Updating the European Union's Policies Towards Islamist Parties and Radical Actors

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Abstract[1]

The policies of the European Union (EU) focus increasingly on how to work with Islamist movements. There is an expanding acceptance of the idea that 'moderate' Islamist movements should be integrated, to some extent, into the legal political process of their countries. Virtually nobody argues, however, that radical movements, violent or not, should also be integrated in this way. This raises questions about how the EU can choose its partners in democratization assistance in North Africa. The main obstacle for the EU is its lack of direct information on this issue. The data it has are often out of date, or inspired by authoritarian governments which have an interest in categorizing opponents as radicals, and in disregarding the recent evolutions of and current dynamics in such movements.

This paper focuses on how the EU should improve its policies of engagement with moderate Islamist movements. It assesses the current role given by the EU to North African Islamists in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP) and bilateral initiatives, and the strategic role these movements should be given in the EU's foreign policies at the political level as well as the views of such movements on their willingness to become involved. The paper discusses radical Islamist movements from a policy-oriented, rather than a security-related, perspective, focusing, through a set of recommendations, on their place in the democratization processes of the EU.

Some argue that democracy promotion should focus on keeping radical and terrorist groups or even legalized Islamist groups away from elections, reinforcing a secular state and persuading such groups to change their views on democracy. Our research reveals that it is precisely the marginalization of Islamists and radical actors from modern state institutions and the lack of politicization among their base that can lead to the rise of violence. The illusion of promoting moderate and depoliticized networks of actors led

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to the failure of US democracy promotion in the Arab world. Renewing peaceful and non-violent forms of political participation would be a major challenge for the EU in the region.

Summary of Recommendations

The EU must coordinate its security policies with the political reintegration of former radicals. The EU has a lot to offer the Arab world, including its experience of reintegrating radical groups and terrorist movements in EU member states. Political participation by all citizens should be a priority in EU partnerships with Arab countries, and it can help to reactivate the non-violent modes of political opposition that used to exist in the Arab world. The EU should be more transparent in the way it deals with Islamist groups that are officially legalized by their governments. They are no more or less democratic than other political actors and should be treated like other EU partners, with clear rights and duties which should be related to existing sector-specific programmes in the region, differentiating between political, social and economic lines of action. There is no need to create new programmes specifically for Islamist actors and their organizations.

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The EU should promote and strengthen national institutions that do not exclude Islamist parties. Only civil servants chosen by governments have so far benefited from MEDA programmes to strengthen institutions. Cooperation with both secular and non-secular parties should be encouraged. Institutionalized cooperation will allow Islamists to gain credibility by clarifying their positions on so-called grey zones.

To ensure that the partnership evolves and continues to concern actors from the South, the EU should promote the existence of independent national civil society commissions, making it possible to assess, criticize and propose adjustments to EU policies in the region. Bringing Islamists into these structures would help to counter the feeling that the EU promotes a Euro-centric democratization that does not meet local expectations.

1. Introduction

European Union (EU) foreign policies are increasingly focused on how to deal with Islamist movements. There is an expanding acceptance of the idea that 'moderate' Islamist movements should be integrated, to some extent, into the legal political processes of their countries. Virtually nobody argues, however, that radical movements, violent or not, should also be integrated. This raises questions about how the EU chooses its partners in democratization assistance in North Africa. The main obstacle to the EU updating its views on how Islamists could become partners of democratization in the region is its lack of direct information on this issue. Its data are often out of date, or inspired by authoritarian governments which have an interest in categorizing their opponents as radicals, and in disregarding the recent evolutions and current dynamics of such movements.

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Who are the Islamists in North Africa? Are they ready to get involved in EU policies? How should the EU affect these actors? Attitudes to the use of violence and rejection of what are considered Western democratic values are not sufficient criteria for a categorization of which Islamist organizations the EU should deal with. It has been proved that the programmes of radical Islamist movements can evolve internally according to their given place in the political process of their countries, as well as externally through interactions with the international community.

This paper focuses on how the EU should improve its policies of engagement with moderate Islamist movements. It examines the place currently given by the EU to North African Islamists in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP) and bilateral initiatives. It assesses the strategic role these movements should be given in EU foreign policies at a political level and their current willingness to join these policies. The paper examines radical Islamist movements from a policy-oriented perspective, rather than as a security issue related to the risk of violence, and focuses, through a set of recommendations, on their place in the democratization processes of the EU.

2. Understanding the Views of the Legalized Islamist Parties in Algeria and Morocco

After a long time in marginalized or underground opposition, some Islamist movements were legalized in the 1990s. They are usually called moderate Islamists because they have accepted the framework of elections and pluralism in order to promote their views. Given the problematic nature of the political field in Morocco and Algeria, where parties are more likely to be chosen or co-opted by the ruling elite than to evolve in a genuinely pluralistic political arena, we call them legalized Islamists in this paper.[2]

In order to understand the evolutions of these parties, we need to consider the cooptation strategies of the state. By permitting Islamist parties to take part in national elections, the state elite tried first to neutralize their protests and radical nature (Lahouari Addi 2006), and then to establish a superficial climate of democratic transition. In the absence of structural and institutional change, however, the idea of a democratic transition allows states to consolidate their legitimacy while continuing to limit the influence of the new arrivals. Nonetheless, this legalization has also obliged Islamist parties to rethink the grey zones[3] of their policies with regard to the democracy. For almost 10 years, the legalization process has introduced change for Islamist actors. It has influenced their views and strategies towards their state and other political actors, and altered the relations they have with the EU and its member states.

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[2] Among them are the Mouvement pour la réforme nationale (Harakat al-Islah al Watani – MNR) and the Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix (MSP, Society for Peace Movement) in Algeria and the Parti de la justice et du développement (PJD, Justice and Development Party) in Morocco.

[3] Grey zones represent ambiguous attitudes of Islamists to what the EU calls 'European values of democracy', such as women's rights, religious minorities, morals in public life, application of the *Shari'a* and the *Houdud* (corporal punishment), the use of violence, political pluralism, the religious freedom of minorities, etc. These issues are also strongly debated among Muslim thinkers themselves. See Brown, Hamzawy and Ottaway (2006).

This legalized framework represented a new opportunity for the EU. Legalized Islamist political parties presented new channels for political exchange and are a new category of political actor. However, the EU has chosen to limit its interest in political Islam to the traditional issue of examining how sincere the Islamists were about democracy (Fuller 2004). Grey zones such as the application of the *Shari'a* and the *Houdud* (punishments for crimes), the use of violence, political pluralism, the religious freedom of minorities, women's rights and the parties' positions on what the EU calls 'European values of democracy' must be resolved in a pragmatic way, not least because opinions on these grey areas are changing.

Grey areas will not be resolved by ideology but in the political framework available at the time – clandestine actors' statements in times of repression or legalized parties' views in times of cooptation. The question of Islamists' compatibility with democracy is therefore irrelevant. We prefer to focus on the participation of Islamists in the process of democratization currently under way, which is strongly controlled by states. The EU must examine two sets of issues in its attempts to engage but also circumscribe the actions of Islamists: First, how the changing political nature of Islamism perceives 'ambiguous issues', such as political pluralism, the religious freedom of minorities and women's rights, and their relation to democracy; and, second, the specific, neutral institutional frameworks as well as political and parliamentary professional standards – rather than the vague concept of democratization – that must be promoted.

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3. Potential Areas of Cooperation with Legalized Islamist Parties

Since the 1990s, political instability in the Maghreb and the emergence of terrorism have prompted the EU to marginalize Islamist parties, and to prioritize instead an EMP focused on the security and stability of the region. This has left the EU little inclined to involve Islamist parties in the negotiations on the initiatives concerning the region. While EU policies have not tackled the problem of the exclusion of Islamists from the EMP, the question of terrorism has enabled a number of Arab states to use the post-11 September 2001 security situation as a tool for negotiating with the EU, particularly to obtain funds.[4] Paradoxically, the fact that 'security thinking took over the political aspect'[5] offers new opportunities for dialogue with the Islamist parties, and consequently for greater integration into EU policies, as they are increasingly consulted on security issues. What does not exist at the European level is therefore already a reality at bilateral levels. Many EU member states, particularly Spain and the United Kingdom, have recognized that a certain level of engagement with moderate Islamist groups is unavoidable. A number of Islamist Members of

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[4] Algeria's change of position on security cooperation is particularly striking. See Martinez (2003).

[5] Olfa Lamloum (Lamloum 2003).

Parliament from Algeria and Morocco are members of bilateral parliamentary groups or take part in interregional or inter-municipal projects with certain EU member states. These activities are no doubt in keeping with the national policies of their countries and leave little room for them to play on their specific Islamist identity. Similarly, initiatives such as the Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)[6] on combating international terrorism, signed in Ouagadougou on 1 July 1999, and the OIC's ongoing dialogue with the EU since 1999 involve certain Islamists in dialogue with the EU,[7] but solely as representatives of their national entity. When it comes to including or having a dialogue with Islamists as Islamists, there is still an absence of clear, transparent and coherent policies within the EU.

The EU needs to take a more proactive stance with regard to MENA governments and their treatment of their political opponents, mainly the Islamist parties, and encourage them to initiate democratic reforms.

There are some cases of 'systematic and formal engagement' with some Islamist groups, but this is far from being recognized as an accepted EU policy instrument – especially in promoting and encouraging democratic reform. The lack of knowledge and expertise on these issues is striking, even in the highest EU policy circles. One reason for this is the lack of contact between many EU policymakers and representatives from the Islamist parties of Middle East and North African (MENA) at the EU level. In many cases, Islamism is too often viewed through a religious rather than a political prism. This exacerbates the already thorny debate on whether and how the EU should engage with Islamist parties.

Despite cautious steps, there is no evidence of a clear shift in policy. There has been no constructive follow-up on establishing a dialogue with Islamists as a specific category of political actors. The EU needs to take a more proactive stance with regard to MENA governments and their treatment of their political opponents, mainly the Islamist parties, and encourage them to initiate democratic reforms. The EU is currently seeking to define more flexible ways to integrate political Islamist actors, mainly by funding think tanks and research conferences, but still fears the potential integration of Islamists into shared EU-South policies and objectives.

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One point that is often overlooked to justify the EU's willingness to 'democratize' Islamist movements rather than engage in a political dialogue with them is the fact that these groups operate largely in authoritarian contexts and are therefore mainly inexperienced and untested in democratic principles. But are Islamists willing to be 'democratized' by the EU?

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[6] The Organization of the Islamic Conference was founded in 1970 and has 55 member countries. Its headquarters are in Jeddah.

[7] The first dialogue with the Organization of the Islamic Conference took place in Helsinki in December 1999, was then followed by a meeting of 30 foreign affairs ministers from the EU and OIC within the join OIC-EU forum in Istanbul in February 2002 on the issues of harmony between civilizations, resolution of conflicts, human rights in Islam and cooperation in the fight against terrorism. The form was held at the invitation of the Turkish foreign affairs minister. Source: website of the Turkish MAE: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/OIC_EU_cdrom/index.htm

Islamists' Views on the Democratization Efforts Supported by the European Union

Several events have undermined Islamists' views on EU policies in the region. First, the EU's refusal to recognize the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006 has in large measure undermined the credibility of EU discourse on democratization in Muslim countries among civil societies and Islamist parties alike. Second, Israel's participation in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), launched in 2008, particularly angered the legalized Islamist parties in Morocco and Algeria. The UfM was rejected as a valuable process even more firmly after the war in Gaza in January 2009 following the EU's lacklustre response. Third, the West in general is often seen as having contradictory policies towards the MENA countries – on the one hand promoting the value of democracy and, on the other hand, supporting perceived stability by enabling undemocratic pro-Western regimes to stay in power.

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In our interviews, the majority of Islamist actors declared that they did not reject the possibility of becoming more democratic 'thanks to Europe' and its support, but would not become 'like Europe'. What they dispute is the need to conform with EU demands and to act solely through the democratization programmes proposed by the EU, from which they are often excluded, in order to build democracy. The Islamists also contest, with regard to the dynamics of democratization in the South, the EU's promotion of a democracy to meet its external objectives, that is, with the aim of creating stability and security for direct exchanges between Europe and its partners (which illustrates well the current direction taken by the ENP concerning the economy, energy, security, counterterrorism or the Israeli-Palestinian issue) to the detriment of democracy with internal objectives, that is, affecting civil society and the opposition parties particularly through freedom of expression, access by the masses to the political sphere, and so on.

According to one MSP official:

> I was at this Wilton Park conference and they were wondering how to be more efficient on the democratization process in the region. Honestly I was sceptical about their proposals as I saw how they support the undemocratic aspects of our governments, or with regard to their unfairness toward the Palestinian occupation or the Hamas victory. For these reasons I always prefer to talk about the need for a dialogue with the EU rather than for genuine cooperation.[8]

According to Abdellah Djaballah, the former leader of the MRN:

> The west was living in darkness while we had Andalusia, Al Qarawiyine [an Islamic university in Morocco]. They began to learn about justice, citizenship or even the relationship between people and the state when we had had all this for 1000 years. Why are they silent on the legacy of the "South" in today's Europe? What about St Augustin? What about Constantine 1? Islam is *dine wa daoula* [religion and state affairs]. We cannot have religious beliefs (*aqida*) without a law

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[8] Author's interview with an MSP official, Algiers, 2007.

(*shari'a*). This is also the way Europe was built, between faith and jurisdiction, and now they are going through a major identity crisis. I want them to talk about Islam from an Islamic perspective, not only from their own conception. I do not talk about democracy because it is already in my Islamic culture. Democratizing a religious party [*hizb dini*] sounds weird to me. Thinking in terms of Islamism vs. democratization is a sign that the West refuses to understand my conception of governance, politics, and so on.[9]

Thus, the democratization initiatives promoted by the EU seem no longer to inspire confidence among Islamist players, who have difficulty in identifying with them.

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However, Europe must avoid reducing democratization efforts in the South to an intercultural dialogue between the two parties, thereby legitimatizing the use of political norms that are different from those that apply to political players in the North. It is precisely the argument of 'Islamic cultural specificity' that has enabled the authoritarianism of certain Arab states to monopolize Islam as a resource, and to crack down on all attempts at opposition and change. Paying heed to the requests of civil societies and to what they are trying to build, and thus ensuring their representation in institutions in these countries, will be more effective than the North's current obsession with the question of 'Arab reform' – without, moreover, managing to identify the reformers. It would also be illusory and superficial to consider the Islamists as the new 'miracle' political protagonists of the region, after having long treated them as the 'untouchables of the democracy assistance world' (Youngs 2004).

The interests represented by the Islamist parties and the civil society associations that form part of their movement are not exclusively Islamic. It is in any case not the role of the EU to exacerbate the religious aspect of these parties, which is extremely cyclical. In our view it would undoubtedly be more useful for the EU to embark on a new dynamic on democratization questions, with new political actors who are seen as legitimate in the eyes of part of Arab civil society. These Islamist parties must nonetheless agree to clarify their stance on political pluralism and the other values promoted by the EU, not on an Islamic normative basis but pragmatically through training programmes approved jointly by the EU, the states and the parties. Interestingly, when Islamists feel that the EU is trying to impose a cultural legitimacy on what democracy means a typical reaction is to criticize Europe's own weaknesses with its Muslim communities.

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Islamist Discourses on European Islam

With more than 20 million Muslims based in Europe, Islamist parties are active in denouncing the situation of European Muslims as poor, marginalized populations that suffer from Islamophobia and racism. Their mobilization is quite important in time of crises such as veil controversies or the cartoons of the Prophet. For example, during

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[9] Author's interview with Abdellah Djaballah, Algiers, 2007

the 33rd session of foreign ministers of the Islamic Conference Organization in 2006, Aboujerra Soltani, the leader of the MSP, proposed setting up a mechanism to fight the Islamophobia he claims is rife in the West:

> Its aim is to bring Islamic states to pass laws to fight this phenomenon and work towards adopting a UN resolution to protect Islam and its symbols. The Algerian proposal calls for the creation of an Islamic fund to support efforts to combat Islamophobia in Western countries and to promote the values of dialogue and tolerance between cultures, religions and civilisations. It also puts the emphasis on the need for Islamic countries to legislate on the economic boycotting of countries that encourage Islamophobia. The proposal sets out a series of measures – mobilisation of Muslim NGOs working in Europe and stepping up cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It also advocates closer dialogue with political parties, decision-makers and NGOs to influence the content of school programmes which circulate a 'distorted image' of Islam passed from generation to generation (Abdelkamel 2006).

Establishing partnerships with Islamist movements has become an EU foreign policy priority. However there is no clear policy on how to deal with people who belong to radical Islamist groups, or on whether they should be integrated into the legal political process as well. EU security is likely to suffer negative repercussions if the EU remains silent on this matter.

The MSP, the MRN and the PJD take part in elections in their own countries and are recognized as official parties by their governments. They are also interested in European Muslims for electoral reasons. Nearly 3 million Moroccans (i.e. nearly 10% of the total population) live abroad and more than one million Algerian nationals live abroad – mainly in France. The MSP, the MNR and the PJD see these immigrants and their dual-nationality children as a significant pool of voters who can be mobilized. Election campaigns are therefore also targeted at those living in Europe with the hope of gaining votes. During the 1997 presidential elections, the MSP candidate, Mahfoud Nahnah, took first place in the Algerian consulates of Strasbourg, Nice and Grenoble, well ahead of the winning candidate.[10]

Establishing partnerships with Islamist movements has become an EU foreign policy priority. The EU has stated that 'moderate' Islamist movements should be integrated into the political system of their respective countries. However there is no clear policy on how to deal with people who belong to radical Islamist groups, or on whether they should be integrated into the legal political process as well. EU security is likely to suffer negative repercussions if the EU remains silent on this matter.

4. What Place for Radical Movements in the European Union's Democratization Policies?

The EU needs to complement its current policy of engaging with 'moderate' Islamist

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[10] Although dissolved since 1992, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) is also trying to win the votes of Algerians abroad. Rabah Kébir, head of the executive delegation of the Front islamique du salut, who took refuge in Germany for a long time, had called on them to vote for Abdellaliz Bouteflika during the 2002 presidential elections. He also invited the different Islamists and terrorists living in Europe to come to Algerian consulates abroad to benefit from a law on civil concord, promulgated in 2000, the aim of which was to seek an amnesty those responsible for crimes during the civil war.

movements by pursuing a more comprehensive policy approach that enhances its knowledge of radical Islamist movements. This enhancement would also benefit the EU's security and anti-terrorism policies. Trying to convince those who are far from thinking like you is a more necessary challenge than negotiating with people who already agree with you.

Radical movements are not homogenous. Interesting and new dynamics should be taken into account by the EU. There is growing evidence of radical Islamist movements and individuals within these movements changing or abandoning their original ideologies through experiences of de-radicalization and repentance. The challenge for the EU is whether, once these movements and individuals have been through de-radicalization processes, they can be considered to have radical views on the EU's democratic values but without being violent or supporting violence.

An analysis of how radicals with an Islamic identity and who are outside any legalized political framework evolve would provide an opportunity to complement the EU's current efforts to deal with moderate legalized Islamist movements in the neighbourhood. It would also be a way to think about radical movements from a policy-oriented perspective, focusing on their place in democratization processes rather than exclusively on security analysis relating to their role in violence.

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The Opportunity to Support Internal De-radicalization Processes and the Political Reintegration of Radicals

De-radicalization, as opposed to disengagement, refers to a complete physical and psychological abandonment of the radical Islamist movement. In other words, former Islamists are not just leaving the movement, they are also abandoning the accompanying ideology. Thus, de-radicalization involves a renunciation and a complete abandonment of violence. There are several reasons that can lead radical Islamists to quit violence. Among the state-sponsored programmes are: (a) de-radicalization programmes, which can be conducted in jail or in the public space, aimed at providing an alternative ideological discourse to radical Islam through the media, a religious *fatwa* or theological committees condemning violence, testimonies of former terrorists who regret their actions or psychological support groups; and (b) amnesty programmes accessed on reintegration into the community along with protection against vengeance.

An important amnesty for radical Islamist groups occurred in Algeria. The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, implemented in 2005, was a means of bringing closure to the bloody Algerian civil war and offering amnesty to those who participated in the fighting. Terrorists were exempted from prosecution, as were members of the Algerian security services, for crimes committed during the war. The families of those who lost their lives were financially compensated. Many Algerians, however, feel that reconciliation with former terrorists has taken unfair priority over justice for victims. A peculiar twist to the amnesty programme is that anyone who opposes it is liable to be arrested. The EU has supported this amnesty policy and the social rehabilitation of prisoners (mainly former Islamists or terrorists who have benefited from national

reconciliation). Although it has not said as much officially, the EU's determination to step up the development of programmes of this type is linked to the future of Islamism and terrorism, particularly in the context of the Civil Concord:

> The development of civil society, still fragile in Algeria, is essential for sustaining dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms. The Commission supports the institutional strengthening of a number of development associations under MEDA; the activities of local NGOs can also be strengthened, particularly in the areas of human rights, the effects of terrorism and democratization (Council of the European Union n.d.).[11]

How can these initiatives be made relevant to the EU? First, it is necessary to map good practice in de-radicalization in order to inspire the EU in its own struggle against terrorism. Second, EU efforts to support the southern Mediterranean countries dealing with radical groups cannot be restricted to security issues. It needs to think 'politically' about these groups.

The dilemma that the EU will face is that Arab governments often allow radicals to leave terrorism only if they commit themselves to leave politics. This neutralization of the radical threat leads to re-radicalization and the percentage of recidivism among repentants remains high. This underlines the need for the EU to support the political reintegration of disengaged terrorists or radicals. Although more visible today in al-Qaida inspired movements, disengagement and de-radicalization are not new phenomenon. The majority of 'moderate' Islamist movements that the EU is now dealing with now used to be considered radicals and even terrorists. For 20 years, movements have been allowed to join the political process (or have been co-opted by their state) after they ceased clandestine activities, disengaged from radical acts or discourses and experienced de-radicalization – leaving violence behind. This was the case for the Chabiba Islamiyya in Morocco, from which the PJD was created. In Algeria, numerous former FIS activists have been reintegrated into the MNR and the MSP.

> **The dilemma that the EU will face is that Arab governments often allow radicals to leave terrorism only if they commit themselves to leave politics. This leads to re-radicalization and recidivism, which underlines the need for the EU to support the political reintegration of disengaged terrorists or radicals.**

5. Recommendations

The main recommendation from this paper is that the EU needs to coordinate its security policies with the political reintegration of former radicals. The EU has a lot to offer the Arab world, in particular its experience of reintegrating radical groups such as extreme-left, neo-Nazi or nationalist terrorist movements in Germany, Ireland and Italy. Political participation by all citizens should become a stated priority in all EU partnerships with Arab countries. In this way, the EU can help to reactivate the non-violent modes of political opposition that used to exist in the Arab world.

To international observers, it is the political participation of legalized Islamists and even that of radical or terrorist groups that represents a threat to the EU's security and foreign policies and to stability. Democracy promotion thus focuses on keeping

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11 See the Algeria Strategy Document and Indicative National Programme, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/algeria/csp/02_06_fr.pdf>.

them away from elections, reinforcing the secular state and then persuading them to change their views on democracy. Our research, however, reveals a different story. It is precisely the marginalization of Islamists and radical actors from modern state institutions and the lack of politicization among their base that leads to the rise of violence. The illusion of promoting moderate and depoliticized networks of actors is mainly what led to the failure of US democracy promotion in the Arab world. Keeping radicals away from politics will not avoid radicalization.

The fight against terrorism needs to isolate radicalism but not radicals. Renewing peaceful and non-violent forms of political participation is a major challenge for the EU. Its policymakers should try to integrate states in the region into the EuroMed institutions in order to promote a feeling of belonging and socialization with other democratic actors.

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The EU should be more transparent about the way it deals with legalized Islamists groups. They are no more or less democratic than other political actors and should be treated as EU partners, with clear rights and duties within the partnership. Such partnerships should relate to sector-specific programmes in the region, differentiating between the political, the social and the economic. There is no need to develop new programmes specifically for Islamist actors and their organizations, only to encourage their inclusion in existing programmes.

The EU should promote work in these countries to strengthen those national institutions which do not exclude Islamist parties. Only civil servants chosen by governments have so far benefited from MEDA programmes to strengthen institutions. Professional norms should be strengthened, most notably though parliamentary experience, and cooperation with both secular and non-secular parties should be encouraged. The issue of democratization, ever present in the partnership with the EU, should leave room for joint work on specific projects where institutions can address social problems. This institutionalized cooperation would allow Islamists to gain credibility by clarifying their positions on the so-called grey zones.

To ensure that the partnership evolves and continues to concern actors from the South, the EU should promote the existence of independent, national civil society commissions – making it possible to assess, criticize and propose adjustments to European policy on the region. Bringing Islamists into such structures would help counter the feeling that the EU proposes only a Eurocentric democratization which does not meet local expectations.

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