily has to reveal differences if it wants to be free. Similarly, there is the challenge of balancing individualism and homogeneity. Different emphasising and characterisation further underlines pluralisation and contradicts universalisation.[66] Translated into political prac-

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[60] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, pp. 56-8.
[61] see for instance Held, *Models of Democracy*, p. 223; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, p. 113.
[62] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 78-74.
[63] Vicky Reynaert, `Preoccupied with the Market: The EU as a Promoter of ´Shallow` Democracy in the Mediterranean´, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 16, 2011, p. 625.
[64] Lisa Wedeen, `Concepts and Commitments in the Study of Democracy´, in Ian Shapiro and Rogers M. Smith and Tarek E. Masoud, eds., *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 277-79.
[65] Philippe C. Schmitter, `The Quality of Democracy: The Ambiguous Virtues of Accountability´, *Journal of Democracy*, 15, 4, 2004, pp. 52-3.
[66] Hidalgo, `Conceptual History´, pp. 187-190.

tice it is then little surprising how the internal contestability leads to a highly complex situation in democracy promotion, where the democracy promoter´s own interests and conflicts with other concepts add to the picture. Examples for the latter entail democracy versus stability, democracy versus governance and democracy versus majority.[67] Accordingly, a lack of clarification and conceptualisation can have detrimental effects on democracy promotion practice.[68]

1.4.4 Pluralisation and context-boundedness

While the discussion above emphasises how the assumption of a universal understanding of democracy is untenable on an academic level, it is even more so on a societal one because cultures and societies are diverse and share a diversity of ideas.[69] Hence, democracy can not be regarded as confined to a developmental state or particular culture as it does not contain a fixed set of values, institutions and practices.[70]

Problematically, the West has for decades tended to equate democracy with one theory, liberalism, often with the focus on one element in practice, the majority´s right to choose their government.[71] As Oliver Hidalgo illuminates, it is crucial not to

> "forget that the fact that Western civilization has dominated our view of global democracy means nothing but the long-term result of normative decisions, values, habits, and practices. So although the appreciation of non-Western democracies might be almost impossible for Westerners, we must keep in mind that we are never simply describing but always evaluating in accordance with our norms."[72]

As the nature of essentially contested concepts determines, it is difficult to agree on a core meaning of democracy.[73] This theoretical problem becomes evident in different understandings of democracy between democracy promoters and local populations, because practices that are labelled democratic by the promoters might be labelled differently by the targets and vice versa. Accordingly, the full meaning of a concept can only be revealed when it is consid-

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[67] Hans-Joachim Spanger and Jonas Wolff, `Universales Ziel – partikulare Wege? Externe Demokratieförderung zwischen einheitlicher Rhetorik und vielfältiger Praxis´, in Anna Geis and Harald Müller and Wolfgang Wagner, eds., *Schattenseiten des Demokratischen Friedens: Zur Kritik einer Theorie liberaler Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik*, Campus Verlag: Frankfurt, vol. 55, pp. 262-7.
[68] Anne Wetzel and Jan Orbie, `The EU´s Promotion of External Democracy: In search of the plot´, *CEPS Policy Brief*, 281, 2012, pp. 5-6.
[69] Hidalgo, `Conceptual History´, pp. 187-190.
[70] Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, `What Democracy Is … And Is Not´, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Democracy: A Reader*, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, pp. 11-13.
[71] Gallie, `Essentially Contested Concepts´, p. 185.
[72] Hidalgo, `Conceptual History´, p. 193.
[73] Williams, `Democracy as Idea´, p. 339.

ered within its historical and social context,[74] and democracy promotion should most constructively nurture already existing democratic potential in third countries.[75]

A plurality of understandings of democracy is highlighted by the results of the Arab Barometer: on one hand, classical liberal notions, such as free elections or free speech, were not considered as the primary characteristics of democracy by two thirds of the people questioned in the participating countries of ABI and the following survey in 2010/11.[76] Other factors, such as Islam in politics, do on the other hand play a role for many citizens. The exact meaning favoured in different areas is, however, context and time-bound, as the results illustrate: while in 2011 56% of the Tunisians surveyed agreed that religious leaders should influence the decisions made by the government, in 2013 only 36% were in favour of the same notion.[77]

To conclude, the author emphasises following aspects of importance for this thesis: there is a plurality of meanings of democracy – a fixed set of values, institutions and practices associated with democracy is detrimental to democracy promotion practice; the ideas of democracy are context bound – time, place, society and culture are aspects that determine the idea; there is a contestability inherent to democracy and its consisting elements (say between elements considered constituent for liberal democracy, such as liberty or political equality) and there is a contestability between different concepts and their associated theories (for example between liberal democracy, social democracy or participatory democracy). Accordingly, if the EED would support conceptual pluralism and context-sensitivity, it would accept the notion of ECCs and add value to existing EU democracy promotion.

1.4.5. Politico-economic models of democracy

Scholars have come up with a diversity of labels to describe their democracy models and the state of democracy (like delegative, partial or limited democracy), which contributes to increased complexity in the study of democratisation and democracy promotion.[78] As Laurence

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[74] Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, `Introduction: the conceptual politics of democracy promotion´, in Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, eds., *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion*, Oxon: Routledge, vol. 20, p. 12.

[75] Whitehead, `On ´cultivating` democracy´, p. 21.

[76] Mark Tessler and Amaney Jamal and Michael Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs and Democracy´, *Journal of Democracy*, 23, 4, 2012, pp. 91-2.

[77] Mark Tessler, `The Civic Orientations of Arab Publics: Selected Findings from the Arab Barometer´, 25.06.2014, http://www.arabbarometer.org/reports (consulted 30 March 2015) p. 10.

[78] Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert, `The Resilience of Democracy: An Introduction´, *Democratization*, 6, 1, 1999, p. 3.

Whitehead emphasises, within the study of democratisation there exists a "shared vocabulary, but [...] multiple shades of meaning and little terminological closure."[79]

In light of the diverse understandings, interpretations and ideas of the concept, a continuous debate and dialogue is necessary in order to define the criteria of democracy´s implementation, existence and institutions. While Gavin Williams consequently postulates that it is impossible to agree on the meaning of democracy, but only on certain elements,[80] for the Qualitative Content Analysis it will be necessary to use defined and thus meaning-loaded models of democracy. The author will thus accept specific elements and democracy models, mainly drawn from Milja Kurki´s analysis, but also from further research. Kurki identifies nine ideal types of democracy models, which represent politico-economic orientations of democracy promoters, each consisting of core, adjacent and peripheral concepts of democracy. The models entail classical liberal, reform liberal, neoliberal, embedded neoliberal, socialist delegative, social democratic, participatory, radical and global democracy.[81] However, only three models are used for the analysis, as will be explained in chapter five. These "different politico-economic models exhibit different understandings of democracy by the way they structure differently the value commitments surrounding democracy´s meaning."[82] Hence, it is relevant that the elements associated with democracy are a choice,[83] and that the EU´s choice to include and exclude certain aspects can lead to different conclusions about the underlying objectives and concepts in their democracy assistance.

1.5 State of the art: a liberal discourse and its critique

The scholarly discourse on democratisation is dominated either by a liberal democratic understanding or its critique. Its proponents mostly root their understanding in a historical narrative that tells the steady evolution of democracy from Western Enlightenment to the model´s succession after the Cold War.[84] The link of the concept with the element of liberty is a product of the same narrative, which was broadened in the 19th century to include economic principles, such as a free market and free trade.[85]

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[79] Whitehead, *Democratization*, p. 5.
[80] Williams, `Democracy as Idea´, pp. 339-343.
[81] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 113-16.
[82] Ibid., p. 112.
[83] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory,* p. 58.
[84] Andrea Teti, `The Globalization of Democracy and the Location of the Middle East in the Contemporary Global Order´, in Stephan Stetter, ed., *The Middle East and Globalization: Encounters and Horizons*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 85.
[85] Michelle Pace, `Liberal or social democracy? Aspect dawning in the EU´s democracy promotion agenda in the Middle East´, *International Journal of Human Rights*, 15, 6, 2011, pp. 801-4.

As Chantal Mouffe illustrates, the predominant position in the West is characterised by the *Democratic Paradox*: the specific historically and thus context-bound grown link of liberalism with its individualism and universal rights claim, and democracy, which puts emphasis on the rule of the people and equality. The focus on individualism is, however, inherent to Western societies and cultures but problematic in others, where communal rights or other values are prioritised.[86]

Hence, it is important to remember that there are

> "multiple modernities and to accept that the path followed by the West is not the only possible and legitimate one and that non-Western societies can follow different trajectories according to the specificity of their cultural traditions and of their religions. Once it is granted that the set of institutions constitutive of liberal democracy – with their vocabulary of human rights and their form of secularisation – are the result of a contingent historical articulation in a specific context, there is no reason to see their adoption worldwide as the criterion of political modernity and a necessary component of democracy."[87]

1.5.1 Liberalism and democracy

The relationship of liberalism and democracy is widely disputed among scholars. Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki for instance argue that their linkage in democracy promotion today would be stronger than ever, essentially because democracy was used to advance a liberal world order, while liberalism itself can be supportive of and detrimental to democratisation. Liberalism strongly influences how democracy is contemporarily understood and institutionalised, which is normatively reflected in the importance of individual liberty and autonomy, and practically in constitutionalism, the rule of law and a representative government.[88] Constitutionally secured individual rights and freedoms are seen as the basis of a democratic state ruled by individuals, by the proponents of the liberal democratic model.[89] Furthermore, they assume a positive relationship between liberalism and democratisation, for instance by arguing that liberalism brings equality in political participation and in terms of possessions.[90]

However, David Held illustrates how being a liberal does not imply being a democrat and vice versa, because precisely the West had first only been characterised by a liberal order be-

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[86] Chantal Mouffe, `Democracy in a Multipolar World´, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 37, 3, 2009, pp. 556-7.
[87] Mouffe, `Democracy´, pp. 559-60.
[88] Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, `Democracy Promotion as a Practice of Liberal World Order´, in Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart, *Liberal World Orders*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 202.
[89] Mark E. Warren, `Democracy and the State´, in John S. Dryzek and Bonnie Honig and Anne Phillips, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 387.
[90] Marc F. Plattner, `From Liberalism to Liberal Democracy´, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Democracy: A Reader*, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 66.

fore a democratic one evolved.[91] Fareed Zakaria reiterates by stating that the Western picture of a singular unit of liberalism and democracy can be countered by its own 19th century history, which had been dominated by aspects of constitutional liberalism rather than the people´s power and thus democracy. Furthermore, the 1990s revealed an increase in illiberal democracies characterised by elected governments that deprived their citizens of their rights and freedoms.[92] Democratic institutions can thus successfully be established but used to pursue illiberal policies, as also results of EU democracy promotion in third countries sometimes reveal.[93] At the same time, Middle Eastern states in the 1990s are an example for increasing liberalisation that was detrimental to democratisation.[94] Accordingly, emphasising a historically grown and inseparable relationship of liberalism and democracy can not only be countered by the existence of illiberal democracies, but also by liberal non-democracies.[95] Lastly, the judgment on the state of democracy depends on the choice of elements and the conceptual definition, and a different picture evolves if a conceptual separation is considered – for example, if liberalism is seen as concerning governance (the performance and quality of a government) and not democracy (mutual accountability) per se, as Philippe C. Schmitter explains.[96]

1.5.2 Preconditions for democratisation

Besides the discussion on the relationship of liberalism and democracy, the discourse on liberal democracy is dominated by scholars and policy makers who emphasise a specific set of procedures linked to the concept of democracy, and others who focus on certain prerequisites for democratisation.[97] The latter popularly entail modernisation, secularisation, and economic growth,[98] despite wide agreement that the assumption that democratisation needs certain preconditions is not tenable.[99] The link between democratisation, modernisation and secularisation is problematic, as it not only encompasses the separation of the church and the state but of religion and politics in general. As Andrea Teti illustrates, this separation is again rooted in

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[91] Held, *Models of Democracy*, p. 4.
[92] Fareed Zakaria, `The Rise of Illiberal Democracy´, 1997, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/53577/fareed-zakaria/the-rise-of-illiberal-democracy (consulted 27 January 2015).
[93] Beate Jahn, `Rethinking democracy promotion´, *Review of International Studies*, 38, 2012, p. 691.
[94] Lisa Anderson, `Searching Where the Light shines: Studying Democratization in the Middle East´, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9, 2006, p. 203.
[95] Marc F. Plattner, `Liberalism and Democracy: Can´t Have One Without the Other´, *Foreign Affairs*, 77, 2, 1998, p. 172.
[96] Philippe C. Schmitter, `Crisis and Transition, But Not Decline´, *Journal of Democracy*, 26, 1, 2015, pp. 36-7,
[97] Kurki, `Democracy and Conceptual Contestability´, p. 366.
[98] Teti, ` Globalization of Democracy´, pp. 82-8.
[99] Jonas Wolff, `Die externe Förderung von Demokratie und Good Governance zwischen Dominanz und Konvergenz´, in Hans-Jürgen Burchardt, ed., *Nord-Süd-Beziehungen im Umbruch: Neue Perspektiven auf Staat und Demokratie in der Weltpolitik*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009, p. 257.

a historical misreading of the West.[100] The idea that democracy is based on secularism ignores the fact that religion is an institutionalised feature of Western democracies, as well as an individual right in its understanding as a private matter, and that there is a diversity of relationships between politics and religion – ranging from Great Britain´s state church to France´s laicism.[101] Furthermore, the secularist epistemology inherent to Western political discourse defines a concept of `normal politics´ and certain parameters that construct a social reality, affecting foreign policy towards non-secular societies, such as in Muslim-majority states. It characterises these Muslim-majority societies in a way that equates Islam with fundamentalism and ignores realities of separation between Islam and politics, as will be further elaborated in 3.1.3.[102] Similarly problematic is the often postulated link between democratisation and economic growth and that economic liberalisation would naturally expand to the political dimension and lastly lead to an increasingly democratic culture. First and foremost, this can be countered by the widely acknowledged detrimental effects of economic liberalisation on relative equality and socioeconomic stabilisation.[103] As Jonas Wolff criticises, the West´s neoliberal understanding of the state, as well as their promotion of elections, civil society and participation would only serve to strengthen the status quo of socio-economic conditions in third countries rather than making improvements and genuinely supporting pluralism.[104]

1.5.3 A procedural approach and minimum conditions

While the underlying norms and concepts are hardly ever put into question, procedures and possible issues of implementation are. This often leads to the assumption that there was a `fixed menu´ of elements (such as elections, the division of powers or an independent judiciary) that defines democratisation. Dominant discourses of this kind lastly legitimise the West´s privileged position in democracy support and eliminate alternative conceptions of democracy.[105] Nevertheless, the procedural approach to democratisation, most popularly a link between democracy and elections, has been stressed by policymakers and scholars from Alexis de Tocqueville to Samuel P. Huntington.[106] It is now continuously found with reference to Robert Dahl´s seven minimal conditions of democracy, a model often replicated by

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[100] Teti, `Globalization of Democracy´, pp. 86-9.
[101] Oliver Hidalgo, `Die ‚Säkularität´ der Demokratie und der Islam als politisch-theologisches Problem´, in Ahmet Cavuldak and Oliver Hidalgo and Philipp W. Hildmann and Holger Zapf, eds., *Demokratie und Islam: Theoretische und empirische Studien*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014, p. 224.
[102] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, `Political Islam and Foreign Policy in Europe and the United States´, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 3, 2007, pp. 345-8.
[103] Teti, `Globalization of Democracy´, pp. 86-9.
[104] Wolff, `Die externe Förderung von Demokratie´, pp. 261-2.
[105] Teti, `Globalization of Democracy´, pp. 82-8.
[106] Zakaria, `Illiberal Democracy´.

scholars, who sometimes add conditions like Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl,[107] or even narrow it down further, like Philippe Van Parijs.[108] Larry Diamond makes the point in holding that a basic definition of democracy entails free and fair elections, minimal freedoms and governmental accountability. Frank L. Horowitz even reinforces this notion by calling elections the *sine qua non* of a democracy,[109] while Bernard Lewis refers to Samuel P. Huntington in defining that a democracy is existent when a government is changed by elections through public vote.[110] Also Guillermo O´Donnell highlights that a government´s legitimisation today depends on the people´s right to vote and the existence of free elections. His second main components of a democracy are, as classical for liberal democracy, political freedoms, although he recognises that there are other characteristics of a democracy to be judged `better´ or `fuller´.[111] It is little surprising that a state´s level of democracy is then popularly measured by the state of its elections and the associated political freedoms.[112] The link with these freedoms, especially the individual right to life and property, freedom of religion and speech is, however, rooted in Western history.[113] Furthermore, a procedural approach to democracy ignores underlying power structures and actual cultural as well as political practices, for the sake of superficial, observable practices that are often inconsistent with the realities on the ground. This becomes particularly evident when liberal theories and procedures are applied to non-Western countries.[114]

Even if democracy´s definition and measurement is expanded beyond its electoral state, minimum conditions are too precise for the complexity of the topic on one hand and too omissive on the other hand. Laurence Whitehead illustrates, how even most of the existing democracies would fail a minimum condition test and how such models focussing on procedural elements are ignoring values and outcomes.[115]

To conclude, the scholarly discussion is fairly in line with Kurki´s model of a classical liberal democracy, focussing on the core concepts of liberty and individualism, the adjacent concepts

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[107] Schmitter and Karl, `What Democracy Is´, pp. 8-10.
[108] Philippe Van Parijs, *just democracy: the rawls-machiavelli programme*, Colchester: ECPR Press, 2011, p. 7.
[109] Francis Fukuyama and Larry Diamond and Donald L. Horowitz and Marc F. Plattner, `Reconsidering the "Transition Paradigm"´, *Journal of Democracy*, 25, 1, 2014, pp. 90-4.
[110] Bernard Lewis, `A Historical Overview´, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003, p. 209.
[111] O´Donnell, `Perpetual Crises of Democracy´, pp. 6-7.
[112] Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen, `Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices´, *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 1, 2002, p. 10.
[113] Zakaria, `Illiberal Democracy´.
[114] Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002, pp. 21-2.
[115] see for instance Whitehead, *Democratization*, pp. 11-12; Mike Alvarez and José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi and Adam Przeworski, `Classifying Political Regimes´, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 31, 2, 1996, pp. 18-20

of political equality, economic liberty and electoral competition, as well as little interest in socio-economic considerations.[116] The latter is particularly relevant for democratisation in the `developing world´, as Jean Grugel illustrates, because equal citizenship, characteristic for a democracy, depends on socio-economic and structural equality.[117] Leaving out socio-economic considerations for the sake of neoliberal policies does not lead to results many target societies of democracy promotion would expect, and thus to dissatisfaction with democratisation itself.[118]

2. Contextualisation: EU involvement in the Middle East and North Africa

> "The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law."[119]

After the Cold War democracy promotion became a vital foreign policy instrument of Western states, which claimed democracy´s universality and at the same time their own leading role in promoting it abroad.[120] This was highly influenced by the democratisation processes of Southern and Eastern Europe as well as Latin America, and the assumption that these developments could be duplicated elsewhere.[121] Accordingly, liberal democracy has since the 1990s been displayed as a teleological model, an end point to a steady progressive development, which every society should follow, but only the West has thus far reached.[122]

As this `development´ did not take place in the Middle East and North Africa, the region has long been treated as an exception and also widely been excluded from democratisation studies until the 1990s. This is also due to the fact that scholars could not foresee a democratisation process happening in the near future, which can partly be attributed to their narrow under-

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[116] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, p. 113.
[117] Grugel, *Democratization*, p. 22.
[118] Hobson and Kurki, `Democracy Promotion´, p. 194.
[119] European Union, `Consolidated Version of the Treaty of the European Union´, 09.05.2008, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:C2008/115/01&from=EN (consulted 20 April 2015).
[120] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 1-2.
[121] Scott Walker, `The Contingent Nature of Democracy Promotion´, *Political Studies*, 13, 1, 2015, pp. 2-3.
[122] see for instance Christopher Hobson, `Beyond the End of History: The Need for a ´Radical Historicisation´ of Democracy in International Relations´, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 37, 3, 2009, pp. 634-5; Pavel Dufek and Jan Holzer, `Democratisation of democracy? On the discontinuity between empirical and normative theories of democracy`, *Representation*, 49, 2, 2013, pp. 119-121.

standing of democracy – ranging from electoral competition to the existence of a liberal civil society.[123]

However, as democracy promotion became an explicit goal of the EU in the 1990s, the spread of democracy to the MENA was claimed, while an interest in security and stability guided the EU´s actual policy. Promoting a liberal democratic model in the Middle East through political and economic conditionality was the instrument for achieving a stable relationship. The underlying concept was based on the Kantian `democratic peace theory´, which concludes that democracies solve their conflicts in a peaceful way rather than going to war with each other. Since the Middle East was perceived as a region of crises, democracy should path the way to peace and prosperity. According to the EU, this should firstly be achieved by economic liberalisation which would then lead to political openness and lastly democracy. However, in fear of the consequences of an inclusive democracy which would be in favour of Islamist actors, the EU chose to cooperate with the autocrats of the region to sustain stability instead of pushing for political reforms.[124] After all, Islam was perceived as a security risk per se, as it was equated with terrorist attacks – even more so after the attacks of September 2001.[125] Cooperation with the regional governments to contain Islam and a focus on economic integration and migration management thus served the interests of the EU best.

These as well as the EU´s normative claims were captured in three major regional frameworks with the MENA region: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) of 1995, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of 2004 and its redefinition, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) of 2008.[126] According to Sandra Lavanex and Frank Schimmelfennig, one can divide three models of EU democracy promotion: linkage, leverage and governance. The first model was popular from the 1980s on and focused on the socio-economic preconditions for democratisation; the conditionality model, which linked support to political conditionality, dominated the enlargement process of the 1990s; and recently the governance model, which connects the former two, got more popular. The ENP can be seen as a major example for the latter, where an (official) approximation on a normative level should go hand in hand with stronger ties in other policy fields.[127]

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[123] Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs, `Themes in European Democracy Promotion´, *Democratization*, 9, 1, 2002, p. 3.

[124] Anette Jünemann, `Vor dem Scherbenhaufen einer verfehlten Regionalpolitik: Europa und der Arabische Frühling´, in Thorsten Gerald Schneiders, ed., *Der Arabische Frühling: Hintergründe und Analysen*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013, 100-2.

[125] Behr, `EU Foreign Policy´, pp. 24-5.

[126] Günay, `Troubled Neighbourhood´, 78-9.

[127] Lavanex and Schimmelfennig, `EU democracy promotion´, pp. 886-7.

The main thematic instrument for EU democracy promotion outside of its borders is the EIDHR, which was founded to coordinate international attempts and offer direct funding to projects.[128] Criticism has been raised because of the instrument´s inflexibility, the difficulties for projects in acquiring funds connected with a wide range of bureaucratic measures, the small range of actors supported as well as the insufficient focus on democracy and democratisation.[129]

Similarly, the regional programs of the EU are widely criticised: While the EMP and the ENP both included negative conditionality for the violation of human rights and positive conditionality for democratic and liberal changes, sanctions hardly ever followed human rights violations.[130] In practice the EU did not use its conditionality clauses to push for political reforms, but rather focused on economic growth and development. Furthermore, it strove to include civil society on paper, but excluded Islamist actors in practice,[131] while working with civil society organisations (CSOs) that matched their own norms and standards. Including Islamist actors within the new ENP framework also failed because of disagreements among EU member states.[132] With the victory of the Islamist parties of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in 2005 and 2006, the normative agenda was finally replaced by a mainly economic one.[133] This dichotomy between the EU as a normative and realist actor in international politics has caught extensive scholarly attention and while some criticise the EU´s solely realist approach, a recent debate explains the EU´s behaviour as a combination of norms and interests in the MENA region.[134]

2.1 Reaction to the Arab Spring

The revolts of the Arab Spring took the EU by surprise – the autocrats had proven to be stable partners throughout decades and the existence of an active civil society had widely been ignored. While France initially offered assistance for suppressing the demonstrations in Tunisia,[135] the EU expressed their support to the Arab public as soon as it became clear that the former governments could not guarantee stability anymore – instead, democracy should now

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[128] Andrea Teti, `The EU´s First Response to the ´Arab Spring`: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity´, *Mediterranean Politics*, 17, 3, 2012, p. 269.
[129] Lambsdorff, `The European Endowment´, pp. 1-2.
[130] Daniela Huber, `US and EU Human Rights´, pp. 104-5.
[131] Behr, `EU Foreign Policy´, pp. 25-6.
[132] Timo Behr and Aaretti Siitonen, *Building Bridges or Digging Trenches? Civil Society Engagement after the Arab Spring*, Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2013, pp. 20-1.
[133] Günay, `Troubled Neighbourhood´, p. 79.
[134] Michelle Pace, `Interrogating the European Union´s Democracy Promotion Agenda: Discursive Configurations of ´Democracy` from the Middle East´, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15, 2010, p. 616.
[135] Jünemann, `Scherbenhaufen´, pp. 96-7.

serve as a granter of stable conditions.[136] However, there was a general passivity of the EU members towards the revolutionary states and support mainly expressed itself in form of humanitarian aid.[137] In Egypt the EU largely followed the US´s lead and called for a peaceful and democratic transition,[138] while the member states did not pursue a common policy in Libya. France, which had failed to support the upheavals in Tunisia, was now on the forefront of supporting the NATO-led military intervention, while Germany for instance opposed it. Similarly, the EU members could hitherto not agree on a common policy in Syria, where the initial uprisings have grown into a bloody and long lasting civil war.[139]

Within the EU the revolutions led to a reconsideration of policies in the MENA region and to the issuing of new treaties and the revision of old ones. The revised Neighbourhood Policy of 2011 reveals a focus on `deep democracy´, incentives and positive conditionality, is built on the `3 M´s´ of money, mobility and market, and a more-for-more approach. Economic growth and development should lead to a democracy inheriting a dynamic civil society, also supported by the newly set up `Civil Society Facility´.[140] Its inclusion is similarly laid down in the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity of 2011, which is based upon three pillars: 1. democratic transformation and institution-building, 2. inclusion of civil society and 3. economic growth and development.[141] Another tool for promoting democracy in the region is the European Endowment for Democracy, which seeks to promote European values and support national democratic transition.[142] All in all, a more country-specific approach as well as the inclusion and support of local civil society organisations was laid down in the EU´s revised approach.[143]

However, criticism towards the revised EU approach to the MENA region has been loud: the EU would not offer any new strategies on how to deal with a region in crisis and transformation, nor reflect on past failures in order to work on those effectively.[144] Instead of an actual region-specific approach, it did not come up with a strategy to address the sectarian divisions,

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[136] Behr, `European Union´s Mediterranean Policies´, pp. 80-2.
[137] Jünemann, `Scherbenhaufen´, pp. 98-9.
[138] Behr, `EU Foreign Policy´, p. 28.
[139] Muriel Asseburg, `The Arab Spring and the European Response´, *International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 48, 2, 2013, p. 59.
[140] European Commission, `The EU´s response to the `Arab Spring´´, 16.12.2011, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-918_en.htm (consulted 16 September 2014).
[141] European Commission, `A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean´, 08.03.2011, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0200&from=EN (consulted 16 September 2014).
[142] European Endowment for Democracy, `Our Mission´, https://www.democracyendowment.eu/about-eed/ (consulted 16 September 2014).
[143] Behr and Siitonen, *Building Bridges*, pp. 21-2.
[144] Asseburg, `Arab Spring´, pp. 56-8.

it is argued.[145] Instead of enhancing security and promoting `deep democracy´ in the region, the member states concerned themselves with controlling the refugee flows to Europe. Additionally, while the demonstrations within the Arab Spring were directed against neo-liberal structures imposed by international financial institutions, which had contributed to inequalities in the first place, the EU did not change its approach. It tried to solve them with the exact same instruments of market liberalisation rather than attacking these problems from scratch. It promised to improve positive conditionality but mainly increased aid.[146] Accordingly, there is wide agreement that the EU has failed to put the relationship with the MENA region on new and solid ground and play an active role.[147]

3. The contestation of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa

> "Because democracy promotion is, by definition, about external support to internal self-determination, its aim cannot be neatly pre-defined from the outside but has to be (and remain) open to adaption and revision in accordance to local values and preferences in target countries."[148]

3.1 Western discourses on democracy in the MENA

There are two sides to the critique of Western democracy promotion in an Arab context, one criticising a single model approach due to the different understandings of democracy in the MENA region, and the other one arguing that people in the MENA are having the same ideas of democracy as the West and are thus receptive to dealing with democracy promotion as it is. As Larbi Sadiki illustrates, this has led to a dichotomy between relativist and exceptionalist approaches, both of which do not deliver explanations for the meaning and understanding of democracy in the MENA and do not question democracy´s conceptual underpinnings. Moreover, there is a tendency in the West to analyse regional conditions alongside Western concepts and methods while Arab scholars also tend to reproduce Western theories.[149]

As with the above illustrated scholarly discourse on liberal democracy´s prerequisites, the same can be found in the discussion on the MENA region and democracy, but often aiming at the opposite: instead of evaluating the necessary conditions for democratisation, the focus lies on explaining the absence of democratisation. Therefore, explanations are usually referring to

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[145] European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2014*, London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2014, pp. 84-5.
[146] Huber, `US and EU Human Rights´, p. 107.
[147] ECFR, *Scorecard 2014*, p. 83.
[148] Jonas Wolff, `The Question of Self-determination in International Democracy Promotion´, 2014, http://hsfk.de/fileadmin/downloads/PRIF_WP_19.pdf (consulted 15 April 2015) p. 17.
[149] Larbi Sadiki, *Rethinking Arab Democratization: elections without democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 1-11.

specific cultural, economic or religious obstacles which would be inherent to the region and detrimental to the development of democracy. Problematically, these do not only undermine existing democracy demands in the MENA,[150] but they also suggest that only Western models and a specific set of elements would count as democratic.[151]

3.1.1 Socio-economic development and external dependence

Modernisation theory is one of the theories popularly used for explaining the absence of democratisation in the MENA. It seeks to show how economic development leads to a pluralist and democratic society and `underdevelopment´ could be equated with non-democratic.[152] This economic but also social development, the argument goes further, would lead to an increased education level and form politically interested citizens. Prosperity and industrialisation would increase along the same line and result in a growing middle class (supportive of democratisation), fairer income distribution and the devolution of any kind of `traditional´ structures. Originating in the late 1950s, the reality of the 1960s already revealed how the theory was not applicable in many parts of the non-Western world. Not only existing democracies with a low level of economic development, but also non-democracies with a high level of economic development, such as the Arab oil states, countered the theory´s main arguments.[153]

Another theory referring to detrimental socio-economic conditions but from a different angle is dependency theory, aiming to explain how non-democratisation is directly related to the `developing world´s´ external economic dependence and exploitation. Authoritarian structures and cooperation with local classes would prevent the development of a democratisation-friendly middle class and support internal conflicts between `modern´ and `traditional´ parts of society. As with modernisation theory, reality revealed how the theory was not universally and generally applicable and extensive scientific criticism was raised.[154]

In a more differentiated approach, the MENA region´s history of external dependence and colonialism could be used to underline the complex relationship between Middle Eastern societies and the West. This part of history highly contributed to tensions within the former colonies (especially in the process of decolonisation), but also between the newly independent states and the former colonial powers, who had lost much of their credibility. By supporting

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[150] Fares Braizat, `What Arabs Think´, *Journal of Democracy*, 21, 4, 2010, p. 131.
[151] Mouffe, `Democracy´, pp. 559-61.
[152] Aitana Radu, `Democratization in the Arab World: Challenges and Setbacks´, *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, 3, 2009, p. 517.
[153] Alex Hadenius, *Democracy and Development*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 77-83.
[154] Ibid., pp. 91-4.

top-down nationalisation in the MENA, they strengthened authoritarianism instead of democratisation after the decolonisation. While the region´s colonial history contributes to hostility towards the West among some groups, it is often used as an argument on its own for the absence of democratisation in the Middle East because regional societies would reject democracy as a Western concept.[155] This is a highly problematic generalisation and ignores widely existing support for democracy in the region.[156]

3.1.2 `Traditional societies´

A less economic and more cultural explanation for the absence of democracies in the MENA refers to the `traditional´ societal structures of the region as well as its history of imperial and colonial intrusion, where Western models were imposed on these `traditional´ societies. Not only the existence of these `traditional´ structures but also of the superficially created ones is used as an argument against the existence of a consolidated civil society and for the absence of democratisation.[157] This explanation ignores that the idea of family and kinship is context-specific and abstract and that its political role is determined by a diversity of factors which are not just inherent to the region.[158] Within this argument tribal and kinship loyalties are viewed as opposed to the development of an independent civil society, whose purpose mainly is to be critical of or in opposition to the state. Hence, it suggests that a Western and liberal model of civil society would be a prerequisite for a democracy,[159] where civil society acts as a mediator between the sphere of society and state, checks on potential state excesses and serves as a means of communication between the two.[160] It is often argued that this kind of civil society would not exist in the MENA because of the all controlling authoritarian state, and that potential democratic actors would rather cooperate with than counter the state.[161]

Again, as exemplified before, explanations for the existence or non-existence of a civil society are based on two opposed sides, where one is highlighting the region´s exceptionalism, while

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[155] Richard Youngs, `External dimensions of democratization: The case of the Middle East´, in Nuno Severiano Teixeira, ed., *The International Politics of Democratization: Comparative perspectives*, Oxon: Routledge, 2008, pp. 154-55.
[156] Mark Tessler and Michael Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, in Marc Lynch, ed., *The Arab uprisings explained: new contentious politics in the Middle East*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, pp. 250-3.
[157] Muhammad Muslih and Augustus Richard Norton, `The Need for Arab Democracy´, *Foreign Policy*, 83, 1991, pp. 5-6.
[158] Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 84-5.
[159] Radu, `Democratization´, pp. 518-22.
[160] George Joffé, `Democracy and the Muslim world´, in Nuno Severiano Teixeira, ed., *The International Politics of Democratization: Comparative perspectives*, Oxon: Routledge, 2008, p. 168.
[161] Radu, `Democratization´, pp. 518-22.

the other one argues for prospects of a civil society[162]- but the conceptual understanding stays within a liberal frame. Instead of thinking in paradigms, which do not contribute to conceptual clarification, it would be more constructive to view the concept of civil society neutral and context-specific.[163] A good example therefore is given by Lisa Wedeen, who illustrates how in Yemen qat chew gatherings are an evidence for a public democratic sphere outside of classical liberal thinking. In these mostly public gatherings political and social problems and opinions are critically discussed and exchanged on a level of equality – every citizen can access and participate. At the same time, what might be termed `traditional matters´ are handled, such as the arrangement of marriages or the election of local chiefs. These qat chew assemblies thus are a good example for alternative democratic sites and alternative conceptions of civil society, where critical political discussions are taking place alongside `traditional´ societal structures.[164]

3.1.3 Democracy and Islam

A popular, although highly criticised, explanation for the absence of democratisation in the MENA refers to Islam´s incompatibility with democracy.[165] Firstly, it is based on the assumption that Muslim societies would only be defined by their adoption of Islam, which would stand in the way of any development and thus democratic change.[166] Secondly, it assumes that a clear distinction between politics and religion is a precondition for democratisation and that religion and politics would be inseparable within Islam.[167] With this background, political Islam is presented as a pre-modern intrusion into a modern secular order, or as fundamentalism, or a development towards a theocratic state which violates the private sphere. The understanding is, however, rooted in a secularist epistemology which attributes specific meanings to neutral terms and concepts and is itself historically and socially constructed.[168]

Problematically, Orientalist scholarship has tended to present Islam as a form of identification which presupposes and opposes certain political and social attitudes of Muslims, also to illus-

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[162] Frédéric Volpi, `Political Islam in the Mediterranean: the view from democratization studies´, *Democratization*, 16, 1, 2009, pp. 28-9.
[163] Behr and Siitonen, *Building Bridges*, pp. 6-8.
[164] Wedeen, `Concepts and Commitments´, pp. 285-99.
[165] see for instance Larry Diamond, `Why Are There no Arab Democracies?´, *Journal of Democracy*, 21, 1, 2010, pp. 94-103; Mouffe, `Democracy´, pp. 559-61; Olivier Roy, `The Transformation of the Arab World´, *Journal of Democracy*, 23, 3, 2012, pp. 2-13; Laith Kubba, `The Awakening of Civil Society´, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003, p. 34.
[166] Abdou Filali-Ansary, `Muslims and Democracy´, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner and Daniel Brumberg, eds., *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003, pp. 193-4.
[167] Hadenius, *Democracy and Development*, pp. 118-19.
[168] Shakman Hurd, `Political Islam´, pp. 348-50.

trate which liberal democratic principles are compatible with it. These assumptions are then directly translated into political practice, which leads to certain conclusions about a potential Islamist regime, international cooperation and so on. Many of these approaches are, however, narrow in the way they limit Muslim majority societies to certain characteristics of Islamic ideology. With this background, essentialist scholars try to prove that Islam and liberal democracy are not compatible, while contingentists seek to show overlaps[169]- again, the discussion stays within dichotomic thinking, as well as a liberal understanding of democracy when the constituting elements of Islam and democracy are defined. To exemplify, Abdou Filali-Ansary evaluates how secularisation had widely been taking place in most Muslim societies to show how they are compatible with a Western understanding which suggests that secularisation would be a precondition for democratisation. Furthermore, he discusses how an official rejection of secularisation among Muslim societies is related to the equation of secularism with outside imposition.[170] Meir Hatina sets another example by arguing for a liberal discourse inherent to Muslim societies in relation to democratisation.[171]

With the above named assumptions and the Western argument that popularly equates Islam with authoritarianism and sees it as a monolithic concept, approaches to democracy and democratisation are blurred. Viewing culture as a contested and flexible concept, which is not limited to Islam in the Arab region and rejecting a view that defines Islam in a monolithic manner can contribute to a more differentiated and context-specific approach.[172] As Elizabeth Shakman Hurd illustrates, political Islam

> "is a diverse and multi-faceted set of languages and discursive traditions in which moral and political order is negotiated and renegotiated in contemporary Muslim-majority societies. Like secularism, it is a powerful tradition of argumentation and a resource for collective legitimation. It is neither merely an oppositional discourse nor a nostalgic one, though elements of both may be present, just as they are in many forms of secularism."[173]

Following this argument, some scholars have elaborated how Islam is a contested concept and how several aspects of this religion are conducive to democratic features – depending on the interpretation. Khaled Abou El Fadl for instance thinks that Islam´s main values – justice through social cooperation, non-autocratic governance, mercy in social interactions – can be best preserved and implemented by a democratic form of governance. He argues that Islam

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[169] Volpi, `Political Islam´, pp. 22-8.
[170] Filali-Ansary, `Muslims´, p. 199.
[171] Meir Hatina, `Arab Liberal Discourse: Old Dilemmas, New Visions´, *Middle East Critique*, 20, 1, 2011, p. 4.
[172] Asef Bayat, *Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007, pp. 6-10.
[173] Shakman Hurd, `Political Islam´, p. 360.

and democracy are generally well compatible if democracy and Islam are first and foremost seen as defined by moral values and characteristics attached by its believers.[174]

John L. Esposito and John O. Voll illustrate how there is not only a conceptual dispute about democracy, but also about Islam, as Islam inherits several contested elements. Accordingly, the basic elements for an Islamist system – *Tawheed* (Unity of God), *Risalat* (Prophethood) and *Khilafat* (Caliphate) – can all be interpreted as supportive for or detrimental to democracy. God´s sovereignty for instance is popularly seen as conflicting with democracy´s *sine qua non* popular sovereignty in the West, but it can as well be interpreted as a basis for human equality. Similarly, the Caliphate can be interpreted as absolute power of one or as representational, encompassing the whole Muslim community where every individual has the same rights and responsibilities. Likewise, the three concepts most popularly associated with an Islamist democracy, *shurah* (consultation), *ijma* (consensus) and *ijtihad* (independent judgement) are contested. Independent judgement for instance can be interpreted as God´s will that has to be specifically implemented, or as broad principles, the implementation of which is left to individual judgement.[175] Eickelman and Piscatori reiterate that Islam is a contested concept, whose interpretation is context- and time-bound, which also influences the changing patterns of Muslim politics.[176]

From a democracy promoting perspective, a focus on how a diversity of actors – whether Islamists, secularists or liberals – can contribute to democratisation, as well as on public opinion on Islam and an Islamist government can be illuminating.[177] Problematically, the EU has thus far not questioned nor tried to assess the role of Islamists in the region on a conceptual level, which harms their democracy promotion strategies. Researching Islamist´s perceptions of democracy would for example reveal how some tend to not clearly differentiate between the public and private sphere as it is commonplace in contemporary liberal democracies, and how their view of liberty is defined by religious law.[178]

Moreover, some scholars have found that there are signs of change in the region, suggesting that the role of Islam in politics is decreasing[179] and that there are rising individualist notions in the realm of religion. Olivier Roy for instance found that religion is increasingly becoming

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[174] Khaled Abou El Fadl, `Islam and the Challenge of Democracy´, in Joshua Cohen and Deborah Chasman, eds., *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 4-6.
[175] John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 22-31.
[176] Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. 20-1.
[177] Frédéric Volpi and Francesco Cavatorta, `Introduction: Forgetting Democratization? Recasting Power and Authority in a Plural Muslim World´, *Democratization*, 13, 3, 2006, pp. 364-5.
[178] Volpi, `Political Islam´, pp. 31-3.
[179] Tessler and Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, pp. 250-5.

a matter of the private rather than the public sphere.[180] Survey data from ABII generally supports that assumption, although there are broad country variations, ranging from the lowest result of 49.9% of the surveyed Palestinians agreeing with the statement that religion should be a private matter separated from socio-political life to the highest result of 79.9% in Egypt.[181] This reinforces that "Muslim politics, while aspiring to *umma*-wide universals, derives its force and significance from the specific contexts, times, and localities in which it takes places. "Islam" cannot thus be a threat, any more than the "West" can be for Muslims [...]."[182]

3.2 Political attitudes towards democracy

Researching and questioning the attitudes of target populations can help to clarify approaches to democracy promotion. In general, public opinion surveys illustrate that there is strong support for a democratic system of governance in the MENA, and that there has been before and after the uprisings of 2010 – with different degrees depending on the country.[183] Accordingly, about 80% of the surveyed population within the Arab Barometer survey III believes that democracy is the best political system.[184]

Mark Tessler found that as in most other places in the world there hardly is a conceptual understanding of democracy among the Arab population, which underlines the complexity of the field of democracy promotion. One of the few common patterns to be found cross-regional and throughout the three surveys is the importance of accountability associated with the concept of democracy. Accordingly, people of the MENA region understand democracy as a system that holds the government accountable and enables them to influence decisions by making the government respond to their needs,[185] which falls into the category of vertical accountability.[186] Another common pattern throughout the surveys is that people want reforms towards democracy to proceed gradually rather than at once.[187] As will be demonstrated below, most public opinion surveys reveal a focus on three issues in terms of the understanding of democracy: economics, politics and Islam.

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[180] Roy, ` Transformation of the Arab World´, pp. 2-13.
[181] Tessler and Jamal and Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs´, p. 96.
[182] Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 163.
[183] Tessler and Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, pp. 250-3.
[184] Tessler `Civic Orientations of Arab Publics´, p. 5.
[185] United States Institute of Peace, `Public Opinion in the Arab World: What do the latest survey tell us?´, 31.10.2014, http://www.usip.org/events/public-opinion-in-the-arab-world-what-do-the-latest-surveys-tell-us (consulted 30 March 2015).
[186] Schmitter, `Quality of Democracy´, p. 52.
[187] Tessler and Jamal and Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs´, p. 93; Mark Tessler and Michael Robbins, `Political system preferences after the Arab Spring´, 03.11.2014, http://pomeps.org/2014/11/03/political-system-preferences-after-the-arab-spring/ (consulted 30 March 2015).

3.2.1 Between a political and economic understanding

All the AB surveys conducted throughout the last decade reveal a division among the questioned population on an understanding of democracy in economic or political terms:[188] ABI illustrates how approximately half of the surveyed people understand democracy in economic terms, while about the other half understands it in terms of political rights.[189] However, only a minority in ABI views democracy in the liberal tradition with its focus on elections and freedom of speech.[190] The politico-economic ratio of AB I stayed almost unchanged in ABII: 51% saw democracy as a political process entailing free and fair elections, the right to criticise the government and political equality, while 49% revealed an economic understanding, meaning the fight against corruption, provision of basic needs and the decrease of the gap between rich and poor. These results can be sustained almost unchanged throughout the third wave.[191]

The Arab Reform Initiative has found that democracy is a means rather than an end for the MENA population,[192] which is reiterated by AB surveys which all evaluate an instrumental understanding of democracy, where a solution for economic over political issues is prioritised.[193] This led Michael Robbins to conclude that the Arab population´s understanding is more in line with a social democratic than a liberal democratic model.[194] Ellen Lust reinforces this notion by finding that the Arab public´s focus as to democratisation lies on equal economic opportunities, a narrow rich and poor gap and the provision of basic necessities by the state. She explains this prioritisation of economic over political issues with the severe economic situations most transition countries are in and the feeling of the population that elections would not lead to remarkable changes and improvement.[195] Similarly, based on interviews conducted in the region, Michelle Pace found that people would want a `social welfare type of democracy´ which first and foremost secures basic needs.[196]

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[188] Tessler and Jamal and Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs´, p. 92.
[189] Amaney A. Jamal and Mark A. Tessler, `Attitudes in the Arab World´, *Journal of Democracy*, 19, 1, 2008, pp. 99-100.
[190] Michael Robbins, `Strengthening Democracy Promotion: Understanding Conceptions of Democracy and their Effects among Arab Publics´, 2010, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Strengthening_Democracy_Promotion.PDF (consulted 15 March 2015) pp. 2-3.
[191] United States Institute of Peace, `Public Opinion in the Arab World´.
[192] The Arab Reform Initiative and The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, eds., `The State of Reform in the Arab World: The Arab Democracy Index 2011´, 2012, http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/ari-rep11%20ang%20final%20.pdf (consulted 30 March 2015) p. 21.
[193] Jamal and Tessler, `Attitudes in the Arab World´, pp. 99-100.
[194] Robbins, `Strengthening Democracy Promotion´, p. 1.
[195] Ellen Lust, `Elections in transitions: Change and continuity´, 31.10.2014, http://pomeps.org/2014/10/31/elections-in-transitions-change-and-continuity/ (consulted 29 March 2015).
[196] Pace, `Liberal or Social democracy?´, pp. 808-9.

By contrast, the Arab Opinion Index of 2012 (conducted in 2011) concluded that a majority of respondents has a rather political understanding of democracy, focussing on civil and political rights (35% mentioned factors such as freedom of assembly, opinion, expression and the press) as well as justice and equality (21% focussed on citizen´s rights, equality and fair treatment among citizens). Less than 10% of the surveyed population mentioned political pluralism as well as economic issues, security and stability as the main requirements for a democratic country.[197] The survey has been conducted by an independent research institute, The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, and encompasses twelve Arab countries.[198] Different than the Arab Barometer surveys, the answers to the Opinion Index were open-ended and manually categorised by the authors. Despite their results supportive of a political understanding, they concluded that the Arab population would view democracy through a "political prism", but that an emerging trend in the region is reinforcing a more socio-economic and security, as well as stability related understanding.[199]

3.2.2 The role of Islam

A more differentiated and country-specific picture evolves with regards to Islam, the role of religion in politics and the role of Islam for democracy. The question of Islam´s role in politics divides the Arab population as the Arab Barometer survey of 2006-08 reveals, ranging from only 16.4% of the Lebanese surveyed preferring an Islamic democracy to 48% of the Algerians agreeing with the same notion.[200] In general, however, religiosity seems to be no determinant of political system preferences, as there is broad support for democracy among more and less religious Muslims, independent of their support for a political role of Islam.[201] The researchers found that in countries where Islam plays a political role, the entire population surveyed shows less support for it if they are dissatisfied with their government´s performance. Furthermore, men and older individuals that are less satisfied with the performance of their government in secular countries are more likely to vote in favour of a political role for Islam than people that are more satisfied. This could be explained by a stronger link of older persons to the Islamic history of the countries in question. By contrast, women and younger

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[197] Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, `The Arab Opinion Project: The Arab Opinion Index´, 2012, http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/get/001f3d04-99ef-4a4c-9454-d12394ba67b5.pdf (consulted 29 March 2015), pp. 32-4.
[198] Ibid., p. 3.
[199] Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, `The Arab Opinion Project´, p. 44.
[200] Tessler and Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, pp. 250-7.
[201] Jamal and Tessler, `Attitudes in the Arab World´, pp. 101-5.

people might think that they could live with more freedoms in a non-Islamic system of governance and thus not support Islam´s political role to the same extent.[202]

Divisions and broad country variations on that question continued to play a role in ABII, which has revealed a general decline of support for political Islam in most countries compared to the preceding survey. Differences highlight the necessity of context-bound understandings: public opinion in Iraq and Lebanon has least changed with regards to Islam´s political role, which could be explained by a comparatively strong confessional divide and high rate of conflict in both countries. Mark Tessler and Michael Robbins found that the community sphere is where political contestation mostly takes place and thus influences the relationship of Islam and politics. Time is another relevant factor, as an interpretation of the results in Palestine shows: support for political Islam declined 10% between the first and second survey, which is a comparatively high rate. An explanation could be that the first survey took place shortly after Hama´s electoral victory, which shed a positive light on political Islam. Practical policies and their break with Fatah thereafter might have contributed to the weaker result of 2010/11. Furthermore, opinions might depend on the extent to which Islamist parties are considered as governmental alternatives.[203] ABIII, however, reveals how a majority of the population surveyed does not want Islam to play a role in political life.[204]

With regards to Islamic law, the Sharia, ABI and II suggest that there is broad support for a rule of law informed by it, but again with country variations in between the two waves and the countries within one wave – only 26.3 % of the Lebanese surveyed were supportive of a Sharia informed law in ABII, while 94.6% of the citizens of Yemen supported the same notion. The Palestinian support rose from 56.1% in ABI to 83.3% in ABII. Nevertheless, the same surveys also revealed how a majority believes that laws should be made according to the people. Less of a consensus exists on the place of religion in public or private life, as some nationalities supported a separation of religion from socio-political life and some did not, sometimes with significant changes over time.[205]

To conclude, broad country variations influenced by the national, regional and international context as well as the factor of time strengthen the notion of essential contestability and the necessity of a continuous dialogue between democracy promoters and the target societies. Furthermore, the findings highlight the complexity of the democracy promotion field in gen-

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[202] Mark Tessler, `What Do Ordinary Citizens in the Arabs World Want: Secular Democracy or Democracy with Islam?´ http://arabbarometer.org/sites/default/files/files/wtkindofdemocracyppt.pdf (consulted 2 April 2015).
[203] Tessler and Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, pp. 250-7.
[204] United States Institute of Peace, `Public Opinion in the Arab World´.
[205] Tessler and Jamal and Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs´, pp. 96-7.

eral and suggest that even conceptualisation might not lead to the expected results in practice. It can, however, help to avoid misunderstandings and contribute to a more constructive and cooperative climate between the promoters and targets. Furthermore, as long as there are normative documents guiding EU external action, conceptual clarification is important to ensure coherence between rhetoric and practice. To illustrate how a context-specific understanding of democracy could look like, Tunisia will serve as an example throughout the following pages.

3.3 Democracy discourses in Tunisia

3.3.1 Tunisia´s past and national identity

Tunisia has always been regarded by the West as *the* example for stability, moderate and liberal politics in the Arab world, although illiberalism, authoritarianism and human rights violations characterised the country since its independence up until the Arab Spring. While former president Ben Ali reigned more democratic than its predecessor Habib Bourguiba, his presidency was still characterised by a single party hegemony, non-competitive elections, exclusion of the (Islamist) opposition, suppression of political differences in the name of national unity, the prioritisation of stability over political equality and top-down liberalisation.[206] Both Bourguiba´s and Ben Ali´s insistence on national unity, which is often considered a prerequisite for democratisation, prohibited political diversity and civic participation. Pre-colonial Tunisian identity was characterised by kinship and clan loyalties, urban versus rural belongings and loyalty towards further groups, like the state and Islamic scholars. When the French tried to impose identification with a French model on Tunisians, ethno-nationalism and initially also ethno-religiousness was the answer for many to strengthen the opposition to France. Ethno-religiousness was subordinated under Bourguiba, who supported the French model for modernising his country and largely destroyed clan and kinship loyalties and identification. Ben Ali continued to push for secular nationalism as opposed to religious and clan identities.[207] This has led Larbi Sadiki to conclude in the early 2000s that "Tunisia is still a long way from a democratically conceived political community with shared political space and values. The verdict on Bin Ali´s reforms is that they are homogenising Tunisia not democratising it."[208] – which is an argument against the widely held assumption that national

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[206] Larbi Sadiki, `Political Liberalization in Bin Ali´s Tunisia: Façade Democracy´, *Democratization*, 9, 4, 2002, pp. 126-37.
[207] Larbi Sadiki, `The Search for Citizenship in Bin Ali´s Tunisia Democracy versus Unity´, *Political Studies*, 50, 2002, pp. 497-507.
[208] Sadiki, `Search for Citizenship´, p. 509

unity/homogeneity and democratisation would be intrinsically linked.[209] However, despite colonial influence and a strong state pushing for Westernisation, Tunisian society has only partly accepted European norms and implemented those they felt appropriate for their country. They accommodated external influence to their own path of reform and development,[210] and as opinion polls illustrate, this path includes continuous support for democracy.

3.3.2 Democracy and stability

In line with the regional results above, there is wide support among the Tunisian public for a democratic system of governance: 90% thought that democracy was the best political system despite potential setbacks in ABII, and 83% still did so in 2013.[211] But results differ depending on the institution or time: The Transitional Governance Project for instance found that while 86% were in favour of democracy being the best system of governance in 2012, only 64% still did so in 2014,[212] which would reveal a 21% decline since 2013 – this can partly be attributed to the socio-economic situation of the country, as will be explained in section 3.3.3.

In general, there hardly exists agreement on the path to democracy or on the character of major reforms. Society remains divided among parts that prioritise stability and soft reforms, and parts that advocate for harder reforms and a clear break with the former regime.[213] The importance of stability is reinforced by public opinion polls, such as the Pew Research Center survey of 2014, where 62% of the Tunisian respondents favoured a less democratic system that guarantees stability over a full democracy with the risk of political instability.[214] When being given the choice between a stable non-democracy and an unstable democracy, however, polls reveal significantly changing opinions over short time periods, but tendentially a majority voting for an unstable democracy: in a September 2011 survey, for instance, 48% opted for an unstable democracy, while 34% voted for a stable non-democracy, in January 2012 only 26% favoured a stable non-democracy and 70% an unstable democracy. In August the gap was narrowed to 52% prioritising an unstable democracy, while 41% preferred a stable undemo-

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[209] Hadenius, *Democracy and Development*, pp. 112-13.

[210] Brieg Powel and Larbi Sadiki, *Europe and Tunisia: democratisation via association*, London: Routledge, 2010, pp. 5-12.

[211] Tessler ` Civic Orientations of Arab Publics´, p. 6.

[212] Lindsay Benstead and Ellen Lust and Dhafer Malouche and Jakob Wichmann, `Tunisian elections bring hope in uncertain times´, 27.10.2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/27/tunisian-elections-bring-hope-in-uncertain-times/ (consulted 01 April 2015).

[213] Emnja Jeblawi, `Transition to democracy in Tunisia: Where to?´, 2013, http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/ARB_65_Tunisia_E.Jeblawi_Feb13_Final_Layout_En.pdf (consulted 2 April 2015) pp. 6-7.

[214] Pew Research Center, `Tunisian Confidence in Democracy Wanes: Ratings for Islamist Ennahda Party Have Declined Since Revolution´, 15.10.2014, http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/15/tunisian-confidence-in-democracy-wanes/ (consulted 2 April 2015).

cratic system of governance.[215] These findings reveal that despite shifting opinions, the support for democracy remains strong.

3.3.3 Between a political and economic understanding

A closer look at the ABII and ABIII results reveals how contexts matter and perceptions of democracy or a preferred form of governance change over time: the ABII survey was conducted in September and October 2011, right before the elections for the Constituent Assembly, and exhibits a slightly stronger political than economical understanding of democracy. Accordingly, 49% saw political aspects as the *main characteristic* of a democracy – 27% opted for elections, 11% for the freedom to criticise the government and another 11% for political equality between citizens.[216] Similar results are presented by Arno Tausch, who weighed the Arab Public Opinion Index findings of 2011 with UNDP population data, and found that 29% (the highest percentage in the ranking) of the Tunisians see political freedoms and liberties as *characteristic* of a democracy over 26% who find that equality and justice would be so.[217] This suggests that political aspects, entailing elections and political participation, are considered more important at a time when elections take place.

However, an almost equal proportion of 48% considered economic aspects as the main features of a democratic system within the same ABII survey: 22% defined the provision of basic needs as most characteristic, 21% a narrow gap between rich and poor and 5% the fight against corruption. At the same time, a clear majority of 61% chose economic aspects over political ones (37%), when asked about the *second main characteristic* of democracy.[218] Also the causes of the revolution were considered to be economic rather than political by 63% as opposed to 14%.[219]

A post-election survey conducted in the end of 2012 reinforces context-dependence: when asked to only choose one thing that *essentially characterises* a democracy 33.1% chose the provision of basic needs, followed by 28% opting for the freedom to criticise the government,

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[215] International Republican Institute, `Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion: July 26-August 8, 2012´, 2012, http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2012 October 3 Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion, July 26-August 8, 2012.pdf (consulted 2 April 2015) p. 39.

[216] Mohammed Al-Masri, `The Arab Barometer Second Report Tunisia´, 2012, http://www.arabbarometer.org/sites/default/files/Tunisia%20Country%20Report%20ABII.pdf (consulted 1 April 2015) p. 13

[217] Arno Tausch, `A Look at International Survey Data about Arab Opinion´, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 17, 3, 2013, pp. 62-3.

[218] Al-Masri, `The Arab Barometer Second Report Tunisia´, p. 13.

[219] Tessler and Jamal and Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs´, p. 101.

26% for elections and 6.3% for a small income gap.[220] Additionally, Marc Lynch found that improving the job situation, increasing living standards and developing the economy were the most commonly cited main concerns by the Tunisian public in 2012.[221]

In the Afrobarometer survey of January 2013, the respondents were asked four times about the *most essential characteristics* of democracy, every time with different answer options. Accordingly, 38% of the Tunisians surveyed responded that choosing a government in free and fair elections would be most essential over 27% prioritising a narrow gap between rich and poor. However, when being asked about the government ensuring equal job opportunities or multiple parties competing in free elections, the former was preferred by 52% of the re- spondents over the latter (12%). The highest proportion was given to the provision of basic needs (58%) and politics being free from corruption (58%) in two different sets of questions. Basic needs were favourised for instance over the freedom of association, while the fight against corruption was considered more essential than governmental aid for people in need or protection by fair courts.[222] Hence, both economic and political aspects were considered of similar importance.

The Transitional Governance Project of 2014 highlights a more socio-economic understand- ing of democracy, with 27% of the Tunisians surveyed seeing the provision of basic needs as the *most important characteristic*, followed by 24% relating the protection of human rights to democracy, 18% opting for elections and 15% for the freedom to criticise the government.[223]

These opinion polls illustrate how the understanding of democracy depends on the time and domestic events, but also how results differ depending on the institution and formulation of the questions. However, there seems to be a slight tendency of a political understanding when people are asked about the *main characteristics* of democracy, but stronger evidence for the prioritisation of socio-economic issues when asked about the *most important feature* of a de- mocracy or the state as such. This is supportive of the MENA regional findings above, which revealed an instrumental understanding of democracy that prioritises a solution for economic over political problems. This is reinforced by the findings of the International Republican

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[220] Lindsay Benstead and Ellen Lust and Dhafer Malouche, `Tunisian Post-Election Survey: Presentation of Initial Results´, 11.12.2012, https://www.pdx.edu/hatfieldschool/sites/www.pdx.edu.hatfieldschool/files/ 121213_English%20Tunisia%20Post-Election%20Survey%20report%20FINAL_3.pdf (consulted 01 April 2015) p. 4.
[221] Marc Lynch, `Tunisia´s political turmoil´, 03.10.2012, http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/03/tunisias-political- turmoil/ (consulted 2 April 2015).
[222] Michigan State University, `Afrobarometer: Summary of Results Afrobarometer Round 5 Survey in Tunisia, 2013´, 2013, http://www.afrobarometer.org/files/documents/summary_results/tun_r5_sor.pdf (consulted 3 April 2015) pp. 30-43.
[223] Benstead and Lust and Malouche and Wichmann, `Tunisian elections bring hope´.

Institute polls in 2014, which highlight that the people´s perception of democracy is strongly linked to their economic well-being. Accordingly, people are more satisfied with the democratic process when there is immediate socio-economic improvement.[224]

To illustrate, after the new constitution was passed in February 2014, an opinion poll by the International Republican Institute showed how 55% of the Tunisians surveyed were somewhat satisfied with the present state of democracy and 8% were not at all, while only four months later 21% were somewhat satisfied and 65% not satisfied at all.[225] This could be explained by optimism after the passing of the constitution, and pessimism when it did not lead to immediate improvements of the socio-economic situation.[226]

Furthermore, the socio-economic situation seems to influence Tunisian´s opinion on whether they consider themselves `ready for democracy´ or not: 53% of the Tunisians surveyed in ABII thought that their fellow citizens would not be ready for democracy, while 71% did so in ABIII. Khalil Shikaki and Michael Robbins found that the most likely explanation is declining socio-economic conditions which made people feel less secure since the revolution. Tunisians would be dissatisfied with the reforms, declining living conditions, and the economic situation of the country. Accordingly, more than 80% saw economic problems as the most important challenge to be overcome in the ABIII survey.[227] This notion has even grown stronger since ABII, where only a majority of 68.1% saw economic issues – such as unemployment rates and inflation – as the *main problems* facing the country, over not even 2% defining either elections or democratic consolidation as main challenges.[228] Prioritisation of a solution for unemployment (38%) over democratic as well as political rights (1%) in 2013 underline the importance of improving the socio-economic situation in relation to democratisation.[229] The ABIII findings are reinforced by the Pew Research Center survey in April and May 2014, as well as by the International Republican Institute survey of the same year, where an improvement of the economic situation was seen as the *main challenge* and *most important*

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[224] International Republican Institute, `IRI Poll: Tunisia´s Democratic Transition at a Crossroads´, 19.08.2014, http://www.iri.org/resource/iri-poll-tunisia%E2%80%99s-democratic-transition-crossroads (consulted 2 April 2015)

[225] International Republican Institute, `Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion: June 22-Juli 1, 2014´, 2014, http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014 August 19 Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion%2C June 22-July 1%2C 2014_0.pdf´(consulted 2 April 2015) p. 13.

[226] International Republican Institute, `IRI Poll: Tunisia´s Democratic Transition´.

[227] United States Institute of Peace, `Public Opinion in the Arab World´.

[228] Michael Robbins and Mark Tessler, `Tunisians voted for jobs, not Islam´, 07.12.2011, http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/12/07/tunisians-voted-for-jobs-not-islam/ (consulted 30 March 2015).

[229] Michigan State University, `Afrobarometer´, p. 51.

aspect for Tunisia´s future.[230] The importance of positive developments in the economic realm for a successful democratic transition is further highlighted by scholars.[231]

3.3.4 The role of Islam

Both Arab Barometer surveys of 2011 and 2013 exhibit how a democratic system *without* the influence of Islam is preferred, by 67 % in the former and 60% in the latter, over a democratic system of governance *with* Islamic influence, which 22% opted for in the first survey and 23% in the second survey.[232] Similarly, 76.5% supported a civil state over a religious one (23.5%) in ABII.[233]

This is reinforced by a wide majority in both surveys strongly agreeing or merely agreeing that religious leaders should neither influence governmental decisions, nor that religion should be part of political life.[234] While Robbins and Tessler found that there would be a general regional decline in support for political Islam,[235] Tunisia reveals a different picture with increasing polarisation on the topic. Accordingly, in ABIII more Tunisians strongly agreed or disagreed with Islam´s role in Tunisian politics, while only the proportion merely agreeing or disagreeing decreased compared to ABII of 2011. This can be interpreted as a result of two years of experience and dissatisfaction with an Islamist government.[236] To illustrate, in ABII 19% strongly disagreed and 56% disagreed that religious leaders should be able to influence governmental decisions, while in ABIII 38% strongly disagreed and 36% disagreed. The proportion of those strongly agreeing that religious practices should be separated from social and political life increased from 36% to 44%, while there were less Tunisians merely agreeing with that statement.[237] However, while in seven other Arab countries support for a political role of Islam significantly decreased between the ABII and ABIII surveys, over 20% of the Tunisians voted in favour of it in both AB waves. Furthermore, there was 7% less support for

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[230] Pew Research Center, `Tunisian Confidence in Democracy Wanes´; International Republican Institute, `Survey of Tunisian Public Opinion: June 22-Juli 1, 2014´, p. 17.
[231] Laurence Michalak, `Tunisia: Igniting Arab Democracy´, in Jeremy Kinsman and Kurt Bassuener, *A Diplomat´s Handbook for Democracy Development Support*, 3rd edition, Ontario: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2013, p. 141.
[232] Tessler `Civic Orientations of Arab Publics´, p. 12.
[233] Robbins and Tessler, `Tunisians voted for jobs´.
[234] United States Institute of Peace, `Public Opinion in the Arab World´.
[235] Tessler and Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, pp. 250-7.
[236] Mark Tessler, `Mapping and Explaining Attitudes toward Political Islam among ordinary Citizens in the Middle East and North Africa´, 2015, http://www.erf.org.eg/CMS/uploads/pdf/902.pdf (consulted 15 May 2015) pp. 4-5.
[237] Tessler, `Mapping and Explaining Attitudes´., p. 15.

a secular democracy in 2013, which can be explained by the successful coalition building of Ennahda after the elections in 2011.[238]

The ABII survey of 2011 highlights how a secular political system is preferred over an Islamic one, which could be read as contrary to the election results, where the Islamist Ennahda party had won. However, election results do not necessarily reflect the values of people and are influenced by the party´s mobilisation efforts as well as their historical background. Not only is Ennahda a well established party with the financial needs to mobilise, but it also has a history of communal involvement, which probably contributed to their victory. Furthermore, people might have voted for them despite their own religious values because they perceived Ennahda as less corrupt in their decades-long position as opposition.[239] The higher importance of parties solving socio-economic problems over the relevance of their ideological background has also been highlighted by other scholars, such as Asma Nouira.[240]

Additionally, party founder Rashid Al-Ghannushi stated that his party represented a reformist form of Islamism which does not seek to implement an Islamic state, but a state where Islam would just be one source among others for governance and politics.[241] This is somewhat reflective of survey results of 2011: 78.4% voted for religion being a private matter separated from socio-political live and that men of religion should not influence people´s voting behaviour. Furthermore, a majority of 86.4% agreed that law should be made according to the people´s will, while 65.1% agreed that it should be informed by Sharia.[242]

Election results – while not being fully representative of what kind of democracy Tunisians want – reveal societal splits in Tunisia influenced by religiousness: In the December 2014 presidential elections Beji Caid Essebysi, member of the secular Nidaa Tounes party, won the majority of the northern Tunisian votes, while Moncef Marzouki, member of the hitherto oppositional Congress for the Republic, succeeded in the south, and the middle of the country was divided. This is reflecting the south´s stronger link to the Arabist Yousifiya Movement, as well as Islam, and the north´s stronger link to Bourguiba.[243] Adel Ltifi explains how the

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[238] Michael Robbins and Mark Tessler, `Arab views on governance after the uprisings´, 29.10.2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/29/arab-views-on-governance-after-the-uprisings/ (consulted 20 March 2015).

[239] Tessler and Robbins, `Political System Preferences of Arab Publics´, p. 260-2.

[240] Asma Nouira, `Tunisia: Elections… and then what?´, 2012, http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/Tunisia_Paper.pdf (consulted 2 April 2015) p. 5.

[241] Robbins and Tessler, `Tunisians voted for jobs´.

[242] Tessler and Jamal and Robbins, `New Findings on Arabs´, pp. 96-7.

[243] Hamadi Redissi and Hafedh Chekir, `Analysis of Tunisia´s presidential election: the ´behind the scenes` political struggle´, 2015, http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/Analysis%20of%20Tunisia%E2%80%99s%20presidential%20election%20the%20%E2%80%98behind%20the%20scenes%E2%80%99%20political%20struggle_0.pdf (consulted 21 June 2015) pp. 5-6.

Tunisian population got increasingly polarised in between the two rounds of elections in 2011 and 2014. Accordingly, the secular Nidaa Tounes´ success over the Islamist Ennahda party in the 2014 parliamentary elections would represent a shift of the Tunisian population from the issue of political Islam to the issue of the state and Tunisian national identity. The victory could partly be explained by Ennahda´s reserved reaction to Jihadist activities in the region and their way of governance which might have dissatisfied many – which reiterates the interpretation of the AB researchers above. Furthermore, Ltifi underlines how there was a split between the more conservative south and south eastern regions that largely voted for Ennahda and the north western area with its large urban areas that mainly voted for Nidaa Tounes.[244]

Independently of what the opinion polls on the role of religion illustrate, Alfred Stepan has convincingly argued that Tunisia is in a transition to democracy while holding on to a relationship of religion and politics. This is characterised by the "twin tolerations", meaning that religious citizens accept decisions and authority of a democratically elected government and that the state supports laws and civil rights of religious and non-religious citizens alike.[245] Similarly, Anthony Dworkin found that secularists will have to accept that political Islam is a relevant part of public life and inclusion as well as mutual toleration is necessary to reduce the existing societal polarisation.[246] It is thus of high importance to define a democratic model in the Islamic world that accommodates both secular and religious actors.[247]

3.3.5 A model of Tunisian democracy

As the results of a variety of public opinion surveys illustrate, it is not possible to define *one* Tunisian model of democracy and they reinforce that democracy is an essentially contested concept. Opinion changes over time and is influenced by domestic, regional and international developments, suggesting that a continuous dialogue between democracy promoters and the target population on their democracy demands is necessary. It also reiterates that integrating local preferences is vital for the satisfaction with democracy promotion results.

However, there are some trends that can help conceptualisation and clarification. Some factors steadily considered *characteristic of* a democracy by the Tunisians are mostly in line with a Western liberal understanding and encompass the separation of religion and politics, as well

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[244] Adel Ltifi, `The Tunisian Elections 2014 and Societal Polarization´, 2014, http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/Ltifi_Tunisia-Elections-Societal-Polarization.pdf (consulted 2 April 2015) pp. 4-6.
[245] Alfred Stepan, `Tunisia´s Transition and the Twin Tolerations´, *Journal of Democracy*, 23, 2, 2012, pp. 89-90.
[246] Anthony Dworkin, *The Struggle for Pluralism after the North African Revolutions*, London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2013, pp. 28-30.
[247] Hidalgo, `,Säkularität´ der Demokratie´, p. 243.

as the importance of certain political freedoms. However, the factor of religion (Islam) plays a role and socio-economic equality is continuously considered *more important* than political progress, and sometimes also defined as more characteristic of a democratic system. Economic issues in general, the provision of basic necessities in particular, but also equal job opportunities and a narrow income gap are seen as *essential characteristics* of *any political system* and, depending on the survey and how the questions and answers are formulated, of a democracy. With regards to Islam, the opinion polls revealed a majority of Tunisians preferring a secular political system, but also a noticeable minority that believes in a political role of Islam. Similarly, the Sharia is considered as an important source of law by many Tunisians. Accordingly, including Islamist actors in democracy assistance strategies and discussing their concepts of democracy seems an inevitable task for democracy promoters.

Defining a concept of Tunisian democracy is a difficult task, also because all the public opinion surveys reveal a focus on the issues of Islam in relation to democracy on one hand and on a split between economic and political understandings on the other hand, thus not leaving much room for alternative visions. When the results are assigned to Milja Kurki´s politico-economic models of democracy, the Tunisian demand for democracy seems to be mostly in line with parts of her social democratic model. Kurki´s social democratic concept entails at its core liberty, community, solidarity, political and economic equality and stability of the social order. Adjacent concepts are welfare, state regulation of the economy and representation of wage earners, property, education, a big state, full employment and grassroots civil society. Peripheral concepts entail rights claims and free trade.[248] Combined, Kurki defines a social democracy as a

> "liberal democratic system with strong controls over the economy. A dual track system of democracy. Strong emphasis on value of solidarity and communal grounding of democracy in social interaction and controls over excessive political or economic power. Education as basis of social unity."[249]

In promoting a social democratic model, the EU could build on the democratisation experiences of its member states. These were characterised by the importance of social democratic *and* liberal democratic aspects, as social protection, solidarity and economic equality were considered just as important as political reforms.[250] Whether these aspects have been and can

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[248] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, p. 115.
[249] Ibid., p. 115.
[250] Sheri Berman, ´The past and future of social democracy and the consequences for democracy promotion´, in Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, eds., *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion*, Oxon: Routledge, p. 83.

be acknowledged by EU democracy promotion practice and discourse, will be elaborated in the next two chapters.

4. EU democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa

4.1 Thematic instruments: the EIDHR and the EED

The motivation behind setting up the EED was to renew EU democracy promotion in response to the Arab Spring, as wide criticism directed at the EU´s cooperation with the authoritarian regimes contributed to an understanding that a new approach in democracy assistance was needed. The EED aims to support a wider range of actors in a more flexible manner than the EIDHR does and add value to conventional EU democracy promotion.[251] It particularly seeks to support political actors that face problems with getting support from other donors and thereby make a difference in democracy support.[252] It works at an arm-length of the EU institutions and draws on Europe´s own democratisation experience. The regional focus is on the European Neighbourhood, where `deep and sustainable democracy´ should be supported in a cooperative manner to uphold local ownership of the democratisation processes.[253]

The EED is a private foundation located in Brussels, initiated on EU level and supported as well as financed by EU member states. The idea of its set-up was first and foremost initiated by the Polish EU Presidency in 2011 and the political decision for its set-up followed towards the end of the same year. Its Brussels secretariat is managed by an Executive Director and monitored by a Board of Governors (consisting of MEPs, CSO members and two members nominated by the EC and the European External Action Service). Additionally, there is an Executive Committee which is involved in the grant-decision-making process and also serves as a bridge to other organisations and EU institutions.[254] The initial budget is around 14 million Euros,[255] and by June 2015 it had funded 155 projects.[256]

The scholarly discourse on the EED thus far seems to be – similarly to the research on EU democracy promotion in general – on practical issues of the EED rather than the underlying concept of democracy. Jaqueline Hale and Viorel Ursu for instance discuss the potential added value of the EED in relation to existing EU instruments and in terms of actors and ac-

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[251] Lambsdorff, `The European Endowment´, pp. 1-2.
[252] Appendix, Interview with Peter Sondergaard.
[253] European Endowment for Democracy, `About EED´.
[254] Lambsdorff, `The European Endowment´, pp. 1-3.
[255] European Commission, `European Endowment for Democracy – additional support for democratic change´, 09.01.2013, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-17_en.htm (consulted 20 June 2015).
[256] European Endowment for Democracy, `We Support´, https://www.democracyendowment.eu/we-support/ (consulted 09 June 2015).

tivities which should be supported. Besides that, its connection with the American National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is evaluated. The local context only plays a role insofar as the practicality of procedures is concerned and not the idea of democracy itself.[257] A general focus on the importance of EED compliance rather than duplication of existing instruments and on the problems of gaining sufficient support by a majority of EU member states is also addressed by the Institute of International and European Affairs.[258] As one of the EED´s main goals is to provide funding to actors facing obstacles in getting access to traditional EU funds, the problems associated with this are discussed in further detail.[259] In general there is a clear focus on the practicality of the EED, (potential) difficulties and the added practical value it could produce. Integrating local actors for better coherence and practical successes rather than for adding different concepts of democracy is a point of discussion.[260] This is reinforced by an EED report for the European Parliament of its work in 2013/2014, which focuses on practical issues and successes, such as funding procedures, positive and negative local developments for the implementation of EED´s support, and highlights the EED´s fast and flexible support mechanisms for a broad range of actors.[261]

Working in a broader defined field (human rights *and* democracy) and without a regional focus, the European Instrument of Democracy and Human Rights is supporting over 1200 projects in more than 100 countries, working with a budget of 1,105 million Euros for seven years. Promoting democracy is just one part of the general objectives, which also encompass support to human rights, justice, the rule of law and civil society involved in these fields[262] – without the need for the national government´s approval.[263] As the EIDHR has existed for more than a decade, there is an ongoing scholarly discussion on its work – parts of it will be pointed out in the next section on EU democracy promotion discourse.

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[257] Jaqueline Hale and Viorel Ursu, `How Could a European Endowment for Democracy Add Value?´, 2011, http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/eed-paper-20110927.pdf (consulted 19 December 2014).

[258] James Kilcourse, `A New Approach to Democracy Promotion in Europe´s Neighbourhood´, 2013, http://www.iiea.com/blogosphere/a-new-approach-to-democracy-promotion-in-europes-neighbourhood (consulted 19 December 2014).

[259] Laine Skoba, `European Endowment for Democracy: hopes and expectations´, 30.04.2013, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130458/LDM_BRI%282013%29130458_REV1_EN.pdf (consulted 20 June 2015).

[260] Julia Leininger and Solveig Richter, *The European Endowment for Democracy between Wishful Thinking and Reality. Flexible and Unbureaucratic?*, Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, 2012, pp. 1-4.

[261] European Endowment for Democracy, `Report for the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament July 2013-September 2014´, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/droi/dv/92_eedreport_/92_eedreport_en.pdf (consulted 10 June 2015) pp. 3-13.

[262] European Commission, `What is EIDHR´, http://www.eidhr.eu/whatis-eidhr (consulted 11 June 2015).

[263] European Commission, `How we support Democracy and Human Rights?´, http://www.eidhr.eu/supporting-dandhrs (consulted 11 June 2015).

It will illustrate how the scholarly debate on EU concepts of democracy exhibits two major sides: scholars who argue that the EU has a narrow perception of democracy and thus promotes one single (mostly liberal) democratic model and scholars who say there was no clear concept of democracy, but rather a lack of definition and a broad or fuzzy approach.[264] Within these two groups, further divisions can be made because scholars differ in their approach to what any model or concept of democracy entails, whether within a broad or limited conception – which is a remainder of the internal contestability of democracy and its elements. As a clear differentiation along the narrow-fuzzy line is difficult, a division along the rhetorical-practical line will be used to evaluate the scholarly discourse on the EU´s democracy concepts. To gain a more extensive picture of the EU concept(s) of democracy, it will not only entail the discourse on the EIDHR, but on EU democracy promotion in the MENA in general.

4.2 General EU discourse on democracy

Compared to the amount of literature on EU democracy promotion practice, there is little on EU discourse and the conceptual underpinnings. What can be found in the scholarly debate, however, is that democracy tends to be loosely defined in relevant EU documents, sometimes a diversity of conceptions are described within the same document, the meaning and relationship of certain elements with each other is hardly ever defined and the underpinnings mostly stick with a liberal democratic understanding. Interestingly, the word `liberal´ itself is rarely mentioned directly but rather described and implied.[265]

4.2.1 Conceptual links

A general characteristic of Western (and thus also EU) democracy promotion is a link of democratisation with further goals and concepts, such as good governance or the rule of law.[266] According to Jonas Wolff, the West creates conceptual ambiguities by not differentiating between the rather technical good governance concept and the political concept of democracy promotion. Elements that classically fall under the rubric of good governance, such as the fight against corruption and support of the rule of law, are similarly represented as part of the democracy support agenda.[267] The notion of `good´ in good governance assumes that there is a good and a bad approach to governance, assigning the former to the democracy promoter´s understanding and the latter to local ones, and thus marginalising the domestic sphere. Fur-

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[264] Anna Wetzel and Jan Orbie, `Promoting Embedded Democracy? Researching the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion´, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 16, 2011, 566-67.
[265] Pace, `Liberal or social democracy?´, p. 802.
[266] Grimm and Leininger, `Not all good things go together´, p. 395.
[267] Wolff, `Die externe Förderung von Demokratie´, pp. 248-50.

thermore, it suggests a bottom-down approach to democratisation, prioritising institutional changes on state level over societal demands.[268] In the MENA region this technocratic, governance focused approach is, however, commonly perceived as an imposition that does not have a direct relationship with democratisation,[269] which reiterates a plurality of context-bound understandings. Similarly, democracy and the rule of law are commonly mentioned in the same breath.[270] This is problematic as the rule of law can be interpreted as a concept on its own. As Amy C. Alexander, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel argue, the relationship between democracy and the rule of law is that the latter conditions the former, but does not define it. It is a condition for democracy insofar as it ensures the defining element of democratic rights.[271]

The conceptual linkages further entail stability, peace, prosperity and development – evoking the scholarly discussion on liberal democracy above. Problematically, their relationship and contribution to democratisation is usually not explained.[272] Illustrative examples are the documents surrounding the ENP of the early 2000s, where a connection between democracy and development is assumed and the latter tends to be prioritised over the former.[273] This linkage of democracy promotion and development policy tends to undermine the promotion of democratic principles, as it focuses on measures leading to better reform outcomes, such as accountability and transparency. Youngs and Pishchikova found that there is no direct relationship between these elements and democratisation, as one can improve without the other.[274]

A link between democracy, peace, prosperity and stability is well illustrated by the Partnership for Democracy and Prosperity of 2011. Again, these goals are named in the same breath, without illustrating how one could contribute to or harm the other. Instead, several aspects are listed in a linear way, like trade and investment leading to growth and poverty reduction and lastly to stability, which needs a framework of the rule of law and the fight against corrup-

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[268] David Chandler, `Back to the future? The limits of neo-Wilsonian ideals of exporting democracy´, *Review of International Studies*, 32, 3, 2006, p. 478.

[269] Richard Youngs and Kateryna Pishchikova, *A More Pluralist Approach to European Democracy Support*, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013, p. 9.

[270] see for instance European Parliament and Council of the European Union, `Regulation (EU) No 235/2014´, p. 88.

[271] Amy C. Alexander and Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, `Measuring effective democracy: A defense´, *International Political science Review*, 33, 1, 2011, pp. 42-3.

[272] Michelle Pace, `Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits of EU normative power´, *Democratization*, 16, 1, 2009, pp. 42-3.

[273] Andrea Teti and Darcy Thompson and Christopher Noble, `EU Democracy Assistance Discourse in Its New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood´, *Democracy and Security*, 9, 1-2, 2013, pp. 64-6, 75.

[274] Youngs and Pishchikova, *More Pluralist Approach*, p. 13.

tion.[275] How this line of thought is not sustainable in practice has been illustrated further above, but is even recognised by the EU itself. In an EP resolution of 2011 it is acknowledged how in the MENA the stability and security focus has not led to poverty reduction, and how growth has not led to socio-economic equality. Nevertheless, in the same paragraph a direct link between security, accountability and democracy is suggested.[276]

Similarly, human rights related topics are mostly referred to as part of the democracy assistance agenda and vice versa. This is particularly accurate with regards to the EIDHR, which is also criticised for exhibiting a prioritisation of human rights (with a focus on women´s and children´s rights) over democracy in practice.[277] With these conceptual ambiguities in mind, it is little surprising that one can find a diversity of terms equated with democracy in EU documents, ranging from good governance to the rule of law, and a diversity of adjectives attached to democracy, like `pluralist´, `participatory´ or `deep´ democracy. This is despite the EU´s acknowledgement that a consensus on the meaning of democracy – and thus conceptual clarity – is desirable.[278]

4.2.2 Liberal or social democracy?

A communication on the EU´s role in the promotion of democratisation and human rights in third countries is illustrative of the internal contestability of democracy: socio-economic rights, essential for a social democratic model,[279] are described as intrinsically linked to democracy in the introduction, but not further elaborated in the rest of the document. They are only mentioned again in so far as they concern development and not described in their relation to democracy.[280] Similar findings were made by Andrea Teti, Darcy Thompson and Christopher Noble: the preamble of the EIDHR review of 2001 suggests that economic, social and cultural rights are as important as civil and political rights, and that the social and economic setting of a state is relevant for democratisation while the rest of the text cannot keep up with this perspective. Instead, they are linked to development policy instead of democracy

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[275] European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, `Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean´, 08.03.2011, Brussels, COM(2011) 200 final, pp. 8-14.

[276] European Parliament, `EU external policies in favour of democratization: European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2011 on EU external policies in favour of democratization (2011/2032(INI))´, 07.07.2011, P7_TA(2011)0334, 6.

[277] Federica Bicchi, `Democracy Assistance in the Mediterranean: An Overview´, *Mediterranean Politics*, 14, 1, 2009, pp. 64-71.

[278] Anne Wetzel and Jan Orbie, `With Map and Compass on Narrow Paths and through Shallow Waters: Discovering the Substance of EU Democracy Promotion´, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 16, 2011, pp. 706-12.

[279] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 114-15.

[280] Teti, `The EU´s First Response´, pp. 269-72.

promotion.[281] This is not only supportive of a shallow democratisation agenda, but little interest in socio-economic considerations also strengthens a classical liberal democratic understanding.[282] Essentially, democracy in a liberal sense is confined to the political arena, while the economic sphere is being regarded as separate.[283]

Andrea Teti found that on the surface of EU-MENA treaties the EU is careful not to formulate a single model approach and mentions the importance of local ownership but that substantially these documents would be about economic liberalisation and procedures. Thus, the preambles mostly hold prospects for the recognition of the multiple meanings of democracy, while the main parts tend to refer to a liberal democratic model.[284]

4.2.3 Recent developments in EU discourse

Teti, Thompson and Noble illustrate how the liberal agenda in EU documents published in reaction to the Arab Spring is still intact – with a particular focus on elections, civil and political rights and little emphasis on socio-economic considerations. Interestingly, the EU highlights that it does not want to impose a one-size-fits-it-all democracy model and that a country-specific approach would be of importance. According to these scholars, the definition of `deep democracy´ is, however, narrow and does not put emphasis on socio-economic rights, while also the definition of civil society would be fairly in line with a liberal democratic understanding.[285] Anthony Dworkin also argues that the EU´s concept of `deep democracy´ would mainly be about political pluralism and inclusive political institutions.[286]

A different view with a similar conclusion is expressed by Milja Kurki, who argues that in EU rhetoric `deep democracy´ would represent a conceptual step forward as it describes a democratic model rooted in the target states which seeks to minimise social inequality. Problematically, the EU´s welfare support does not necessarily aim to decrease inequality and can be detrimental to the welfare functions the target state should be responsible for. Also, a substantial shift towards this ideal cannot be sustained throughout EU documentation in response to the Arab Spring, as the emphasis is on liberal ideals and procedures, ranging from elections to the rule of law.[287] However, Kurki also found that pluralism would be increasingly recognised in EU rhetoric in its reference to social democratic and participatory ideals. What is missing,

[281] Teti and Thompson and Noble, `EU Democracy Assistance Discourse´, pp. 64-6, 75.
[282] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, p. 113.
[283] Hobson and Kurki, `Democracy Promotion´, p. 202.
[284] Teti, `Globalization of Democracy´, pp. 83-90.
[285] Teti and Thompson and Noble, `EU Democracy Assistance Discourse´, pp. 70-5.
[286] Dworkin, *The Struggle for Pluralism,* p. 10.
[287] Milja Kurki, `How the EU can adopt a new type of democracy support´, 2012, http://fride.org/download/WP_112_democracy_support.pdf (consulted 20 May 2015) pp. 6-8.

is a clarification of the relationship between different concepts and their underlying principles. Furthermore, this ambiguous rhetoric takes emphasis off the need to define what is actually meant by democracy.[288] Similarly, Anne Wetzel and Jan Orbie found that the EU has failed to clearly conceptualise democracy in the documents published since the Arab Spring.[289]

To conclude, there are recent signs in EU rhetoric that multiple understandings of democracy exist and that spreading a universal liberal model in form of a one-size-fits-it-all concept is not desirable. In the same breath, however, formulations of democracy and the consisting elements are made within a mostly liberal frame, emphasising individual rights, economic liberalisation, good governance and the rule of law, focusing on procedures to the detriment of socio-economic rights and equality. EU rhetoric thus is ambiguous and fuzzy, offering a broad concept of democracy while at the same time defining the elements in a narrow, liberal fashion.

4.3 Democracy models in EU practice

4.3.1 Liberal democracy in general...

With regards to EU democracy promotion practice, there is wide agreement on the EU being a narrow liberal actor. According to Pace, the EU has always promoted a liberal democratic model in practice, before and after the uprisings of 2010. This would manifest itself in a procedural, technical approach to democratisation and the underlying assumption that elections would lead to democratic institution building.[290] This procedural approach mainly entails an election monitoring and a rule of law focus, lastly aiming at economic growth.[291] The understanding of the rule of law itself can be criticised as too technocratic, as its focus would be on institutions rather than on the underlying state-society relationships, according to Youngs and Pishchikova.[292] Vicky Reynaert thus holds that the EU follows a one-size-fits-it-all liberal democracy promotion agenda, which would not only equate democracy with good governance but also mainly strive to increase people´s individual freedoms in practice.[293]

Gillespie and Youngs reiterate that EU practice was in line with the scholarly discourse on liberal democracy: economic liberalisation (leading to political liberalisation) and good gov-

[288] Kurki, `How the EU can adopt a new type of democracy support´, pp. 3-4.
[289] Wetzel and Orbie, `EU´s Promotion of External Democracy´, p. 6.
[290] Pace, `Liberal or social democracy?`, pp. 801-4.
[291] Teti, `Globalization of Democracy´, pp. 90-1.
[292] Youngs and Pishchikova, *More Pluralist Approach*, p. 14.
[293] Reynaert, `Preoccupied with the Market´, pp. 632-7.

ernance are promoted as the main pillars of democratisation.[294] This is also criticised by Reynaert because the EU´s focus on economic liberalisation would be detrimental to socio-economic equality. The problem with the concept of good governance would be that it is broadly defined in EU policy documents but narrowly applied in effectiveness and anti-corruption measures in practice.[295] As illustrated further above, the assumption that economic would lead to political liberalisation and lastly democratisation cannot be sustained. Political liberalisation in an authoritarian state does not have to be a trigger for a transition leading to democratisation,[296] and economic liberalisation can occur without democratisation, as exemplified by Ben Ali´s Tunisia.[297] In Tunisia and also across the region it tendentially led to a reduction of political freedoms and welfare – a gap that was then often filled by Islamist organisations.[298]

Furthermore, the concept of civil society is used to advance liberal values as only certain actors are considered democratic and the understanding of civil society as opposed to or at least sceptic towards the state is in line with that understanding.[299] As Ayers argues, Western democracy promoters tend to use civil society for the promotion of private economic interests and promote non-governmental organisations to strengthen the middle class[300] – *the* democratisation-friendly class, according to modernisation theory.[301] Civil society thus plays a role in practice, but mainly to strengthen and establish liberal democracy.[302]

4.3.2 ...Elections in particular?

Michelle Pace found that elections and basic freedoms were the main focus of EU democracy promotion practice at least until the victory of Hamas in 2006, where the EU did not accept a legitimately elected government. This procedural approach would have further been accompanied by an economic agenda that should lead to progress, stability and democratisation.[303]

By contrast, Wetzel and Orbie disagree with the common criticism that the EU would mainly promote elections within their democracy promotion strategies. At least in comparison with liberal democracies in Europe, the EU´s focus on procedures in general and elections in par-

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[294] Gillespie and Youngs, `Themes in European Democracy Promotion´, p. 12.
[295] Reynaert, `Preoccupied with the Market´, pp. 628-9.
[296] Burnell and Calvert, `Resilience of Democracy´, p. 7.
[297] Larbi Sadiki, `Bin Ali´s Tunisia: Democracy by Non-Democratic Means´, *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 1, 2002, p. 69.
[298] Youngs, `External dimensions of democratization´, pp. 164-5.
[299] Hobson and Kurki, `Democracy Promotion´, pp. 208-9.
[300] Alison J. Ayers, `Demystifying Democratisation: The Global Constitution of (Neo)Liberal Polities in Africa´, *Third World Quarterly*, 27, 2, 2006, pp. 329-32.
[301] Hadenius, *Democracy and Development,* pp. 77-83.
[302] Hobson and Kurki, `Democracy Promotion´, p. 206-7.
[303] Pace, `Paradoxes and contradictions´, pp. 45-6.

ticular would be much narrower outside of Europe.[304] Also Kurki and Hobson found that democracy promotion today would not be limited to elections anymore, but would aim to strengthen (liberal) civil society and grass roots organisations.[305]

Youngs does not support the electoral focus accusation either, but from a different angle: he criticises that elections and liberal rights in general are *underestimated* in contemporary democracy promotion. He defends the liberal democratic model, as other models of democracy would not necessarily be more responsive to local demands than the liberal one.[306] Youngs and Pishchikova even found that the EU has recently changed their democracy promotion approach towards a model with focus on social equality and collective rather than individual freedoms. They concluded that what the EU would try to enhance are pre-liberal values because it would not fully support liberal norms.[307]

4.3.3 Conceptual links and fuzzy practice

To conclude, scholars come to different conclusions as to EU democracy promotion practice, because "it is often unclear, when the EU promotes democracy, whether it wishes to advance the cause of ´liberal democracy` or whether it has in mind a more ´social democratic` or ´European social model` vision of democracy."[308] Discrepancies thus exist about whether the EU focuses on elections or not, on socio-economic considerations or not, and so on – although the electoral focus accusation seems hardly sustainable anymore. There is, however, a tendency that strengthens (neo)liberal democratic practice, as most scholars agree on a technocratic, institutional approach with a fixed set of institutions and practices that are aimed at influencing the economy of the target states. A liberal frame is widely acknowledged, but again, different elements are considered with different importance. EU practice thus reveals a ´fuzzy´ and often liberal understanding of democracy, which enables the EU to be flexible in its decisions on which democratic actors and processes to support and which ones not to support. This leads to practical inconsistencies, which makes the target countries question the EU commitment to democracy.[309] This is also influenced by the absence of dialogue between the EU and actors in third countries on their understanding of democracy,[310] which suggests that

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[304] Wetzel and Orbie, ´With Map and Compass´, pp. 707-14.

[305] Hobson and Kurki, ´Democracy Promotion´, p. 206-7.

[306] Richard Youngs, ´Misunderstanding the Maladies of liberal democracy promotion´, 2011, http://fride.org/download/WP106_Misunderstanding_maladies_of_liberal_democracy_promotion.pdf (consulted 2 April 2015) pp. 8-12.

[307] Youngs and Pishchikova, *More Pluralist Approach*, pp. 20-1.

[308] Kurki, ´How the EU can adopt a new type of democracy support´, p. 1.

[309] Wetzel and Orbie, ´EU´s Promotion of External Democracy´, pp. 2-3.

[310] see for instance Wetzel and Orbie, ´With Map and Compass´, p. 722; Kurki, ´How the EU can adopt a new type of democracy support´, p. 9.

the EU does not understand democracy to be context-bound. Accordingly, EU rhetoric since the Arab Spring, thus far, seems to be ahead of EU practice with regards to the idea and understanding of democracy promoted.

5. The EIDHR and the EED: democracy discourse since the Arab Spring

To evaluate developments in EU discourse on the concept of democracy in democracy promotion since the Arab Spring, the EED and EIDHR texts introduced in the first chapter are examined in a Qualitative Content Analysis. Before the results are presented, the category system will be explained and the direction of analysis recalled.

The research questions for this thesis were twofold and interrelated − the first one was directed at conceptual breaks and continuities (pluralism vs. universalism) in EU democracy promotion since the Arab Spring, based on the EED and in comparison to the EIDHR. To assess these breaks and continuities, chapter four encompassed the general EU democracy promotion discourse and practice until recently. As the scholarly discourse has illustrated, the EU´s democracy rhetoric and practice is still dominated by a mainly liberal model. This is particularly accurate in practice and to a lesser extent in EU policy documents, where the EU has recently been trying to acknowledge a multiplicity of democracy ideas. However, conceptual ambiguities and links with other concepts are created without an explanation of their relationship, which makes the EU a fuzzy democracy promoter. Accordingly, the EED would add value and break with past EU democracy promotion, if it was conceptually clear (with definitions of and links between elements), but, first and foremost, if it would reveal a pluralism in their understanding of democracy − meaning that it does not suggest that there was a universal liberal model of democracy.

The second question was directed at the responsiveness of the EED to local demands and a positive answer would be that that the EED understands democracy as context-bound. As chapter three has illustrated, there is a diversity of democracy discourses in the MENA, sometimes overlapping with the liberal model, sometimes more with a social democratic model, sometimes associating completely different values with a democratic system of governance − the understanding of democracy depends on the context. The opinion polls and scholarly discourse revealed how socio-economic demands, characteristic for a social democratic model, are steadily considered *more important* than liberal ones, even though liberal democratic values are sometimes viewed *more characteristic* for a democracy. Furthermore, political Islam and Islamist actors play an important role in Muslim-majority societies that has to be accommodated in a democratic system of governance. Accordingly, if the EED would value local

ownership, the latter could be ensured; if it would acknowledge a pluralism of understandings of democracy and be open for other than the liberal models, chances for responding to MENA discourses would be higher – and lastly, the EED would add value.

The research questions and category system were built on the overall theoretical assumption that democracy is an essentially contested concept, meaning that there is a plurality of context-bound understandings of democracy, which have to be acknowledged in democracy promotion. Additionally, the previous findings of this thesis guided the analysis.

5.1 The QCA category system

The category system for the QCA is twofold – one part consisting of three models of democracy, the second part of C4 `context-bound´ as opposed to C5 `EU fuzzy democracy´. The first three categories (C1 liberal, C2 social, C3 participatory democracy) serve to assess conceptual clarity (defined concept(s) and elements) and pluralism (more than one model of democracy) in EU discourse. With C4 the value of context-boundedness will be assessed and with category five the opposite, fuzzy EU democracy promotion. C1, C4 and C5 build upon the findings of this thesis, while categories two and three are partly based on Milja Kurki´s politico-economic models of democracy[311] and partly on further secondary literature (a concrete discussion of C2 and especially of C3 would have exceeded the scope of this thesis). Moreover, the categories represent ideal types of democracy models – the definitions are contested and the choice for the elements was partly subjective. Where a clear differentiation between categories and variables was hard to draw, coding rules were added as suggested by Mayring. Furthermore, where it was possible, anchor samples from the text corpus were added to the category system.[312]

Category 1 (C1) is called **classical liberal democracy,** which was chosen because of the scholarly consensus on the EU being a mostly liberal democracy promoter and the discourse on liberal democracy in general. It consists of eight variables, encompassing V1 Economic liberty and competition, V2 Political equality, V3 Electoral pluralism and competition, V4 Liberal civil society, V5 Rule of law and horizontal accountability, V6 Individual freedoms, political and civil rights, V7 Minimal state and V8 Separation of economics and politics. While the choice for the variables and parts of their definition is based on the findings of this thesis, further secondary literature was used for the exact definition of the variables.[313]

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[311] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 113-16.
[312] Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, p. 95.
[313] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 30-40; Held, *Models of Democracy,* pp. 25, 42, 70-80, 223; Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, `Beyond the Radial Delusion: Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy and Non-

Category 2 (C2) is a model of **social democracy**, which is used for the QCA because the MENA and Tunisian democracy discourse suggested preferences for a social democratic model – however, the model used here for the analysis is an ideal type and not based on Tunisia per se, as it was not possible to define a specific model of Tunisian democracy. It encompasses six variables: V1 Big state and state regulation of economy, V2 Welfare and social justice, V3 Socio-economic community and solidarity, V4 Political and socio-economic equality, V5 Cooperative and solidaristic civil society and V6 Individual and communal rights and freedoms.[314]

Category 3 (C3), **participatory democracy,** was chosen because it constitutes a radically different model to conventional democracy promotion and EU compliance with it would support the notion of conceptual pluralism. Its five variables encompass V1 Active civil society, V2 Direct participation of active individuals, V3 New spheres of democracy, V4 Community, solidarity and self-development and V5 Decentralised authority.[315]

Category 4 (C4), **context-bound democracy**, serves to assess the value of local ownership and whether the EU understands democracy as context-dependent. It was defined in accordance with the findings of this thesis. Therefore, chapter three was used to line out context-dependent democracy discourses in the MENA in general and Tunisia in particular. The variables for C4 are threefold and entail V1 National ownership, V2 Variety of contexts and V3 Local civil society.

Category 5 (C5) refers to **EU-fuzzy democracy** and is based on the scholarly discourse on conceptual ambiguities of EU democracy promotion, additionally to and outside of the liberal model. Compliance with the variables will underline the `old policy with a new name´ possi-

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democracy´, *International Political Science Review*, 31, 3, pp. 269-83; Thomas Janoski, *Citizenship and civil society: a framework of rights and obligations in liberal, traditional, and social democratic regimes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 30-2; Weale, *Democracy*, p. 193; Claire Mercer, `NGOs, civil society and democratization: a critical review of the literature´, *Progress in Development Studies*, 2, 1, 2002, pp. 5-9.
[314] Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 66-74; Berman, `past and future of social democracy´, pp. 75-84; Günther Sandner, `Veranstaltungsreihe Leistung und Solidarität: Die Zukunft der Sozialen Demokratie´, http://www.renner-institut.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Themen/Programmatik_der_Sozialdemokratie/SD-Konzept-_Sandner.kurz.pdf (consulted 08 June 2015); Thomas Meyer, *Theorie der Sozialen Demokratie*, 2nd edition, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011, pp. 13-33; Heikki Patomäki, `Democracy promotion: neoliberal vs social democratic telos´, in Christopher Hobson and Milja Kurki, eds., *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion*, Oxon: Routledge, vol. 20, pp. 68-84; Ottfried Höffe, *Democracy in an Age of Globalisation*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2007, vol. 3., pp. 147; Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Chambers, `Civil Society and the State´, in John S. Dryzek and Bonnie Honig and Anne Phillips, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 370-5; Janoski, *Citizenship and civil society*, pp. 20-31, 112-36; Weale, *Democracy*, p. 200; Richard Youngs, `The European Union and Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A New or Disingenuous Strategy´, *Democratization*, 9, 1, 2002, pp. 44-5.
[315] Chambers and Chambers, `Civil Society and the State´, pp. 367-72; Held, *Models of Democracy,* pp. 210-15; Höffe, *Democracy,* pp. 76-7, 227; Kurki, `Conceptions of Democracy´, pp. 373-79; Kurki, *Democratic Futures*, pp. 76-86, 116; Weale, *Democracy*, 27; Grugel, *Democratization*, pp. 23-7.

bility, while non-compliance will support a renewal of democracy promotion. It particularly builds upon chapter four, which illustrated general EU democracy promotion rhetoric and practice. The category consists of seven variables: V1 Good governance and the rule of law, V2 Universality of values, V3 European model democracy, V4 Development, V5 Security, V6 Peace, prosperity and stability, V7 Adjective democracy.

The category system with its variables, definitions, anchor samples and coding rules is illustrated in 5.2, while the structuring results in tabular form are exhibited in 5.3, followed by the conclusions drawn for the research questions in 5.4 and 5.5.

5.2 Coding guideline

Category	Variable	Definition	Anchor samples	Encoding rules
C1 Liberal democracy	C1 V1 Economic liberty and competition	o Freedom to accumulate unlimited economic resources in a free and self regulating capitalist market with no state interference o Unrestricted and free exchange of goods and labour o Competition of companies and individuals in the market		
	C1 V2 Political Equality	o Individuals have equal opportunities to be involved in politics, they have equal rights in political decision-making to define the conditions and boundaries of private autonomy o Equal capacity of citizens to protect their own interests o Universal suffrage	"[…] the ability of men and women to participate on equal terms in political life and in decision-making is a prerequisite of genuine democracy;"	Code if *only* political equality or parts of its definition are mentioned.
	C1 V3 Electoral pluralism and competition	o Political competition between a choice of political parties, factions and potential leaders in regular, free and fair elections to form a representative government o Inclusive political institutions	"whereas political parties and freely and fairly elected parliaments are centrally important to each democracy and democratisation process [...]" "There can of course be different systems of democratic governance [...] but they must all rely on free and fair elections, [...]"	Code if elections as such or parts of the definition are mentioned. If reference to procedures and institutions see C5V1.
	C1 V4 Liberal civil society	o Independent civil society separated from, sceptic towards or in opposition to the state o Civil society as check and balance of state power o Arena of individual interest and self-realisation, where citizens can pursue their private lives	"In this regard, civil society is to be understood as spanning all types of social actions by individuals or groups that are independent from the state."	Code if reference to definition or emphasis on NGOs.

	C1 V5 Rule of law and horizontal accountability	o Authorities abide by the law that circumscribes the limits of state power o Existence of independent judiciary o Rules regulating state violence are public, transparent, universal and binding on all o Legal system upholds political and civil rights and is thus a condition of individual freedom o Corruption control o Checks and balances between the executive, judicial and legislative branches of the government o Division of power for mutual accountability	"[...] democratic control, domestic accountability and the separation of powers are essential to sustain and independent judiciary and the rule of law which in turn are required for effective protection of human rights."	Code if defined according to (parts of the) definition. Without a definition see C5V1.
	C1 V6 Individual freedoms, political and civil rights	o Individuals are naturally entitled to rights that cannot be violated by anyone o Civil and political rights encompass freedom of speech, opinion, association, demonstration, expression, assembly, religion, conscience, information, equal acess to and treatment by the law, protection against illegitimate arrest, exile, torture, unjustifiable intervention in personal life of citizens o Focus on negative freedom from overarching political authority o Right to private property as natural right	"All aspects of democratisation will be addressed, including […] the promotion and protection of civil and political rights such as freedom of expression online and offline, freedom of assembly and association."	Code, if category or elements of the definition are mentioned without reference to social and economic rights.
	C1 V7 Minimal state	o Scope and power of the state are strictly limited o State creates a neutral framework that enables citizen to pursue private lives free from violence and unwanted interference o Little circumscribing of the public sector o Development of private sector		

	C1 V8 Separation of economics and politics	o Market separated from democracy o Politics as distinct and separate sphere apart from economy, culture and private life		Code if socio-economic aspects are described as not being a feature of a democracy.
C2 Social democracy	C2 V1 Big state and state regulation of economy	o Socially controlled market economy with just redistribution measures o State regulates the public realm and acts as guardian of society to protect from capitalism´s destructive tendencies and destabilising consequences of the markets o State fights against inflation and aims at full employment		
	C2 V2 Welfare and social justice	o State takes care of social security and justice, offers unemployment support, and guarantees basic needs o State offers social services like health, education, care of elderly, daycare (mostly) for free o Welfare state is mainly financed by general revenues o Job protection policies are supported by active labor market and education policies		Do not code if only justice is mentioned as such.
	C2 V3 Socio-economic community and solidarity	o Individuals believe that ensuring a basic level of well-being for all citizens is a worthy goal o Feeling of collective responsibility for eliminating socio-economic risks o Stability is upheld through social solidarity and a solidaristic wage policy o State actively promotes a sense of community		Code if community and solidarity refers to socio-economic aspects as in the definition. Otherwise see C3V4.

C2 V4 Political and socio-economic equality	o State and society are actively putting forward equal opportunities and equality in the political, social and economic realm o Fight against social divisions and conflict o Narrow gap between rich and poor and fair distribution of wealth o Equal access to basic services and living standards	" […] promoting the equal participation of women and men in social, economic and political life, […]"	Code if reference to political *and* socio-economic equality, or only emphasis on socio-economic equality.
C2 V5 Cooperative and solidaristic civil society	o Strong civil society complemented by the state which pursues plural ends in association and co-operation with each other o Characterised by toleration and respect for each other o Empowerment of subordinate classes o Emphasis on grassroots movements, trade unions and social movements	"[…] stronger emphasis on socially excluded groups by supporting, among others, women´s rights and women´s increased participation, as well as grassroots movements and media activists."	
C2 V6 Individual and communal rights and freedoms	o Political and civil rights as in the liberal model, but individual *and* communal property, individual *and* group rights o Emphasis on economic and social rights (social security, health services, family allowances, education, pensions, unemployment compensation, work injury insurance,...) o Positive *and* negative freedoms: freedom from arbitrary intervention and opportunities for action		Code if mentioned as part of democratisation agenda-

C3 Participatory Democracy	C3 V1 Active civil society	o Civil society as an active sphere of democracy, a public sphere where ideas, interests and values are shaped and made politically effective	"[...] supporting, developing and consolidating democracy in third countries, by enhancing participatory […] democracy, strengthening the overall democratic cycle, in particular by reinforcing an active role for civil society within this cycle" "Civil society builds social capital, trust and shared values, which can be transferred into the political sphere."	
	C3 V2 Direct participation of active individuals	o Individuals directly and actively participate in political and civil life and exercise their rights o Involvement of citizens in decision-making in all spheres of life (politics, work, school, community, etc.) o People as the bearers of politics o Democracy from below to foster maximum self-development		Code if reference to participation in all spheres of life or to *direct* and *active* participation. Otherwise see C1V2 or C2V4.
	C3 V3 New spheres of democracy	o Expansion of democratisation in spheres previously left out from democratisation o Possibility of experimenting with political forms (e.g. workers´ democracy) o Therefore open and fluent societal structures and institutions to allow experiments		
	C3 V4 Community, solidarity and self-development	o Democracy mainly is about self-development o Self-reflection through the community o Improved educational levels and open information system form self-reflective citizens o Strong sense of community and trust between individuals of society strengthens democracy o Individual fulfillment by interdependence on and in relation to others	"[…]supporting measures to facilitate peaceful conciliation between segments of societies, including confidence-building measures relating to human rights and democratisation;"	

	C3 V5 Decentralised authority	o Decentralisation of power, decision-making and authority structures o Participatory forms of local government		
C4 Context-bound democracy	C4 V1 National ownership	o Democratisation process should be in the hands of and determined by local populations	"whereas it is recognised by the EU that democracy cannot be exported and that the principle of ownership is paramount for fostering a genuine democratic culture."	
	C4 V2 Variety of contexts	o The meaning of democracy is context-bound, different contexts determine different understandings of democracy	"The EED will operate in the most flexible and effective manner reflecting the situation, the specific context and the needs of its beneficiaries"	
	C4 V3 Local civil society	o Open concept of local civil society to allow integration of a diversity of actors	"The Union […] should seek regular exchanges of information and consult with civil society at all levels, including in third countries" "[...] in order to enable the EED to support a wide variety of local actors striving for democratic reforms;" "[...] necessary to develop better cooperation with and open grants to religious communities, including persecuted religious minorities"	Code if reference to o MENA-region specific actors, such as religious actors o wide variety of actors o local civil society

C5 EU fuzzy democracy	C5 V1 Good govern-ance and the rule of law	o Good governance or rule of law as main pillar or equated with democracy o Effectiveness, strengthened institutional and administrative capacity o Institutions and procedures leading to democratisation o State-centred perspective o Fight against corruption	"[...] developing and consolidating democra-cy under this Regulation may possibly in-clude the provision of strategic support to national democratic parliaments and constitu-ent assemblies, in particular to enhance their capacity to support and advance democratic reform processes" "All aspects of democratisation will be ad-dressed, including the rule of law [...]" "deep democracy is not just about changing governments, but about building the right institutions and attitudes"	Code if fight against corrup-tion and rule of law are referred to *as part of* good govern-ance. Code if empha-sis on rule of law and if un-defined. If defined see C1V5.
	C5 V2 Universality of values	o Universality of values, such as democracy or human rights o Direct link between democracy and human rights o No differentiation between human rights and democratisation agenda	"Democracy is a universal value that includes respect for human rights as enshrined in pub-lic international law [...]" "Democracy and human rights are inextrica-bly linked and mutually reinforcing." "Locally driven processes should be support-ed, as long as such initiatives [...] are compat-ible with international human rights stand-ards."	Code if refer-ence to *same values* or *shared values* or *international values* as pre-requisite for democracy support
	C5 V3 European model democracy	o European democracy as model that can be repli-cated elsewhere o Democracy is particularly European	"The EED shall draw on the experience of democratic transition in the Member States of the EU" "considering that democracy is a constituent part of European history, […]"	

	C5 V4 Development	o Direct link between democracy and development o Democratisation as part of the development agenda and vice versa	"[...] the promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance, and of inclusive and sustainable growth, constitute two basic pillars of the Union´s development policy"	
	C5 V5 Security	o Relationship between security and accountable, democratic system of governance o Link between instability and undemocratic governance	"[…] urgency of addressing instability and undemocratic regimes in the EU´s neighbourhood as relevant to Europe´s own security and stability"	
	C5 V6 Peace, prosperity and stability	o Trade and investment leads to growth leads to poverty reduction leads to prosperity leads to stability and peace		
	C5 V7 Adjective democracy	o Social democracy o Liberal democracy o Representative democracy o Participatory democracy o Deep democracy	"Such assistance shall aim in particular at: (a) supporting, developing and consolidating democracy in third countries, by enhancing participatory and representative democracy […]"	Code if adjective is added to `democracy´ without definition of the concept.

5.3 Structuring results

Category	Variable	Σ EIDHR	Σ EED-official (o)	Σ EED-unofficial (u)	Σ EP EED	Specifics EIDHR	Specifics EED
	If `Specifics´ of coded variable is empty, then documents broadly cover the definition of coding guideline; if only `EED´ in `Specifics EED´ then it covers official (EED-o) and unofficial (EED-u) approach; only coded variables are illustrated here;						
C1 Liberal democracy	C1 V2 Political equality	2	1	3		o Women and men o Marginalised groups	o EED: Women and men
	C1 V3 Electoral pluralism and competition	6	2	4	2	o Democratic pluralistic multiparty system and representation o Electoral cycle o Election observation missions (EOMs)	o EED-u: free and fair elections+ pluralistic multiparty system o EED-o: pluralistic multiparty system o EP: free and fair elections
	C1 V4 Liberal civil society	3	2	2		o Independence o Human rights o NGOs	o EED-u: independent and developed o EED-o: NGOs among others
	C1 V5 Rule of law and horizontal accountability	6		4			
	C1 V6 Individual freedoms, political and civil rights	3		3	1	o Listing of freedoms	o EED-u: emphasis on individual political rights o EP: decline in political rights
	C1 V8 Separation of economics and politics			3			o EED-u: Socio-economic aspects part of development policy

C2 Social Democracy	C2 V4 Political and socio-economic equality	2				o Women, men, disabled o Undefined	
	C2 V5 Cooperative and solidaristic civil society	1	2	2	6		o EED-o: social movements among others o EED-u: strong CS, marginalised groups, grassroots o EP: Empowerment of bases, social movements, trade unions, grassroots, unsupported actors
C3 Participatory Democracy	C3 V1 Active civil society	1			1	o Only definition of participatory democracy	o EED-u: trust and shared values transferred into politics
	C3 V4 Community, solidarity and self-development	1				o Marginal code	
C4 Context-bound democracy	C4 V1 National ownership	2		3	3		o EED-u: highly emphasised
	C4 V2 Variety of contexts			5	2		o EED-u: diversity in EU; Islamist democracy; contexts change o EP: context-specific assistance
	C4 V3 Local civil society	4		3	4	o Local, regional, national and international civil society	o EED-u: religious actors; link to local society o EP: wide variety of local actors, religious communities and minorities

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C5 EU-fuzzy democracy	C5 V1 Good governance and the rule of law	7			2	o `Good governance´ barely mentioned o Much emphasis on rule of law o State institutions	o EP: emphasis on rule of law; organisation of political parties
	C5 V2 Universality of values	5	5	7	1		
	C5 V3 European model democracy	1	1	1		o Enlargement as example	o EED-u: democracy as European value o EED-o: democracy and European history
	C5 V4 Development	2			1		o EP: Opinion of Development Committee
	C5 V5 Security				1		o EP: Europe´s security
	C5 V7 Adjective democracy	2	3	1	1	o Participatory, representative, parliamentary	o EP: deep o EED: deep

5.4 Models of democracy

At first sight, the quantitative findings exhibited by the coding guideline and the structuring results above reveal a continuance rather than break with past EU democracy promotion of both the EIDHR and the EED. This is illustrated by the absence of anchor samples for the social democratic and especially the participatory democratic model, as the anchor samples themselves were drawn from the EU text corpus and thus untraceable for C2 and C3. More-over, it is highlighted by the high frequency of codes in the liberal model, the little frequency in the social democratic one and an almost absence of codes for the participatory democracy model.

Table 1: EIDHR democracy models
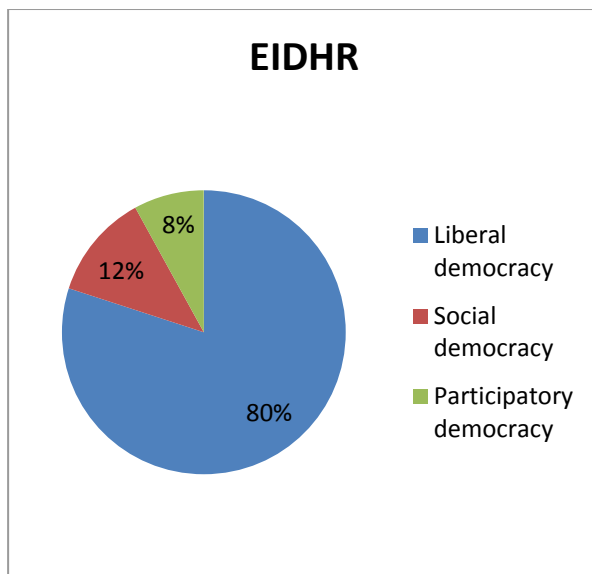
Table 2: EED democracy models
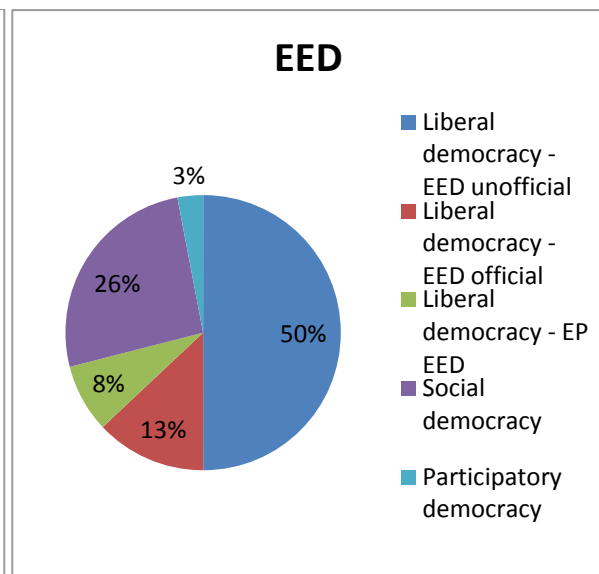
5.4.1 EIDHR

As highlighted in detail in the structuring results, the new EIDHR programme clearly supports a liberal model of democracy and a political as well as rights-based approach to democratisa-tion. The role of the state (involvement in public and private realm as well as in the market) is undefined, which leaves room for assumptions – based on the scholarly discourse above, a practical focus on economic liberalisation would not be a contradiction to a normative omis-sion. In general, the line between the democratisation and human rights agenda is hard to draw, which can very likely be attributed to the nature of the instrument (for democracy *and* human rights), but makes a conceptualisation difficult. This is particularly striking, when it comes to a definition of rights: political and civil rights (ranging from freedom of thought to media and so on) are defined when they are mentioned and are referred to as directly being a part of the democratisation agenda; cultural, social and economic rights are only mentioned in

a list with political and civil rights, without a definition of what they entail and only with direct reference to human rights and a rights-based approach. This is not supportive of a rights-agenda as defined in the social democratic model and reinforces the liberal model promoted by the EIDHR. The only aspect characteristic for a social democratic model in the EIDHR programme is C2 V4, socio-economic equality, which is being referred to twice as equal participation of men, women and people with disabilities in social, economic and political life. However, with the same frequency the importance of *only* political participation is mentioned, which suggests the higher importance of it on one hand and strengthens the electoral focus on the other hand. Interestingly, the notion of `free and fair elections´ is not brought up a single time, but implied with emphasis on electoral observation missions, the `electoral cycle´, a democratic multiparty system, political pluralism and representation. The `electoral cycle´ as such stays widely undefined, except for the description that it would go `far beyond´ the electoral process itself. The only well-defined elements within the EIDHR programme are the rule of law and horizontal accountability (C1 V5), both of which are as important as elections from a quantitative perspective, which strengthens a procedural approach to democratisation. Accordingly, domestic accountability of authorities and the separation of powers as prerequisites for the protection of human rights, as well as the importance of transparency and measures against corruption are emphasised.

Civil society is the only element where the EIDHR is moving outside of the liberal realm, although emphasis of civil society´s state independence and the important role of NGOs strengthen a liberal approach. Once throughout the document, the better cooperation of civil society and authorities is arrogated, which is more constituent of the social democratic model suggested by C2, and once an active civil society in connection with participatory democracy is mentioned, suggesting a broader definition of what civil society might entail. Civil society as such is continuously recalled, which generally supports a society instead of a state-centred approach to democratisation. This is reinforced by an emphasis of `local civil society´ (C4 V1), suggesting a more open approach which will be elaborated in more detail below.

Three further remarks with reference to the EIDHR programme have to be made: first, gender equality has a high priority in the programme and the only reference to social justice (constitutive of a social democratic model) is with regards to gender equality; second, aspects like equality, dignity, solidarity and justice that could have been coded (for instance as C2 V2, C2 V3, C3 V4) if further defined, stay undefined and listed in a line of EU guiding principles; third, `deep democracy´, highly discussed by scholars, is not mentioned a single time.

To conclude, the recent EIDHR programme issued in 2014, suggests a continuation of rather than a break with past EU democracy promotion, it supports a liberal model of democracy and thus a narrow understanding.

5.4.2 EED

The difference between the EED official and unofficial understanding of democracy is striking – while the official documents lack a conceptualisation and an extensive normative dimension, the unofficial approach is highly normative and liberal. Importantly, the European Parliament documents surrounding the EED´s set-up and evaluation are the only ones with a higher coding frequency in the social democratic than the liberal model, due to their concept of civil society. However, they also miss an extensive conceptualisation of democracy as such.

Similarly to the EIDHR discourse, the **official EED** approach references a pluralistic multi-party system rather than free and fair elections, and political equality in relation to gender equality as defining elements of a democratic order. Their concept of civil society is broad and fuzzy: it encompasses social movements (C2 V5), NGO´s (C1 V4), emerging leaders, independent media and journalists, foundations and educational institutions in exile, *but* they have to be in favour of a pluralistic multiparty system and adhere to *core democratic values* and human rights – narrowing the concept again. A broad conceptualisation of democracy is missing, the only elements that are referenced (elections, political equality, liberal civil society) suggest a liberal and narrow model of democracy.

One of the few elements emphasised by the **European Parliament** documents surrounding the EED´s set-up and evaluation is free and fairly elected parliaments. Other than that, the documents stand out for the absence of any conceptualisation with the exception of the concept of civil society. In both the proposal and the evaluation, the `support of the unsupported´ - *the* banner of the EED approach – is highly emphasised, encompassing support to social movements, trade unions, grassroots organisations and the empowerment of the bases of society in general. This characterisation is mostly in line with a social democratic understanding of civil society (C2 V5) and is thus a clear differentiation to the EIDHR approach. Furthermore, it reflects the main critique directed at the EIDHR that it would have been to narrow in their support of actors before the Arab Spring. Other elements of a social democratic model, like fair employment, are only referenced with regards to gender equality. Additionally, women as actors of democratic change are emphasised. Interestingly, all actors worthy of

support are defined as political actors – suggesting a differentiation between the economic and political sphere which is constitutive of a liberal approach.

A clear political dimension is reinforced by the **unofficial EED** documents. According to Peter Sondergaard, Head of Programmes at the EED, eligible actors for EED funding have to be political and their ideas have to reveal a clear political dimension. Socio-economic aspects, such as the improvement of living conditions and salary levels (constituent of a social democratic model and considered essential by many Tunisians as illustrated by the opinion polls) are regarded as development policy and *not* as democracy promotion policy. Even though Mr. Sondergaard claims that the EED does not support a specific concept of democracy with a specific set of elements because of inherent contradictions within the concept of democracy, the answers to the questionnaire attached in the appendix reveal a different, clearly liberal picture – again with the exception of the definition of civil society. Accordingly, the EED supports `deep and sustainable democracy´, which entails free and fair elections, political and civil rights, the rule of law and accountability as well as democratic control over the armed forces. These aspects are highlighted several times throughout the questionnaire, reminding of the elements of democracy in the EIDHR discourse, but with different wording (e.g. deep democracy, free and fair elections). Similarly, aspects such as freedom, dignity, equality and solidarity are continuously mentioned as guiding principles but are not further defined. Economic aspects in general are not considered as parts of democratisation – this is applicable to the liberal element of economic freedom (C1V1), but also to social democratic elements like welfare (C2 V2) and economic equality (C2 V4).

The liberal model suggested by the unofficial EED approach is widely in accordance with the EIDHR, encompassing political equality, elections, the rule of law and political and civil rights. The separation between economics and politics (C1 V8) is even stronger highlighted by the EED than the EIDHR. As with the EIDHR approach, the only area where the unofficial EED line reaches out of the liberal framework is the concept of civil society, which remains fuzzy. Interestingly, it is the only text passage referring to a *definition* of three concepts of civil society rather than a listing of actors as in the other documents. Accordingly, civil society is understood as individuals and organisations independent of the government (liberal) who build social capital, trust and shared values which can be translated into politics (participatory) and is strong and empowers marginalised groups (social).

To conclude, the EIDHR and **unofficial EED** understanding is clearly liberal, except for the concept of civil society, which is fuzzy. The **official EED** approach, however, is not normative, suggesting that a plurality of understandings of democracy is an option – which, never-

theless, seems unlikely if the unofficial approach is taken into account and if this is what guides EED practice. The most striking difference between the EED and the EIDHR approach is their openness for the concept of civil society and thus for *whom* they support – the value of this is, however, questionable, if *what* the EED supports is liberal and the eligible actors thus have to support liberal ideals as well.

5.5 Context and local ownership

The results of the QCA are even more diverse when C4 and C5 are included and the second research question is addressed. Despite the above illustrated narrow liberal understanding of democracy, local involvement in democratisation (C4) is highly valued by both the EIDHR and the EED. Contradictory to this, both institutions reveal a relatively high frequency of references to the EU fuzzy democracy model (C5) which is more supportive of a narrow understanding of democracy than pluralism, as suggested by context-sensitivity.

Interestingly, the least liberal model is, again, promoted by the EP-EED texts, as these are the only ones with a higher frequency of codes in the context-bound than EU fuzzy democracy model.

Table 3: EIDHR and EED context-bound democracy   Table 4: EIDHR and EED fuzzy democracy
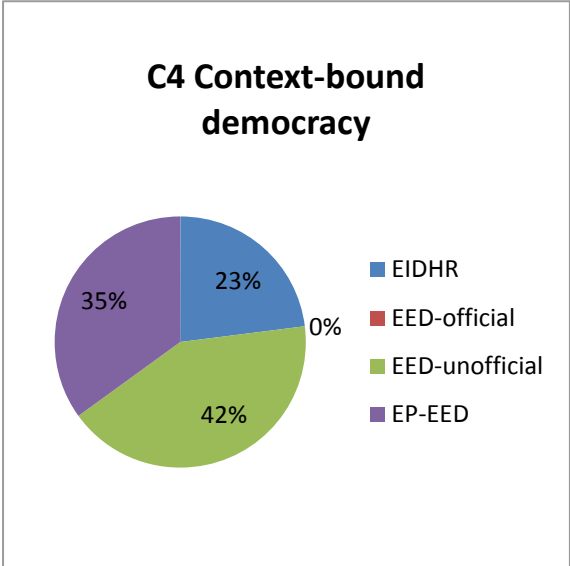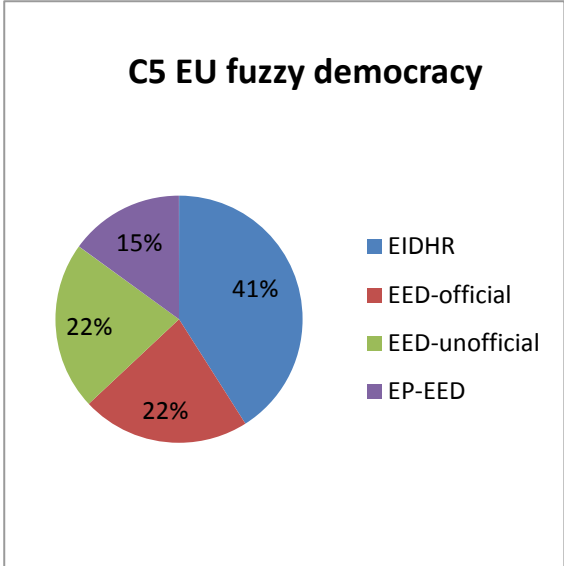

5.5.1 EIDHR

The society-centred approach of the EIDHR mentioned in 5.4.1 is affirmed by the results of C4, context-bound democracy – a relatively high frequency of local civil society (C4 V3) and the importance of local ownership (C4 V1). Accordingly, the process of democratisation is being regarded as a challenge that first and foremost belongs to local societies. However, lo-

cal civil society as such is not emphasised, but only referred to within a list of `civil society at all levels´, including international, national, regional and local civil society. This suggests that civil society is an important actor in the democratisation process, but also that it does not necessarily have to be local.

The society-focus is de-emphasised once the results of C5 are taken into account, where a rule of law and state institution focus is revealed and a highly fuzzy democratisation agenda reinforced. `Good governance´, characteristic for the ambiguous EU approach, is only mentioned once, undefined and in relation to development policy. However, a focus on capacity-building and accountability of democratic institutions as well as an emphasis of the rule of law without defining it, is descriptive of the fuzzy good governance concept (C5 V1). Of all the coded variables for the EIDHR approach, C5 V1 thus has the highest frequency. Other than that, very characteristic of past and present EU democracy promotion, democracy and human rights are continuously described as inextricably linked and universal concepts (C5 V2). Furthermore, they are referred to as part of the EU´s development policy – another link characteristically of EU democracy support which adds to the conceptual ambiguities of their democracy discourse in general. A last characteristic is that adjectives are added to `democracy´ without a definition of what they entail, such as `participatory´, `parliamentary´ and `representative´ democracy (C5 V7). Interestingly, `deep democracy´ is not referenced a single time. Instead, a new and undefined phrase, the `overall democratic cycle approach´ emerges in EU discourse.

5.5.2 EED

The **official EED** approach contributes to conceptual ambiguities as it links the `local´ to the `universal´. Accordingly, local processes are only supported if they adhere to *core* democratic values, *international* human rights standards and the principle of non-violence. Not only does it blur the line between human rights and democratisation, it also suggests a superiority of universal values over local ones. Additionally, there hardly is any conceptualisation of democracy in the official documents and references like this leave room for interpretation in favour of liberal as opposed to local democracy. This is reinforced by references to the concept of `deep democracy´ (C5 V7) without defining what it entails.

Interestingly, the **unofficial EED** approach, which revealed a clearly liberal democratic understanding in 5.4.2, is far more supportive of context-bound democracy (C4) than the official one that lacks a conceptualisation. It has the highest frequency of coded variables within C4. Accordingly, national ownership of democratisation processes (C4 V1) is strongly empha-

sised and contexts for democratisation described as diverse and ever-changing (C4 V2) – also with reference to the past EU experience. This is particularly interesting, as the EU enlargement is tendentially referred to as a good example to build democratisation policies on in EU policy documents, but hardly ever as exemplary for a diversity of democratisation experiences and realities. Moreover, the unofficial EED approach does not suggest a contradiction between Islam and democracy and highly supports the integration of Islamist actors into politics – an Islamist government could be as democratic as a Christian one in Europe, according to the EED texts in the appendix. Also, Islam and the Sharia are viewed as diverse rather than monolithic concepts. This is a striking difference to past EU democracy promotion and a clear added value. Furthermore, the integration of local civil society and their ideas of democracy are of high importance to the EED in order to be able to foster instead of export democracy. The fact that local civil society (C4 V3) is highlighted and not mentioned in a list with international civil society, as it is the case within the EIDHR discourse, suggests that it is considered of higher importance by the EED to actually engage with local actors. Peter Sondergaard reinforces this by stating that unsupported and locally linked actors rather than actors that replicate Western thinking and promote things Western actors want to hear, is what defines the EED´s approach to democracy promotion.

This is affirmed by the **European Parliament** report and evaluation of the **EED** – both emphasise national ownership (C4 V1) and local civil societies (C4 V3). Reminding of the unofficial EED discourse, the EP highlights how engagement with a wide variety of local political actors who have a link to and trust of local societies is vital for democratisation. A specific reference to religious actors as actors of democratic change and the necessity of their integration is made in the evaluation, suggesting that this has not sufficiently happened hitherto. Nevertheless, the EP documents reveal a context-sensitivity that is lacking in the EIDHR discourse – which is reinforced by the acknowledgement of context-specific approaches.

Despite this focus on the `local´, the EED is also referencing aspects of the EU fuzzy democracy promotion agenda (C5). Most prominently is the emphasis of democracy and human rights as universal values (C5 V2) and a link between both concepts, especially within the EED official and unofficial discourse. The only document missing this link is the EP evaluation of the EED, which could be interpreted as realisation that it is not constructive to link democratisation to other concepts. Furthermore, it is the only text that does not mention `deep democracy´, while all the other EED texts do so – either undefined, or defined as `adding substance´ or `supporting the unsupported´. The idea that democracy and human rights are linked and universal (or sometimes particularly European) concepts is where the official and unoffi-

cial EED discourse has the most frequent intersections. This adds to conceptual ambiguities as it is somewhat contradictory to the relevance of context-sensitivity and local ownership, highly acknowledged by unofficial EED and EP-EED discourse. Again, it allows a broad room for interpretations. On one hand these findings suggest that the EED views liberal democracy as a universal model with European roots, characteristic of past EU democracy promotion and the scholarly discourse. On the other hand, this is contradictory to their emphasis of context-sensitivity and importance of local civil societies, including religious actors, revealed by the same documents. It suggests that the EED is based on the acknowledgement that a narrow actor focus of the EIDHR is where past EU democracy promotion had failed most and that support of the unsupported is the solution. According to the EED text corpus, this entails a broad and open concept of civil society in terms of *who* is eligible as democratic actor but not of *what* kind of ideas they have to support. These have to be liberal and political, even if the actors who promote them can be diverse. This is problematic if the democracy discourse of the MENA population is taken into account, where a prioritisation of socio-economic aspects or at least an equalisation with political ones was revealed. Hence, the added value of the EED seems to lay in the range of actors they support and context-sensitivity in that regard, but not in a plurality of understandings of the concept of democracy itself.

6. Conclusion

This thesis was aimed at elaborating the conflictual relationship of Western norms with normative pluralism in general and discrepancies between universal rhetoric in Western external action and local discourses of target populations in particular. These aspects have been exemplified on democracy discourses in EU democracy promotion and the MENA region, as well as on the scholarly discussion of the concept of democracy. It was revealed how a liberal and universal model of democracy is promoted by one side, while partly opposed to this and partly in line with this, but always context-dependent democracy discourses are the reality on the other side. The EU´s approach to democracy promotion has been characterised as liberal, narrow and fuzzy in rhetoric and practice before the Arab Spring and the findings of this thesis suggest a continuation of rather than a clear break with this policy. This is contradictory to understanding democracy as essentially contested concept – a fact that was reinforced by both the discourses in the West and in the Middle East and North Africa throughout this thesis. Accordingly, the theoretical approach to the research questions has proven to be apposite, as it supports a diversity- and pluralism-promoting view on political concepts. The scholarly dis-

course on democracy and its defining elements in the West but also on concepts important in the MENA, such as political Islam, revealed how political concepts always inherit contradictions and differing interpretations. These can not only be acknowledged, but also systematically addressed by a conceptual approach based on essential contestability. However, while a conceptual approach is helpful and diversity-appreciating on an academic level, it is to a lesser extent on a societal and practical level, as there hardly is a conceptual understanding of democracy on the former with consequences for the latter. This underlines the complexity of the democracy promotion field and the importance of continuous dialogue between democracy promoters and the targets on their ideas and demands.

Nevertheless, the essential contestability of the elements of democracy and the subjectivity of the EU in choosing and defining these elements is highlighted by the coding guideline and structuring results of the Qualitative Content Analysis. While some elements that are highly discussed by scholars, such as the rule of law or accountability – considered constituent of a liberal democratic or fuzzy EU model – are well defined, others, such as a non-liberal civil society or elements of the participatory model, are not. Additionally, the lines between the elements are often blurry due to different interpretations and links to further concepts, characteristic for EU democracy promotion. This is evocative of what Connolly termed cluster concepts – the constituent elements of political concepts are often open and need an explanation on their own in order to be conceptually clear.

While some elements most characteristic of a liberal democratic model – such as the rule of law, horizontal accountability or individual rights and freedoms – are well defined by scholars and within EU discourse, others are not. This is representative of ideological choices by scholars and the EU, and strengthens the notion that liberalism highly influences how democracy is understood – a representative government abiding by the law, ensuring individual rights of citizens. These ideological choices affect EU foreign policy and their judgement of political concepts outside of this liberal frame, such as political Islam, which are interpreted and represented according to socially and historically constructed parameters in the West rather than in line with local understandings. This is also reflected in the absence of a broad scholarly and EU discussion on non-liberal elements of democracy. It seems that the social democratic model is as far as the EU is willing to walk outside of the liberal frame. This is detrimental to a pluralist and context-sensitive approach to democratisation, which would be vital for democracy support as reinforced by the democracy discourses in the MENA. The opinion polls revealed a pluralist and highly context-specific understanding of democracy, influenced by regional, national and international developments, as well as the factor of time.

It was found that socio-economic aspects and improvements, as well as vertical accountability are generally seen as most important elements for a democratic system of governance. An instrumental understanding of democracy that guarantees the basic needs of society is a general characteristic of democracy discourses in the MENA.

However, the findings of the Qualitative Content Analysis revealed how the new EIDHR programme is a continuation of past and general EU democracy promotion discourse. It represents a procedural approach to democratisation and the promotion of a liberal, universal democratic model. Democracy is conceptualised in a highly ambiguous way and linked to several other concepts (ranging from human rights to the rule of law and good governance). The EIDHR suggests a political and rights-based approach, while socio-economic aspects are either referenced as human rights or as development policy and thus outsourced of the democracy promotion field. This is supportive of a liberal understanding, where the political and the economic realms are considered as separate spheres, and is opposed to an instrumental understanding of democracy.

With regards to conceptual pluralism, the newly set-up European Endowment for Democracy cannot be regarded as a renewal of EU democracy promotion either, although the official and unofficial as well as the EP discourse reveal striking differences. What the EED officially supports on a normative level is no concept of democracy at all – which theoretically could be supportive of pluralism – while the unofficial approach is essentially liberal. If all the aspects are considered combined, it is most likely that what the EED understands as democracy is in fact liberal democracy rather than conceptual pluralism. Similarly to the EIDHR discourse, democracy is referred to as a universal model, often linked to human rights, and defined by liberal elements. The EED also characterises politics and economics as distinctively separate spheres, where the former is presented as democracy promotion and the latter as development policy. As the discourse in the MENA in general and Tunisia in particular revealed, precisely improvements in the socio-economic realm are what populations expect from democratisation, even though political aspects are sometimes regarded as more characteristic of a democratic order. Satisfaction with Western democracy promotion thus depends on satisfaction with results in the socio-economic *and* the political realm – the EU understanding revealed in this thesis is not responsive to both. A democratic model mainly dedicated to improvements in the socio-economic realm – to deliver welfare, a narrow gap between rich and poor and social justice – while at the same time supporting political improvements would be, but is hardly acknowledged by neither the EED and even less so by the EIDHR.

Strikingly, the European Parliament discourse surrounding the EED´s set-up and evaluation reveals a more pluralistic understanding of democracy than the EED itself and the EIDHR. Its diverse references to and definitions of civil society are supportive of this and also suggest that further research in the field of civil society would be illuminating. The concept of civil society has proven to be a highly contested one. While some scholars focus on a more definitional approach (independent civil society in the liberal model; strong and empowering in the social democratic model; active and direct participative in the participatory model), others focus on actors (NGOs and well-established organisations in the liberal model; grassroots and social movements, as well as trade unions in the social democratic model), but there hardly is conceptual clarity on what civil society entails within different ideological and theoretical backgrounds. A clearer conceptualisation would be constructive on an academic level, but might also have practical consequences for a better understanding of democracy discourses within the democracy promoting community and with local target populations.

This leads to the second research question, which was directed at changes in EU democracy promotion discourse with regards to context-sensitivity and the integration of local ideas, societies and demands. Noticeable developments have been achieved here, first and foremost by the EED but also to some extent by the EIDHR. Accordingly, civil society as actor of democratic change is acknowledged by both the EIDHR and the EED. An emphasis of *local* civil society, however, was most strongly highlighted by the EED. Its discourse has revealed a very open concept of civil society, encompassing grassroots organisations, non-registered NGOs, trade unions, social movements and others, and is reflective of their approach to `support the unsupported´. Religious actors are acknowledged as important actors of democratic change, and Islam and democracy are presented as well compatible concepts. This is particularly striking considering past EU democracy promotion, which was characterised by an understanding of democracy based on secularist epistemology and the exclusion of Islamist actors in practice. By contrast, promoting national ownership, local civil societies and context-sensitivity is what characterises the EED approach to democracy assistance. Furthermore, it reveals a rather reflective understanding of European history, as Europe´s own democratisation experience is (at least unofficially) being regarded as diverse and partly linked to religion. These points support context-sensitivity and thus represent a clear added value to conventional EU democracy promotion on a normative level.

Problematically, the EED also creates conceptual ambiguities in `traditional EU manner´ with its references to democracy as a universal value, deep democracy-rhetoric, linkages to further concepts and the clearly stated political approach to democratisation. Combined, these find-

ings suggest a responsiveness of the EED to *whom* to support (broad civil society concept, local actors) but not for *what* ideas to support (liberal). Precisely these discursive discrepancies underline how conceptual clarification would be fundamental. Conceptual ambiguities as they are presented by the EED discourse leave broad room for interpretations and misunderstandings on an academic level, but will even more so if transferred into policy practice, where a diversity of actors (international, national, regional, local) has to be accommodated.

To conclude – and in consideration of the complexity of the policy field and diversity of actors – the European Endowment for Democracy´s understanding of democracy partly illustrates a break with past EU democracy promotion. It does not in the way it conceptualises democracy, but it does in the way context-sensitivity and responsiveness to local actors is emphasised. The latter constitutes an important step towards a more pluralistic approach to democracy promotion and a more diversity-appreciating understanding of international relations.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Questionnaire

Received: 05.06.2015

Working title: *Democracy as essentially contested concept in EU democracy promotion? The European Endowment for Democracy and Post-Arab Spring Tunisia*

Part I: The EED´s understanding of democracy

1. Please define what democracy *is* and *is not*:

Democracy is a universal value that includes respect for human rights as enshrined in public international law (in particular the International Bill of Human Rights) together with other relevant UN, international and regional texts. The respect of the universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity is inherent to democracies.

2. Does the EED support a specific idea of democracy? If so, please indicate which characteristics are essential for this understanding of democracy:

The European Endowment for Democracy has been created to promote the European values of freedom and democracy. The EED aims at advancing and encouraging "deep and sustainable democracy". The elements contributing to deep and sustainable democracies are: free and fair elections; freedom of assembly, expression, association and free media; the rule of law under an independent judiciary; fights against corruption; democratic control over armed and security forces.

3. Are there certain aspects that a democracy always has to encompass? If yes, please indicate which aspects:

The ability of men and women to participate on equal terms in political life and in decision-making is a prerequisite of genuine democracy.

More generally, democracy relies on respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law, pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

4. What are the main characteristics of a democratic system of governance?

- citizen participation in the political process

- transparency of political acts and process in general

- checks and balances

- representative government

- respect of the democratic opposition's rights

- developed civil society

5. Which role do development, stability, peace and prosperity play for democratisation? Is there a direct link between any of these aspects and democracy?

Democracy does not necessary flourish on stability, peace and prosperity. Of course these are fundamental elements for a well-functioning democratic state, but they can also be ensured by non-democratic states. We have seen some states valuing stability, peace and prosperity over human dignity, freedom, equality, pluralism, etc.

6. Which role does economic liberalisation play for democratisation?

Not relevant for EED.

7. Does the EED support the notion that there is a plurality of understandings of democracy depending on region, time and societies? *Yes/no*?

There can be of course different systems of democratic governance (constitutional monarchies, parliamentary republics, presidential or semi-presidential systems, etc.), but they must all rely on free and fair elections, ensure the freedom of assembly, expression, association and free media, respect the rule of law under an independent judiciary, respect such universal values as human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, and grants the same rights to all the citizens.

8. What does civil society mean for you and which role does it play in a democracy?

EED understands civil society as the aggregate of individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government and that manifest interests and will of citizens. Civil society builds social capital, trust and shared values, which can be transferred into the political sphere.

Strong civil society can notably provide constructive channels for democratic participation. It can also promote citizens' rights and interests, and encourage the inclusion of minorities and marginalised groups.

9. Which role does welfare play in a democracy?

/

10. Which role does economic equality play in a democracy? Should a democratic state deliver full employment and a little income gap?

Not relevant for EED

11. Do you believe that individual political rights are more characteristic for a democracy than communal rights and socio-economic rights? *Yes/no?*

Yes.

12. Is the EED trying to add value to existing EU democracy promotion instruments in terms of the idea of democracy supported? *Yes/no?*

No.

The EED is a tool of the EU democracy promotion instrument.

13. Is the EED trying to be more open and flexible towards local understandings of democracy rather than exporting a liberal model?

The EED strongly believes that democracy cannot be imposed from outside. National ownership is indispensable to ignite the engine of change and ensure sustainable and inclusive democratisation process.

14. Is a democratic system preferable where political equality, economic liberalisation, the rule of law and democratic institution building is prioritised over welfare, solidarity, a communal grounding of democracy and controls over excessive political and economic power? *Yes/no?*

No.

15. Is a liberal democratic model preferable over a global democratic model, where democracy is not state based but defined by global power structures and global representative institutions? *Yes/no?*

/

16. Which aspects are most characteristic of a democracy? Please put the following aspects in order, indicating their importance with percentage points (the higher percentage the higher importance for or the more characteristic of a democratic system of governance):

political equality
economic equality
economic liberalism
socio-economic rights
welfare
state regulation of the economy
full employment
a narrow gap between rich and poor
civil society as a check on the state
civil society as representative of the community
individual rights
communal rights
good governance
rule of law
fight against corruption
security and stability

free and fair elections
electoral pluralism
separation of powers
secularism
religion as a private matter
religion as a public matter

Part II: The EED and local understandings of democracy (in the Middle East and North Africa)

17. How does the above characterisation of democracy influence the EED´s democracy promotion policy in the Middle East and North Africa?

The EED does not promote a particular type of democracy. The EED sees democracy as a universal value and supports local civil society organisations, movements and individual activists provided that all the beneficiaries adhere to core democratic values and human rights as well as subscribe to principles of non-violence.

18. Is the EED prioritising actors according to this order in the Middle East and North Africa over actors that illustrate a different, local understanding of democracy? *Yes/no?*

The EED assists pro-democratic civil society organisations, movements and individual activists acting in favour of a pluralistic multiparty system provided that they adhere to core democratic values and human rights as well as subscribe to principles of non-violence.

19. Is it possible for the EED to gain an understanding of local ideas of democracy in target countries and is it considered of importance to do so? *Yes/no?*

Of course it is important to adapt to the local context and realities, especially in some countries like Syria or Libya for instance, where the context is ever-changing. After almost 2 years of operation the EED managed to build a network of former beneficiaries, and rely on these beneficiaries, as well as on local consultants, to grasp local realities.

20. If so, is the EED supporting democratic actors in the Middle East and North Africa whose understanding of democracy is country-specific?

The EED supports only democratic actors who share the same basic values of democracy, human rights and non-violence.

21. Is the EED supporting democratic actors whose understanding is closest to the values the EED supports?

We consider those values as universals and aim at fostering deep democracies. Therefore we must be very cautious that our beneficiaries abide by the same values and share a common understanding of what these values are.

22. Do you believe there is a democratic model that can be exported from Europe to the Middle East and North Africa? If so, what does it encompass?

In the spirit of solidarity and partnership with societies in transition and struggling for democratisation, EED bases its work on the conviction that democracy cannot be exported or imposed. EED believes in fostering –rather than exporting- democracy. Local ownership is key.

23. Which role does Europe´s democratisation experience play for the democratisation in the Middle East and North Africa?

Europe has a long record of wars, dictatorships, massacres, it is only recently the values of democracies and human rights have prospered. The EU is the result of this. The added value of the EU are its member states, who all followed different paths and experiences towards democracies. It is this diversity and experience of a continent which was so long torn by conflicts that we can offer to the Middle East and North Africa.

24. How are the organisations, political groups or activists in a target country chosen for support by the EED?

All the requests for support received by the EED are assessed and cross-checked. As explained above, the first requirement is that those applying for support share the same core values of democracy and human rights than the EED. It must be noted here that the EED primarily seeks to act as "gap-filler" and support groups and activists that cannot be supported by existing EU instruments or other international donors (grass roots organisations, non-registered organisations, etc.)

Then, the EED Secretariat (a team of experts who has extensively worked and lived in the EU Neighbourhood) assesses the pertinence of the project submitted given the country context and needs and decide or not to make funding proposals to the EED Executive Committee, which takes funding decisions at its regular meetings.

25. Does the EED support the idea that in a democracy state and church have to be separated?

No. Some EU countries are secular whereas others are not. The EED has no opinion about secularism provided that the rights of religious (or atheist) minorities are guaranteed.

26. Does a democracy have to be governed by a secular government? *Yes/no?*

No.

27. Can an Islamic government be democratic?

Why couldn't it be the case? Some EU countries have been, or are being, governed by Christian Democratic governments.

28. Does the EED support Islamic actors in the Middle East? *Yes/no?*

/

29. Does the EED prefer to support secular actors over Islamic actors? *Yes/no?*

The EED has no preference, provided that these actors share the same core values of democracy and human rights than the EED.

30. If in a target country socio-economic rights are considered with higher importance than political rights, which actors would the EED support?

We cannot answer this question as there are many other conditions that have to be considered.

31. If in a target country a narrow gap between rich and poor is seen as more characteristic of a democracy than holding fair and free elections, would the EED rather support actors working on the improvement of the former or the latter?

Ditto.

32. If in a target country there is a majority or a large minority that sees a role of the Sharia in law-making, is the EED supporting actors that stand for these values and work on their implementation?

Interpretations of sharia can vary between Islamic branches and respective schools of jurisprudence. Therefore we cannot answer this question without further knowing about what values we are talking in this specific case.

8.2 Interview

Name: Peter Sondergaard

Position at EED: Head of Programmes

Date: 05.06.2015

Time: 15.00, 28.12 min.

Peter: Okay, I have the working title then on top of the questionnaire. Okay, so do you want to go ahead with that first question on definition of democracy?

Sarah: Yes, that would be very well.

Peter: Okay, yea, so I mean, as an organisation we do not have a specific definition of democracy. And I think that would also be extremely difficult because democracy is such a broad concept, it entails so many things, including some variety and contradictions in the term of democracy, so if we would start defining it in a more narrow sense that would become a very academic and abstract exercise that would not necessarily help us in the practical work that we are doing.

Sarah: Yes, that is understandable, that makes a lot of sense. But, nevertheless, on your homepage it says for instance that you promote the European values of freedom and democracy, as well as deep and sustainable democracy, and so I was wondering whether, what kind of ideas are behind these terms, nevertheless.

Peter: Fair question and first of all on the thing with the European values, this is something very unfortunate and it´s in one of our founding (opaque) I should not be quoted for of course

because maybe somebody put it there because they wanted to put it like that but to claim that these are European values is a mistake and it is not helpful and I do not know what the thinking was behind for those who made that decision to use this term and if they were (conscious?) of it. But obviously when we work in North Africa and if we come and say we are there to support the European values of human rights and democracy that is by no means helpful and also not a good point of departure if we have an idea that these are specific values that are related to some sort of European-ness. It´s universal values, it is universal concepts that are shared by everybody so I do not think that there is anything that they should be highlighted as European or not. So that was specifically on this issue of this language of that, but where did you see that on the webpage, in the, because there is some founding declaration where this is mentioned, is that where you saw it /

Sarah: I saw it on the webpage, on this section `About EED´, there´s those four /

Peter: Yes, so maybe that is where there is this, that that is still the pdf. document of how the institution of this was set up. Because at least I´m doing what I can not to speak about that as European values when I have the chance to correct that and we got that comment several places that it should not be mentioned like that. Okay, anyways, but so that was the part of the European values, that´s at least the way I would look at that and it´s not something were selling at least in day to day work and then saying ok now it's the European side of this values or concepts that were talking about.

Peter: Deep and sustainable democracy, yea, that does have a bit of an influence in some ways, because at least that gives us, even the EEAS worked for a long time on a definition, specific definition of deep and sustainable democracy, and you probably are more aware of that work or at least as aware of it as I am, but when deep and sustainable are added before democracy then that gives a clear (opaque connection problem) this is something that should not just be superficial and this is something that should be looking at the long term. So this is the understanding that that gives us, but it is not like we have a long academic discussion of what is the difference between democracy and deep and sustainable democracy. So in a practical aspect or context then it is not making that much of a difference, it is not something that can be based and then used as a specific input in an argument, but, yea.

Sarah: So it does not refer to specific institutions for instance, like, democracy has first and foremost to be about elections, just to take a very general /

Peter: No, there is no diversification as such of specific things within democracy and I also see these adjectives as something that is added to democracy in its totality, not splitting it down in different compartments, like elections, institutions, state institutions, parliaments, et cetera, et cetera, so I think it´s rather a question of the quality of the democracy and maybe, I mean, these words clearly come from the EEAS and the way the European Union started talking about democracy as deep and sustainable democracy rather than just democracy. And I think from their side and also from other side that the part of the motivation in that was also that you see a lot of things are being called democracy today that are not really democracies; and you see elections being held without any democracy so I think this is where you have the

qualification with deep and sustainable, that means that it is actually, that there is substance to it and not just ticking some boxes and making things look as if there is a democracy.

Sarah: Okay, so, this would also mean that the EED supports the notion that there is a plurality of understandings of democracy that is context-dependent?

Peter: Well, I do not, I would not say that EED has this official understanding as such, but at least the people working in the, in EED, that are implementing EED´s work in practice clearly has that understanding. And I think it clear enough if you study democracy then you do see that there are inherent contradictions in the concept of democracy, equality versus freedom is something and democracy has both but somehow there has to be a balance, you cannot have fully equality and having freedom at the same time and vice versa, so that is a plurality of the concept of democracy that I think everybody who understands it has to accept.

Sarah: Ya, akay, so if there is no working definition of democracy, is there for instance a working definition of civil society, because the EED supports civil society actors, as far as I am aware of, so I was wondering what kind of actors these are, or if there is a definition of what civil society encompasses?

Peter: No, not something that we have been sitting down and having a theoretical discussion about what should be included in this, but then of course when we have assessments of proposals then it comes up in these discussions. If we have proposals from actors that we do not consider being part of the understanding we should have of democracy actors or civil society actors, so then the, those discussions on definitions would come up in practical work. But we are not making the academic abstract exercise of defining that, and to tell you the truth that would also, that would be an extremely not very useful activity and something that would take a lot of time because we would end up discussing abstracts of something that would not necessarily even guide our work then at the end of the day. But those discussions, those reflections do come up in our work when we have specific evaluations of applicants to do. So in that way we do have such considerations, but not in a way that we write them down.

Sarah: Okay.

Peter: And also this, on this now, if you looked at our webpage then our mandate is to reach out in a very broad way, so that compared to other donors they might have a more narrow understanding of democracy actors and civil society actors than we do, because we have a specific mandate to engage with political active people and civil society activists, so that can also be businessmen that can be considered in, or people working more on the private sector can still be considered as civil society. But everything they do should have a political dimension and I think that is rather the defining term for us in terms of whom we engage with this is that it should have a political dimension, which means that if you go to the discussion of the definition of civil society a lot of people, a lot of actors can be included in civil society, you can basically include everybody except state actors and business actors. But then everybody else who is doing I do not know what of organisational work that does not have any direct political aspect could still be understood as civil society actors but they would not really be that relevant for us to engage with.

Sarah: Okay. So what about for instance actors that support socio-economic equality and try to make improvements in that regard, would that be supportive for the EED?

Peter: Yea, exactly, that is the good example of things that they would have to present themselves and their the activities they propose in a way that the political aspect of their work is emphasised. So if they have an emphasis on what would be more developmental work, like improving living conditions, improving, I do not know what, salary levels et cetera, then we would say okay this is even if that has political aspects of course, then that would be considered more development work and not something that we should do because there are plenty of donors working on those issues and supporting that type of work, while our added value and our specific niche is to work with political actors and actors that are doing things in a political way that might make it difficult for other donors to engage with them.

Sarah: Okay, and how do you decide on which actors are democratic and which actors are not?

Peter: That is also a good question. We use when we get applications we get a lot of feedback on those applicants from people who are based in the regions, who know them well or knows the landscape, we have consultants based in the countries where we operate, we use the embassies, other international organisations and get feedback from them on their suspect of the people. But of course in some way there can also be a challenge to the question, because how do you define inherently if anybody is a democratic actor or not a democratic actor? That is difficult because I think it is very difficult to say per definition that somebody is a democrat and somebody is not, so that is part of the challenge of course and we have seen people who appear to be very democratic and turn around, especially when they get into power and then we start calling them non-democrats, so this is, these are not fixed terms.

Sarah: Okay, but there is, as far I am aware of, there is no EED offices in the countries, but there is people working for the EED that are in the countries and that are, well, evaluating the situation?

Peter: Exactly, so we don not have any official representation and that makes our life a bit easier because we do not need to ask to have an official office registered, et cetera, et cetera, but we do have people who work with us and provide us ongoing information.

Sarah: Okay. So does this mean that it is important for the EED to gain sort of an understanding of local ideas of democracy as well, in order to be able to respond to local demands, local understandings of the concept of democracy?

Peter: Yes, by all means, because that is the whole point of the approach that we have, that we are not imposing anything on people that we try to have a very open mind on how they see things and try to facilitate their activities and the things that they want to do to change things. So in order to be able to evaluate such requests for support in a proper manner then we also have to have an understanding of how do people in that country see their possibilities themselves and what could be relevant activities. And of course this is a very complex interaction because we all come with our prejudice and our own ideas of what is right and wrong and it is extremely much shaped our own background and experience but at the same time then the

approach that we have then there is a clear emphasis and obligation to try to look at things with an as open mind as possible. And it is of course extremely important then to have this understanding of the local thinking.

Sarah: Okay. But the only option for you to get aware of this is by, well, EED workers that are placed there and that /

Peter: No, no, there is plenty of different sources of information and the people that we work with and support are also a source of information because people come and visit us and the people that we do support also tell us about how they look at things and what their understanding is of the situation, democracy, and what the possibilities are. So there are many, many different resources, it is just that for those consultants that of course we give them the tasks, so here we can be a little more structured, but otherwise we get information from very many different channels.

Sarah: Okay. And with regard to the Middle East for me it would be very interesting to know how the EED´s position is on the role of religion for democracy and how do you deal with religious actors that are, nevertheless, democratic, or support the notion of demo /

Peter: Yes, 100% open to such actors and of course this is part of I mean, EED, you said the context of this in the beginning was to see how EU support to democracy had changed post-Arab Spring and one of the things in the review of the Neighbourhood policy in 2011 when that came out just after the Arab Spring had taken place or was in process was the idea of setting up EED, so part of that came out of an understanding from the EU that it had not been really good in reaching out to actors in a broad way and it had been too narrow in how it had engaged with the societies and part of that is of course religious actors and making sure that they are part of politics and included in a constructive way. But obviously this is extremely complicated and by all means then the one year rule that the Brotherhood had in Egypt and Mursi did a lot of damage to that idea and damage to those who do try to make some sort of religious role in politics possible in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Because those who are sceptical to that will point at the Brotherhood and what happened in Egypt and say this is what you get if you have groups or parties that have a religious foundation governing a country. So that is very sad that we got that experience in Egypt but, nevertheless, there are positive examples in Tunisia and I think we should do a lot, everything we can to support actors who try to integrate the cultural, religious ideas into politics. And this is by the way also the European experience in many ways because if we look at the European political landscape there are plenty of parties who did actually come out of a religious background but now are doing that in a more moderate or in a clearly political way but still the background of some of these parties are clearly religious.

Sarah: Yes, I just wanted to name Tunisia as a good example for, well, how it can go in a good way, I am also particularly looking at Tunisia and taking Tunisia as an example for my thesis. So, if you were to choose between an Islamist actor that is democratic and a secular democratic actor, the fact that he is, he or she is religious or non-religious does not influence your decision on supporting or not supporting?

Peter: What would influence our decision would be the extent to which other donors would be able to engage with these actors. So, if for some reason the religious actor would be a person or somebody related to groups that would mean that other donors would decide not to support that group then that would be an argument for us to do it. But of course still acceptable people or acceptable in terms of wanting to engage in a constructive way in politics. But then it would be a plus, because the secular activist would often be able to get support from other donors and that is the whole problem to what extent the way we are supporting civil society and democracy in a lot of countries is that we are just replicating our own thinking and the way we would like things to be. So the donors are choosing people that are thinking the same that as they do and then they end up having strong civil society groups in certain countries with no access to society as such because they can speak here in Brussels, they can speak in Europe and people will listen to them and say they are saying the right things but their own society will not say so, so then it is some classy civil society that is constructed. So from our side then it is more important to have somebody who really has the link to society as it really is.

Sarah: So the main reason for support really is that it is someone that is unsupported by other donors.

Pater: Yes, this is a key criteria for us.

Sarah: Okay. So, would it also be an option for instance to support an actor that promotes the Sharia in a country but, nevertheless, elections and plurality and so on?

Peter: Well, this is, that is when it gets difficult of course because it is very easy to say these things in an abstract way but then when it gets more specific it is difficult to say where is the exact line between when somebody is still within this framework of being acceptable and when does somebody move out of that framework. So, that would have to be seen in practice. I mean that is the whole, that is the point, but the point of our obligation and mandate is to try to push that as far as possible. To do engage with groups where others would say no, now they are promoting things that are really anti-democratic but it is very difficult to make a clear line there and it is also extremely difficult because the easy choice is, again, just to choose those that are saying all these nice things that we want to hear, but at the end of the day that is not necessarily promoting change.

Sarah: So it is more important to support someone that has a strong link to society and that represents what a society actually wants, rather than someone /

Peter: This is very important but of course if we end up, I mean, if we would then end up only having the choice between people that would we would consider radicals and conservatives, well, then they would also not be the option, so there has to be some open mindedness within these people.

Sarah: Okay, but lastly the decision is made on a basis by looking at every single actor and then deciding on whether he is or she is supportable, there is no general guideline, but rather, okay, someone applies for support and then it is evaluated whether he or she fits in some democratics /

Peter: Well, yea, in our, on our side the way we evaluate an application is, there are three important elements to evaluating an application. The one thing is who are the people applying, what is, do they have capacity, is there hope that they would actually be able to do something if they get support. The second is the idea itself, what are they proposing to do, is this relevant. And then the third one, and this is the most important for us, is, would other donors be able to support them easily. Because if that is the case then even if it is good people or good ideas, then we might not, then we might decide not to support them. But these are the three different elements that we use to assess, but of course this is not natural science, this is always with a lot of grey zones and difficult to cut the exact boundary.

Sarah: Okay, I see. Do you think, because before you were saying that we can also learn from Europe´s or the EU´s past democratisation experience when it comes to religion, so does Europe´s own democratisation experience influence the EED´s democracy strategies in the Middle East then?

Peter: I do not, I am not sure I said that we could learn from that, but I just put that as an example of the way the religion has been had been constructively integrated in politics in Europe. But part of the inspiration for EED was clearly the transitions in Central and Eastern Europe. So both that, but I mean also in terms of understanding democratisation processes then it is natural to look at the European history and how the background for European democracies are and how societies developed or how they struggled to find their own feet in democracy, and this is of course always something that is used to understand the wider world as well, and the difficulties and people who do acknowledge European history will also see that it took quite a long time before we actually had stable democracies and that those developments were dependent on a lot of fortunate factors. But I can also tell you that there are clearly no consensus among people on exactly how to understand that history and how, which implications that has for how we should approach things.

Sarah: Yes, I see, okay, thank you very much, I think, well, you have answered a lot of my questions already.

8.3 Abstract

Until the Arab Spring, European Union (EU) democracy promotion in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was characterised by a narrow, liberal understanding of democracy and conceptual ambiguities. The aim of this thesis is to assess whether the EU has since then renewed its approach to democracy on a normative level, based on democracy discourses of a newly set-up institution, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), and in comparison with a traditional EU instrument, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). It is based on the theoretical assumption that democracy is an essentially contested concept, meaning it is characterised by a plurality of context-bound understandings. A renewal of EU democracy promotion rhetoric would manifest itself in an acceptance of these notions.

According to secondary literature and public opinion polls, the MENA population revealed an instrumental understanding of democracy, focussing on improvements in the socio-economic realm. Furthermore, Islam and Islamist actors play a vital role in politics, which should be accommodated. A Qualitative Content Analysis of the recent programme of the EIDHR and of official and unofficial texts surrounding the EED´s approach is used to assess the EU´s responsiveness to these findings and its understanding of democracy in general.

The results of the analysis reveal a clear continuation of past EU democracy promotion on side of the EIDHR, while the EED approach highlights some differences. A continuation is illustrated by the EED´s liberal democracy discourse, a narrow understanding and links to other undefined concepts. Opposed to this, the Endowment illustrates context-sensitivity, an open concept of civil society and an acknowledgement of the integration of local society, including Islamist actors. In sum, this leads to the conclusion that the EED is open for a variety of actors, but not for a variety of ideas of what constitutes democracy, and thus not for the socio-economic demands of the MENA population. A clearer conceptualisation could facilitate a more positive conclusion to these first important steps taken by the EED.

8.4 Zusammenfassung

Die Demokratisierungsförderungspolitik der Europäischen Union (EU) im Nahen Osten war bis zum Arabischen Frühling gezeichnet von einem eng gefassten, liberalen Demokratieverständnis, sowie von begrifflichen Unklarheiten. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist, Veränderungen und Kontinuitäten dieses Verständnisses im EU Diskurs festzumachen, an Hand einer neu gegründeten Institution, der Europäischen Stiftung für Demokratie (EED), und im Vergleich zu einem traditionellen EU Instrument, dem Europäischen Instrument für Demokratie und Menschenrechte (EIDHR). Dies gründet auf der theoretischen Annahme, dass Demokratie von kontext-spezifischen Interpretationen und Definitionen geprägt ist – Demokratie also ein *essentially contested concept* ist. Eine Erneuerung der Demokratisierungsförderungsrhetorik der EU würde sich in einer Akzeptanz dieser Theorie manifestieren.

Gemäß Sekundärliteratur und Meinungsumfragen im Nahen Osten zeigt sich im Laufe dieser Arbeit, dass Verbesserungen in sozio-ökonomischer Hinsicht von der lokalen Bevölkerung des Nahen Ostens am wichtigsten für ein demokratisches Regierungssystem befunden werden. Außerdem erscheint der Islam als ein wichtiger Aspekt für Politik in der Region. Eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse des neuen EIDHR Programms, sowie von offiziellen und inoffiziellen EED Texten dient dazu, die Reaktionsfähigkeit der EU darauf und ihr Demokratieverständnis an sich zu überprüfen.

Dabei wird offensichtlich, dass das EIDHR eine klare Kontinuität zu vergangener EU Demokratisierungsförderungspolitik darstellt, während das EED einen teilweise erneuerten Ansatz vertritt. Eine Kontinuität zu konventioneller EU Politik besteht in dem liberalen Demokratiediskurs des EED´s, sowie konzeptionellen Unklarheiten. Einen Bruch stellen hingegen die Betonung von kontext-spezifischem Demokratieverständnis, sowie der Integration der lokalen Zivilgesellschaft, inklusive islamistischer Akteure, dar. Betrachtet man die Kontinuität und Erneuerung jedoch gemeinsam, so lässt sich schließen, dass das EED eine Offenheit für ein breiteres Akteurs-Spektrum aufweist, jedoch nicht für die Ideen, die dieses zu vertreten hat. Einem positiveren Bescheid könnte durch eine klarere Definierung von *essentially contested concepts* beholfen werden.

8.5 Curriculum Vitae

Personal information:

Name: Sarah Haller
Nationality: Austria

Education:

1995-1999   Primary school, 1230 Vienna, Pülslgasse
1999-2003   Gymnasium, 2380 Perchtoldsdorf, BG/BRG Perchtoldsdorf
2003-2008   Institution of higher education, 1130 Vienna, focus of training:
                         Cultural tourism, Bergheidengasse
2009-2012   University of Vienna, 1010 Wien, Universitätsring
                         BA History
2013-2014   University of Vienna, 1010 Wien, Universitätsring
                         BA Oriental Studies
since 2012   University of Vienna, 1010 Wien, Universitätsring
                         MA Global History and Global Studies

Work Experience:

2010-2012   Austrian National Student Union
                         Case worker for the project „Studieren probieren"
since 2013   Verein Balance
                         Personal assistance of a woman with disabilities

Other Experience:

2013   Voluntary work in Cambodia (English teaching in a local
                         organisation called Build Your Future Today Center), 3 weeks

Languages:

German: Mother tongue
English: C1-C2
Spanish: A2