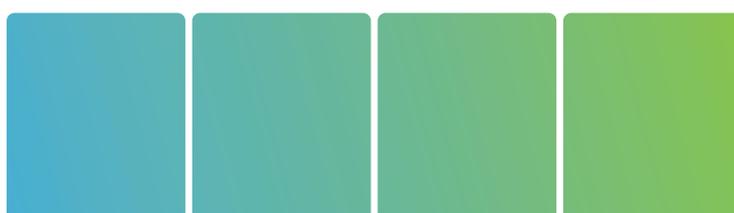


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# **The Adaptation of EU and US Democracy Promotion Programmes to the Local Political Context in Jordan and Palestine and their Relevance to Grand Geopolitical Designs**

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this project is to compare the priorities and methods of American and European administrations for the promotion of democratic values and institutions in the Middle East, taking Jordan and the Palestinian territories as case-studies. We will hence try to evaluate the consistency of the Western powers' democracy-promotion policies, especially pondering the influence of regional strategic parameters on the implementation of co-operation programmes on a local scale.

Both the US and the EU have indeed recently confirmed their intention to encourage political reform in the Middle East and are currently working to upgrade their frame of action in order to make it more immediately efficient. Democracy has even explicitly become a top priority on the Middle Eastern agenda of American foreign policy, while the EU's vocabulary remains more vague. Then, if American and European political priorities seem to roughly converge, their methods and tools of intervention are not entirely comparable, thus revealing the experimental bias of democracy-promotion policies and also the underlying principles and values driving them. Whereas both the US and the EU claim to be generally advocating a rather determined democratic model, some local variants may be observed, primarily addressing the « needs » on the field as perceived by the donors. At the same time, the contents of co-operation programmes depend on the particular political constraints locally met. Closer examination of the co-operation frames with Jordan and the Palestinian territories thus reveals that Western action in favour of democratic reform is notably influenced there by the specific context linked to the continuation and/or intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The discourse and effective actions undertaken to encourage political change under such a strong external constraint are therefore likely to meet the regional strategic priorities of both external powers, notably confirming the difficulty to solve the democracy Vs/ security dilemma. Recent Western attitudes with regard to the internal political dynamics of the Palestinian territories offer a striking illustration of these difficulties.

Given these background hypotheses, the specific objectives of the study will be the following:

- Evaluate the consistency of European and American approaches for political reform and democratisation in Jordan and the Palestinian territories, through the contents of programmes and projects, trying to compare the respective political and institutional models inspiring them;
- Assess the elements of adaptation of both EU and US frameworks of intervention to the specific political context of each territory in a comparative perspective, searching for the parameters accounting for these changes;
- Contribute to a better comprehension of the compared EU and US strategic visions of the political and institutional future of the Near East region;
- Question the appreciation of Western efforts by local stakeholders, so as to ameliorate existing « democratic partnerships » in the countries under observation;
- Explore the possibilities to build bridges between the Western donors' strategies in favour of democracy promotion in the region.

In order to meet these general objectives, the report will be structured as follows: (1) Examine how and to what extent democratisation has become a new norm for Western foreign policies regarding the Middle East; (2) Describe American and European approaches for democracy-promotion in Jordan and the Palestinian Territories, trying to assess their similarities and divergences; (3) Evaluate how local stakeholders react to external intervention focusing on political reform in their respective country; (4) Analyze the relevance of specific democracy promotion programmes to the grand geopolitical visions of the Western powers for the Middle East; 5. Issue some conclusions and recommendations to improve their frame of intervention in the context we have been studying.

## Introduction

This paper aims at describing and explaining the rationale of American and European democracy promotion policies pursued through co-operation programmes in the Middle East. Our observations will focus on two country case studies: Jordan and the Palestinian Territories.

Such a research is meant to address different preoccupations, therefore mixing different levels of analysis. Our underlying and final objective would be to explore the status of democracy promotion policies within the wider matrix of American and European foreign policy priorities, in the specific context of the Middle East. We notably will try to clarify how the Western powers manage to reconcile the local dimension of their intervention with more global security imperatives. Adapting co-operation programmes to local conditions is indeed a necessity in order to reach a certain degree of efficiency to foster political reform. Yet in times of crisis, democracy advocates have to work under very specific constraints, with regional parameters admittedly taking precedence. We would like to observe such differences examining the US and EU interventions on a local scale both in Jordan and the Palestinian Territories, and see how interference with regional imperatives may induce important variations in the direction and methodology of democracy promotion.

The first level of our analysis thus relates to the democratic contents of Western foreign policies and their local adaptation to the Middle East. The second and broader analytical ambition of this study is to examine the possible link between these democracy promotion policies and overarching geopolitical designs aimed at stabilising of the region. The choice of countries to be examined was thus not random: one of our strong assumptions is indeed that the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict does affect in one way or another the democratic approach of the EU and the US toward Arab countries / territories on the frontline.

### Democracy as an objective for Western policies in the Middle East

Since the 9/11 events, democracy promotion has apparently become a shared norm for Western foreign policies operating in the Middle East. Both the American administration and the European Union have by now endorsed at least an explicit commitment to political reform in the region, even if Europeans remain more reluctant to formally refer to democracy as such when they engage into official dialogue with their Arab partners<sup>1</sup>. Yet recent American activism actually seems to have given fresh impetus to reform-oriented discourse in the agenda of European states and the European Union, somewhat partially exonerating the Europeans from their traditional historical and political scruples towards the region<sup>2</sup>.

Both Western powers are thus now prone to discuss overtly political change and to act accordingly, searching for new means to spur reform in the Middle East. Their commitment to democracy has become more explicit, and this shared commitment translates into specific diplomatic and military initiatives, while also influencing the contents and procedures of ongoing co-operation programmes with Middle Eastern Arab countries / territories. The American vision for a democratic Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) is backed by specific programmes implemented partially by the USAID, and for some of them directly by the State department, with a very explicit political content. On the average, the EU seems to meet more difficulties than the US to materialise its intentions into concrete programmes and projects. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was indeed based on a grand scheme for regional reform, but few projects undertaken in this context were specifically democracy-oriented. Yet the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) very much insists on political reform as being a prerequisite to closer economic association with the EU<sup>3</sup>.

### Democracy- promotion efforts in the Middle East: introducing two country case-studies

Whereas both the Americans and the Europeans claim to be generally advocating for a rather determined set of democratic values and institutions, their respective discourses and practices are not systematically converging, and some local variants may be notably observed when it comes to observing effective initiatives on the field. These variants may reflect each power's understanding of democracy and assessment of the course to be followed in order to really obtain important democratic outcomes. The differences in approaches also respond to the conditions and "needs" on the ground as analysed by the external players. The contents of democracy promotion programmes thus partially depend on specific political parameters that are locally met, and on the way the US or

<sup>1</sup> A vast amount of literature concerning American engagement for political reform in the Middle East has flourished over the last three years; for a chronology of American reorientation towards democracy promotion, and an assessment of doctrines and achievements, see for instance Alex Danchev and John MacMillan, *The Iraq War and Democratic Politics*, London, Routledge, 2004; Thomas Carothers and Marina S. Ottaway, *Uncharted Journey: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East*, Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005. On the democratic turn in EU's foreign policy, see Richard Youngs, « European Union Democracy Promotion Policies: Ten Years On », *European Foreign Affairs Review*, n°6, 2001, p. 355-373; on EU's democracy promotion policies in the Mediterranean context and « The European Union and Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A New or Disingenuous Strategy? », *Democratization*, Spring 2002, vol. 9, n°1, p. 40-62; Dorothee Schmid, « Le Partenariat, une méthode européenne de démocratisation en Méditerranée? », *Politique étrangère*, Autumn 2005, pp. 545-557; concerning the Arab world at large, see also Cristina Barrios, « Promoting Democracy in the MENA Region – Developing a European Union Strategy », *Note de la Fondation Notre Europe*, Janvier 2005, and Irene Menendez-Gonzalez, « Arab Reform: What Role for the EU? », Institut royal des Relations Internationales de Belgique, *Egmont Papers* n°11, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> On compared approaches of European states regarding democracy promotion in the framework of their respective foreign policies, see Richard Youngs (ed.), *Survey of European Democracy Promotion Policies 2000-2006*, Madrid, FRIDE, 2006; on the specific issue of legitimacy as a limit to the efficiency of Western democracy promotion policies, see Dorothee Schmid, « European Efforts for Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A Legitimate Emergency? », to be published in *Assessing Reform Initiatives in the MENA Region*, London, Civility / Foreign Policy Center, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Elena Baracani, « From the EMP to the ENP: New European Pressure for Democratization? The Case of Morocco », *Journal of Contemporary European Research* vol. 1, n°2, 2005, pp. 54-67; Dorothee Schmid, *European Community: Policy and Practice on Governance and Democracy. Research in Morocco*, London, One World Action Reports, 2006.

the EU effectively takes them into consideration. For instance, we shall assume and try to verify through this study that the treatment applied to some countries of the Near East, specifically to the neighbours of Israel, is influenced by the constraints linked to the continuation and/or intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The discourse and concrete actions undertaken to foster political reform in such a context are very likely to meet the regional strategic priorities of both Western powers.

The material of this paper derives from observation of Western policies' implementation and their supposed outcomes in two countries / territories of the Middle East: Jordan and the Palestinian Territories. These two case-studies were deliberately chosen according to a combination of analytical criteria, making them particularly relevant to our research objectives.

Both countries / territories are first deemed both by the US and the EU to be interesting fields of experimentation for democracy-promotion policies. Jordan probably stands as the most classical partner for pursuing such policies in the Middle East. The Kingdom is involved in a very intense and comprehensive co-operation framework with Western donors and is supposedly rather sensitive to external pressure; its effort to gain democratic credits are followed closely both by the European and the American administration. The Palestinian Territories (PT) present a rather different configuration, as a non-State entity, with a set of institutions whose power is institutionally limited, and who are extremely dependent on external financial assistance. Western policies concerning the PT are characterised by their remarkable reactivity, a relatively good level of co-ordination among external players and an attempt to constantly adapt to locally evolving political circumstances. One could in fact easily argue that the Western powers have implicitly instituted the PT as the official laboratory for testing the soundness and viability of their democratic strategies in the Arab world.

The importance of these two case studies also relates to the specificity of the sub-regional context, that concretely influences Western policies for democracy promotion. Some limits and inconsistencies of these policies will be thoroughly discussed here, arguing that the search for political balance, especially in the longer term perspective of solving or stabilising the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, does have a strong impact on the democratic designs of both the EU and the US. In other terms, strategic imperatives sometimes drastically alter the Western democratic stance in the Middle East, and the countries involved in a zone of conflict are the first concerned by these variations.

### **Methodological acknowledgements**

This study is essentially based on an extensive review of existing literature relating to the ongoing debate on Western democracy promotion policies in the Arab world. Some field work was conducted in parallel in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Face-to-face interviews were held with officials involved in the management of American, European and French co-operation funds in the region, as well as with Jordanian and Palestinian officials, political analysts and journalists.

The political context of this research evolved rather dramatically during the period necessary to complete work. The Western decision to suspend aid to the new Hamas-led government in the Palestinian Territories in March 2006 indeed considerably disrupted the routine of democracy-promotion in the region. This option will be largely commented here, as we consider it to bear important consequences, announcing a tactical and substantial re-orientation of the Western democratic vision for the Middle East. Furthermore, the political and security climate did evolve very negatively in the beginning of the summer, with the re-opening of the military front on the Israel-Lebanon border. The research team who was carrying out this project tried to take into account all of these political developments and integrate them in the overall rationale of the report, notably for the drawing of its conclusions and recommendations.

In a very short time-span, the case for democracy promotion seems to have become a background feature of Western powers' foreign policies vis-à-vis the Middle East. American and European administrations have both developed over time special programmes to support their long term ambition to spur political reform in Arab countries; their present commitment to a democratic model of reform is becoming rather explicit. The rough convergence between EU and US discourses on democracy and practices to export it to the region should be acknowledged, even if the approaches are not entirely similar.

#### *The American agenda after 9/11: democracy moving from ideal to political priority*

The causes for the recent trend in spreading Western democratic values and institutions through foreign policy action can probably be traced back to the years of the Cold War. During the second half of the twentieth century, the world's division into two camps reflected the competition between the liberal democratic and the centralised, authoritarian socialist model of political organisation and economic governance. After the fall of the Berlin wall, the irrepressible democratic wave in Europe and beyond reinforced the classical liberal conviction that political freedom was an essential prerequisite for the establishment of world peace<sup>4</sup>. Many political analysts and global thinkers followed Francis Fukuyama in his optimistic assessment that eternal peace could be forecasted thanks to the existence of a strong link between democracy and individual welfare<sup>5</sup>.

At the time, the supporters of the Western model were quite confident that democratic forms of governance would spread automatically, following an inevitable historical pattern of development. Even at theoretical level, there nonetheless existed a dilemma regarding the absolute necessity or automatic character of this unfolding democratic process on a world scale. The dilemma primarily affected policy-makers: should they assist passively to the diffusion of democracy or participate actively in spreading its values and institutions to places still labelled as undemocratic?<sup>6</sup>

This essentially academic debate suddenly became a very concrete concern in the aftermath of 9/11. Islamic terrorism had struck at the heart of America; the Bush administration attributed this sudden outburst of violence against the United States to political backwardness in the Middle East and linked Islamic terrorism to the absence of democracy in Arab and Muslim countries. Democracy promotion was thus made congruent to American security priorities and became an essential direction in America's new foreign policy agenda; and the urge for democratic reforms was essentially identified in the Middle East. The Bush administration's September 2002 National Security Strategy, which lays out the US post-September 11 strategic vision, prominently features democracy promotion and describes it as a core part of the US national security doctrine. In November 2003, following the American intervention in Iraq, Georges Bush exposed clearly his intentions in a famous discourse at the National Endowment for Democracy. He affirmed his intention to pursue the spread of democracy worldwide, emphasising that "the Middle East (...) must be a focus of American policy for decades to come", and insisting that this "forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East (...) requires the same persistence and energy and idealism that (the US) have shown before"<sup>7</sup>.

#### *The EU's "soft reform" scheme: origin and impact of 9/11*

European motivations to work in favour of political reform in the Middle East partly overlap with American concerns. Yet one should not oversimplify the picture by merely describing the Europeans bandwagoning to the Bush doctrine after 9/11. Since 1995, the EU had been implementing its own reform strategy in the Mediterranean through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP, or Barcelona Process), a co-operative policy aiming at promoting European liberal values, institutions and procedures. Building on the democratic or liberal peace thesis<sup>8</sup>, the EMP was initially conceived as a grand strategy to tackle regional instability in the Mediterranean, by favouring economic, political and cultural *rapprochement* between EU members states and Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs)<sup>9</sup>. In the EMP scheme, political reform was to be essentially bolstered by, or even triggered by, economic development: good governance laid at the heart of the European strategy, assuming that market economy was generally linked to political liberalisation. Reinforcing trade links through the establishment of a regional free trade zone, and granting new financial aid, partly earmarked for economic reform, were the two main pillars of EU's intervention.

## 1. Democratisation, a shared Western design for the Middle East?

### The emergence of democratisation as an autonomous goal of Western policies in the Middle East

4 Essentially following the « democratic peace » thesis. See Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993; « Give Democratic Peace a Chance ? », special issue of *International Security*, vol. 19, n°2, Autumn 1994, pp. 5-125.

5 Francis Fukuyama, « The End of History ? », *The National Interest*, n° 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Free Press, 1992; see also the special issue of *Commentaire*, « La fin de l'Histoire ? », vol. 13, n°50, Été 1990, pp. 213-250; and Timothy Burns (ed.), *After History? Francis Fukuyama and His Critics*, Lanham Rowman and Littlefield, 1994.

6 See for instance Francis Fukuyama's afterthoughts in « Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle », *The National Interest*, n° 56, Summer 1999, pp. 16-33. On the liberal hesitation for intervention to promote political objectives abroad, see Stanley Hoffmann, « The Problem of Intervention », in Stanley Hoffmann, *Janus and Minerva. Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1987, p. 178-193.

7 George Bush, « Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy », 6 Nov. 2003, on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html> For an official exposé on the first Bush administration doctrine on democracy promotion, see Paula J. Dobriansky, « Democracy Promotion: Explaining the Bush Administration's Position. The Core of US Foreign Policy », *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, n°3, pp. May/June 2003, pp. 141-143.

8 Dorothee Schmid, « Le Partenariat, une méthode européenne de démocratisation en Méditerranée ? », *Politique étrangère*, Autumn 2005, pp. 545-557 and « L'avenir politique du Partenariat euro-méditerranéen : les dilemmes démocratiques », *Polltorbis* n° 2 / 2005, pp. 49-56.

9 The current list of Mediterranean Partner Countries includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The results achieved by the EMP in 2001 in terms of strategic stabilisation, political and / or even economic reform on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean were not truly impressive<sup>10</sup>. The political basket of the EMP certainly suffered from specific diplomatic tension arising from ongoing conflicts, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. On the economic side, the negotiation of bilateral free-trade agreements with the MPCs took longer than expected and their enforcement is just about to start in most of the countries concerned. No manifest link between economic reform, improving the performance of public institutions and political openness has been empirically observed yet. The EU stuck to a rather classical commitment to good governance, and the strictly democratic content of European discourse and practice vis-à-vis the Mediterranean region remained rather weak altogether.

The 9/11 events impacted severely the EMP scheme of relations<sup>11</sup>. Growing political unrest in the region and the rising of terrorist threat confirmed the Europeans that more emphasis should be put on the political basket of the Partnership. Political reform started to be mentioned more explicitly, even if “democratisation” remained somewhat of a taboo. The main difference between American and European motives of intervention from that moment on could be resumed by one essential word: proximity. Geographical contingency is a crucial parameter for the EU to revise and/or reinforce its reform agenda for the Arab world. Growing instability in the Middle East poses a rather direct threat for Europeans. At the same time, the EU is building on an already consistent set of policies, North/South socialisation being one of the most important positive outcomes of the Barcelona Process. In the absence of military power, the EU’s political credits essentially depend on its capacity to engage in long-term dialogue with existing regimes and exert indirect pressure for change. The EMP can be heeded as a good channel to implement European soft power. Consequently, EU member states agreed on the necessity to reinforce the Partnership and to emphasise its reform-oriented contents<sup>12</sup>.

Both in the American and in the European context, the post 9/11 commitment to political reform, precisely to democracy in the American case, is serving at the same time idealistic and pragmatic purposes: democracy is officially depicted as a political model to diffuse in order to advance a universal scheme of modernistic progress; and democracy is also an efficient way to combat the obscurantist forces feeding terrorism in the Middle East. As President Bush stated publicly in 2004, the US “seek the advance of democracy for the most practical of reasons: because democracies do not support terrorists or threaten the world with weapons of mass murder”<sup>13</sup>. These two combined motives: a progressive vision for the world’s future, combined with a necessity to fight terror, explain the effective content of Western democracy promotion initiatives: a consistent discourse exposing the global democratic strategy coincides with effective practical moves through targeted co-operation programmes.

## Democracy as an official objective: introducing the issue of definition

It is important at this stage to provide with an operational definition of democracy, in order to be able to discriminate later amid the contents of various co-operation programmes directed at the Arab world. Fundamentally, democracy means a government of, by and for the people; it is engineered through a political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them.

Strangely enough, it is hard to find any such definition clearly stated in any Western discourse in the Middle Eastern context. The American certainly mention very often free and fair elections as an important criteria in their regional quest for democracy; it actually seems to be at the same time the essential criteria and an operational objective for democracy promotion. Echoing the conclusions of the first Arab Human Development report published under the UNDP auspices in 2002, “freedom” has become another compulsory figure of American official discourse vis-à-vis the region<sup>14</sup>.

Even the use of vocabulary seems to meet specific constraints: while the American have early placed democracy at the centre of their political agenda in the region, the EU for its part seemed initially much more reluctant in explicitly terming the political aims of its co-operation. The essential change immediately brought about by the 9/11 trauma in European rhetoric is probably the open contagion of the concept of “reforms” from the economic to the political field. Yet political reform as such is not necessarily more precise as an objective; it could encompass for instance political liberalisation, or institutional modifications in the balance of internal powers. It is only recently that the word “democracy” has spread through the official European literature to be applied to the Mediterranean<sup>15</sup>. In fact, when one observes the contents of European reform oriented programmes, it reveals a central

10 Richard Youngs, « Ten Years of the Barcelona Process: A Model for Supporting Arab Reform? », *FRIDE Working Paper*, n°2, January 2005.

11 On the impact of 9/11 on the EMP, see the special issue of *Mediterranean Politics* on « Euro-Mediterranean Relations After September 11: International, Regional and Domestic Dynamics », vol.8, n°2-3, Summer-Autumn 2003; describing the growing obsession for security on the European side and constraints entailed for the implementation of the EMP, see Dorothée Schmid, « The Failure of a Collective Security System? », *Bitterlemons International*, vol. 42 n° 3, November 24, 2005.

12 For an optimistic appraisal of Europe’s soft power, read Eneko Landaburu, “Hard Facts about Europe’s Soft Power”, *Europe’s World*, Summer 2006; for enlightening developments on Europe’s potential political influence in the Middle East through the use of economic tools, see Rosemary Hollis, “Europe and the Middle East: Power by Stealth?”, *International Affairs*, vol. 73 n°1, 1997, pp. 15-29 “The Israeli-Palestinian Road-Block: Can Europeans Make a Difference?”, *International Affairs* vol. 80 n°2, 2004, pp. 191-255.

13 « President Bush Discusses Importance of Democracy in Middle East – Remarks by the President on Winston Churchill and the War on Terror », Library of Congress, Washington, February 4, 2004.

commitment to good governance and a rather weak apparent interest in strictly political aspects of the reform. The notable exception of the Palestinian Territories will be examined later on, yet as we will observe in this specific case also, budgetary reform was at the heart of the institutional - political dynamic as advocated by Europeans.

This basic lack of clarity in the definition of democracy and relative indifference, or confusion, in the use of words and expressions, probably accounts for some inconsistencies at the level of implementation. Furthermore, it provides indirectly the Western powers with an unexpected leeway to enforce their objectives, as the “democratic” objectives may evolve over time depending on newly emerging interests.

According to Katarina Dalacoura, three different levels of intervention should be identified within the broad ensemble of American foreign policy initiatives aiming at the promotion of democracy in Arab and Muslim countries<sup>16</sup>.

One deals with the official discourse from the Bush administration, which highlights democracy as a core objective of US foreign policy. In his January 2005 inaugural speech, President George W. Bush still placed democracy promotion at the centre of his second-term agenda<sup>17</sup>; in a few years’ time, democracy has thus become an essential pillar of US foreign policy, and it has acquired particular relevance in the Middle East.

The second level deals with co-operation initiatives aimed at fostering political reform directly on the field; USAID has increased emphasis on democracy promotion since 2001, but the main new US step was taken with the launching of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in December 2002. The MEPI has actually introduced a new source of funding exclusively dedicated to democracy promotion. Its rationale is very much inspired by the conclusions of the UNDP Report of 2002, which identified three cardinal obstacles to human development in the Arab world, posed by widening gaps in freedom, women’s empowerment and education. The MEPI tries to concretely address these priorities by means of targeted co-operation programmes, mainly involving American and local NGOs. In the American vision of democracy promotion, civil society is indeed the central actor for democratic reform; the movement leading to political change is essentially a bottom-up one, with indigenous people claiming and occasionally fighting for their political rights. Besides general encouragement to governmental reforms, support should thus be continued for civic groups pressing for democratic outcomes. The broader institutional environment is not as important as it is in the European vision, even if some institutional mechanisms should be taken care of, as they constitute indispensable channels of communication between the civil society and the state. Classically, the USAID would thus provide technical assistance to parts of the state such as the legislature and the judiciary. Free elections are also an essential accessory and at the same time an expression of democracy, yet they should not be regarded as sacred *per se*. Richard Haas timely warns that « as a rule, ‘electocracy’ should not be confused with democracy »<sup>18</sup>.

The third level relates to the interventionist turn taken by American foreign policy and epitomised by the military intervention in Iraq. Yet in the aftermath of the Iraqi episode, which has not allowed for the deployment of the complete US democratic demonstration, the Bush administration seems to have adopted a softer approach. The co-operative aspects of the US strategy have been emphasised and many analysts would sustain that it marks a slow convergence of American and European practices of democracy promotion in the Middle East<sup>19</sup>. According to Jeffrey Kopstein, differences with the European approach would still be essentially « a matter of how democracy is promoted rather whether it should be promoted »<sup>20</sup>. As seen from Europe, US efforts to encourage democratic reforms could now be characterised as a mix of hard policies, partially relying on the use or the threat to use military force, and of smooth intervention, through renewed co-operation schemes.

If the EMP relied originally on the unfolding of an ideal scheme automatically linking economic liberalisation to political amendment, the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) marks from 2003 on a move towards more direct efforts for the promotion of democratic principles<sup>21</sup>. One has to acknowledge that the European record concerning the promotion of good governance, democracy and the respect for human rights in the Mediterranean had been rather weak until the launching of the ENP. If the effects of bilateral Euro-Mediterranean co-operation on governance, including administrative reform and the efficiency of institutions, notably linked to economic reform, could be debated at

## The American official stance and different levels of intervention in recent years

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large, democracy and human rights did not appear as outstanding European priorities until 2003. The broad conditionality framework offered by the legal texts supporting the EMP (namely the Barcelona Declaration and the Association agreements) was never activated and no explicit political pressure was ever exerted on Mediterranean Partner Countries, for instance through sanctions, as it had been effectively tried previous to the launching of the EMP<sup>22</sup>.

The ENP has been announced to open a new phase insofar as democracy promotion is concerned. It is theoretically offering new concrete opportunities to spread the European basic principles regarding governance, democracy and human rights in the Mediterranean. The ENP sets out the objectives for co-operation with countries bordering the EU's Eastern and Southern flanks; the concept is that of a circle of countries, sharing the EU's basic values and objectives and entering into an increasingly close relationship which goes beyond co-operation and therefore entails a high level of economic and political integration. Democracy, pluralism, the respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law and basic employment standards are all posited as preconditions for political stability and peaceful, sustainable socio-economic development<sup>23</sup>.

The EU's approach through the ENP is in fact still very much based on the expression of legal principles, and relies on rather institutional, or top-down, mechanisms. The general reform objectives that are being regularly trumpeted since 2003 should be attained notably through intensified political dialogue with all partner states, and also by earmarking a direct financial contribution to support the countries' national initiatives aiming at the amelioration of the democratic climate. The prospect of negotiating official « actions plans » dealing especially with human rights and the government's democratic commitment appears as a concrete step to enhance the partners' performance regarding these matters. The possibility to implement new economic conditionalities on co-operation, more directly linked to the contents and pace of reforms in the Mediterranean Partner Countries, has also been evoked. Finally, the few very specific co-operation programmes involving civil society actors and encouraging democratic culture at the grass roots should be preserved, if not reinforced<sup>24</sup>.

One should immediately note that the ENP rationale was directly inspired from the experience of enlargement, and that the revamping of co-operation programmes that it now proposed to Mediterranean partners draws essentially from the logic of previously implemented pre-access strategies<sup>25</sup>. This may be good omen for democrats, as these strategies have proven rather efficient in reinforcing at least the legal democratic frame in candidate countries. Yet one can legitimately wonder if the European system of incentives will be as efficient in the Mediterranean, in the absence of a truly appealing reward in the form of EU membership.

14 The UNDP report identified a "freedom deficit", or a substantial lag between Arab countries and other regions in terms of participatory governance, as one major obstacle to the development of the MENA region. United Nations Development Programme, *Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, at <http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr>. In the words of Condoleezza Rice, « Freedom and democracy are the only ideas powerful enough to overcome hatred, and division, and violence » in the region; see « Remarks at the American University in Cairo », 20 June 2005, on <http://www.state.gov/secretary/tm/2005/48328.htm>.

15 The symbolical starting point was probably the issuing of the Communication of the Commission, "Strategic guidelines for Reinforcing EU actions on Human Rights and Democratisation with Mediterranean partners", COM (2003) 294 final. As a result, see the new agenda as exposed in "The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership – The Barcelona Process", *European Union Fact Sheet*, February 2005 ( on [http://europa.eu/press\\_room/presspacks/us20050222/euromed.pdf](http://europa.eu/press_room/presspacks/us20050222/euromed.pdf)) : "Together for democracy, human rights and prosperity in the Mediterranean". Yet on the average, one can admit that the EU remains rather cautious when mentioning "democracy" in the Mediterranean frame, with the notable exception of the Palestinians. One could introduce here a parallel with EU's action in sub-saharan Africa, where EU policies are supposed to be "high on rhetoric but remains low on delivery"; see Gordon Brown, "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana", *European Journal of Development Research*, Volume 17, Number 4 / December 2005, pp. 571-600.

16 Katerina Dalacoura, « US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East Since 11 September 2001: A Critique », *International Affairs*, online publication, 31 Oct. 2005.

17 George W. Bush, 55th Inaugural Ceremony, January 21, 2005, on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural/>

18 Richard N. Haas was head of policy planning in the State Department in 2001-03; the sentence is taken from *The Opportunity, America's Moment to Alter History's Course*, New York, Public Affairs, 2005; quoted from: « A Rainbow of Revolutions », Special Report, *The Economist*, 19 Jan. 2006.

19 Richard Youngs, « European Democracy Policies in the Light of New US Initiatives in the Middle East », paper presented at the seminar « L'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis face aux crises du Moyen-Orient », Ifri, 2005, on [www.ifri.org](http://www.ifri.org).

20 Jeffrey Kopstein, « The Transatlantic Divide Over Democracy Promotion », *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, No. 2, Spring 2006, pp. 85-98.

21 Michael Emerson, Senem Aydin, Gergana Noutcheva, Nathalie Tocci, Marius Vahl and Richard Youngs, « The Reluctant Debutante: The European Union as Promoter of Democracy in its Neighbourhood », *CEPS Working Documents* 223 (2005).

22 Martin Jerch and Alejandro Lorca, « The EMP between Economic Development and Institution and Capacity-Building », paper presented at a EuroMeSCo workshop in Cairo, 2002; Immacolata Caruso and Abdelkader Djeflat, « Intermediate Institutions for the Growth of Governance Processes in the MPCs », Paper presented at the Conférence FEMISE 2003, 4, 5 and 6th December 2003, Marseille; Dorothee Schmid, « Conditionality Within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership », *EuroMeSCo Paper* n°27, December 2003.

23 Commission Communication entitled « Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours », 11 March 2003 (COM (2003) 104 final).

24 Morocco is a test case to observe the progressive inclusion of civil society in the EU's democratic design; see Dorothee Schmid, *European Community: Policy and Practice on Governance and Democracy. Research in Morocco*, London, One World Action Reports, 2006.

25 Andreas Marchetti, *The European Neighbourhood Policy: Foreign Policy at the EU's Periphery*, Discussion Paper C 158, ZEI 2006

## 2. Democratic devices on the ground: two case studies

### The Jordanian case

The American administration as well as the European one has established a solid co-operation frame with the two political entities that we chose as case-studies: Jordan and the Palestinian Territories. Both countries are highly dependent on external aid to serve their development objectives, and this makes them supposedly more receptive to the donor's strategies of reform. Both countries also can be considered to match in some way the progressive democratisation scheme that is being presently advocated by the Americans and the Europeans. A closer examination of the Western powers strategies on the ground reveal some differences in approaches as well as regarding the devices mobilised to encourage political reform. Yet the objectives pursued by both powers remain rather comparable and, despite a relative lack of co-ordination, Western strategies seem to converge on the medium term.

Jordan's political liberalization process historically started in 1989 and has gone through various dynamic phases ever since. The political opening proceeded slowly yet steadily until 1994, when King Hussein signed a peace treaty with Israel, entailing a period of relative political closure to inhibit internal dissent. The royal succession in 1999 increased public expectations for reform in Jordan, while the country reinforced its status as a privileged political ally for the West. Its open and proactive support to the promotion of political reform in the Arab world, as well as its constructive *protagonismo* in the Middle east Peace Process, make it a valuable partner for Western powers to work with. Jordan has thus only logically become a kind of regional centre of operations for democracy promotion in the Middle East.

#### *Jordan's democratic path as seen by the Western powers*

Jordan is considered by the EU and the US both as an important stabilising and modernising element at regional level. In its description of current US-Jordanian relations, the US State Department explicitly states that « the peace process and Jordan's opposition to terrorism parallel and indirectly assist wider U.S. interests ». On the EU side, the Commission signals that « Jordan's comparative political importance goes beyond the limitations of its size and economic and natural resources and relies on its capacity to remain proactive in the political field which is a rare asset among the countries in the region »<sup>26</sup>.

The perspectives for democratization were indeed rather positive from the end of the reign of King Hussein and on through the early transition period after King Abdallah II came into power. Nonetheless, some observers kept warning on the slow pace of reforms and suspected that the monarchy was paying lip service to its democratic commitments, arguing that for every move toward liberalization, there have been corresponding signs of de-liberalization<sup>27</sup>. Abdallah II has notably emphasized economic development above all things, pursuing his grand design of liberalizing the Jordanian economy and thus meeting at least part of the liberal agenda advocated by the Western powers for the Arab world.

The controversy over the nature and rhythm of democratization in Jordan is closely linked to the security constraints that the regime is facing, both internally and externally. The King himself regularly expresses his utter determination to conciliate political reform with security<sup>28</sup>. Jordan's sensitivity to the regional political climate actually makes it an important test-case for the purpose of our study. Following terrorist attacks of 9 November 2005, the Jordanian regime was rather automatically driven to tighten its strategic alliance against islamist terrorism with the United States<sup>29</sup>. The state of Israeli-Jordan relations since the signing of the peace treaty, the evolution of the Palestinian issue, are two other important parameters determining both the monarchy's capacity to offer political reform, and the Western powers' motivation to accompany such a process of reform.

#### *EU's co-operation for democracy in the Jordanian context*

Jordan's status is of a long-standing and much appreciated partner of the EU. EU relations with Jordan are still governed by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership that is implemented through the EU-Jordan Association Agreement, enforced in 2002. In the wake of the launching of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Jordan early expressed a strong interest in developing further its partnership with the EU. Jordan is among the five countries which have adopted an ENP action plan in 2005 for the next three to five years introducing a new agenda of co-operation, including an updating and reinforcement of actions to improve governance and democracy. Jordan is currently the second largest recipient of EU assistance per capita after the Palestinian territories.

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.statedepartment.gov>; <http://www.cec.de/jor.eu.int>.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Christophe Augé, « Abdallah II de Jordanie : de la difficulté d'être roi... », *Monde arabe*, n°173, Juillet-Septembre 2001-07/09, pp. 39-5 ; Curtis Ryan, « Reform Retreats Amid Jordan's Political Storms » *Middle East Report Online*, June 10, 2005, <http://www.merip.org/mero/meroo61005.html>

<sup>28</sup> Abdallah II, Robert Barry Satloff, « Iraq is the Battleground - The West Against Iran », *Middle East Quarterly*, vol.12, n°2, Spring 2005, pp. 73-80. Some observers have actually talked of a « strategy of survival » of the Jordanian regime facing these internal and external threats; see Russell E. Lucas, *Institutions and the Politics of Survival in Jordan: Domestic Responses to External Challenges, 1988-2001*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Scott Greenwood, « Jordan, the Al-Aqsa Intifada and America's 'war on terror' », *Middle East Policy*, vol.10, n°3, 2003, Fall pp. 90-111.

The priorities of the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2005-2006 for Jordan show the EU's will to build on the substantial progress made in Jordan in recent years notably regarding economic modernisation; the EU also affirms its resolution to encourage progress in political reform, including human rights issues democracy and good governance.

The strategy currently prevailing is primarily to work in partnership with the government to improve its capacity to promote democracy through official policies. Accordingly, the EU supports the implementation of Jordan's National Agenda for political and economic development adopted in 2005, and both parties have officially agreed to cooperate on issues such as freedom of speech, independence of the justice system, strengthening the role of women in public life and improving the conditions for civil society to operate. Specific measures agreed under the new ENP agenda include: support for a strategy to consult civil society stakeholders on political and economic reform, strengthening institutions fighting corruption, support for the Jordanian National Centre for Human Rights, technical co-operation to improve the institutional and legislative framework for the media and support for measures to shelter women victims of violence.

The European Union claims to have become a major player in the area of human rights and democratisation in Jordan essentially through its support to NGOs and community-based organisations. It has worked in co-operation with the Ministry of political development to develop a model for cooperation between the government and civil society. The €2 million Sharaka programme, implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Planning, has effectively provided since 2003 comprehensive financial and technical support to human-rights NGOs throughout the Kingdom. The EU is often trying to fund coalitions of NGOs, in order to promote cooperation rather than competition between groups promoting the same types of social development. It also tends to select NGOs on an equality basis as long as the organization's aims lie within the overall European objectives. Thus, while the EU does not necessarily shy away from Islamic partners, it would most probably refrain from funding Islamist groups, as their view on women and the separation of religion and state (among other issues) differs greatly from European values.

#### *The US approach to democratization in Jordan*

The US has provided both military and economic aid to Jordan since the end of the 1950ies. The amount of aid supplied has varied over time as a function of the threats faced by the Jordanian regime, and as assessed by the American government<sup>30</sup>. Since 9/11, some supplementary aid has been explicitly granted to Jordan as a reward for its support on the American « War on Terrorism » and as a compensation for the effects of the Iraq war on its economy. In 2006, some 250 million \$ have been granted in economy assistance and over 200 million \$ in military assistance.

The US administration is a firm support of Jordan's reform agenda and systematically recalling that it should be internally driven. The USAID official priorities in Jordan are « to support a forward-looking government and NGOs in efforts to enhance economic prosperity for Jordanians and stability in the region », insisting that Jordan has played and essential role as a positive force for peace in the region<sup>31</sup>. The USAID official discourse concerning Jordan seems to stick rather strictly to the official motto of the Palace, insisting on good governance as an important element to bolster economic liberalization and foster economic growth. It also insists on the sincere commitment of the Jordanian regime to pursue democratic reforms, while some entrenched interests might oppose reforms. The US administration nonetheless insists now that recent changes in U.S. government priorities in the Middle East mandate an increased emphasis on reform in democracy and education in Jordan<sup>32</sup>.

USAID is concretely working in partnership with the government of Jordan to strengthen the rule of law, reinforce Parliamentary infrastructure, support stronger ties between Parliament and civil society and improve the status of women. The judiciary is an area of particular dedication, support being given to the Ministry of Justice in its efforts to make the judicial sector more transparent, efficient, and support the government's efforts to develop a free and independent judiciary. Under legislative strengthening, USAID is working with the Jordanian Parliament to ameliorate training of the Parliamentarians, improve research capacity and encourage the greater use of information technology in the legislative process. Furthermore, developing ties between key NGOs and the Parliament will supposedly enhance the organizations' engagement in the policy-making process. A new initiative directly aimed at strengthening the enabling environment for civil society organizations and increase their capacity was also launched in 2006. Finally, in response to a request from the Ministry of Planning, USAID recently provided technical assistance for the development of a strategy and action plan for municipal and local government reform. Jordan has also been the recipient of several MEPI funds.

<sup>30</sup> Alfred B. Prados, « Jordan: US relations and Bilateral Issues », *CRS Report for Congress*, IB 93085, updated April 26, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> USAID/Jordan, « Programme Overview », January 2005; USAID/Jordan, « Operational Plan, FY 2006 », June 12, 2006, both on <http://www.usaid.org>

<sup>32</sup> USAID/Jordan, « Strategic Statement Jordan 2007 – 2011 / Public version »

## The Palestinian issue

The Palestinian Territories offer a rather original setting for democracy promotion efforts. They do not have the characteristics of a full sovereign state and their institutional system is still by many aspects under construction<sup>33</sup>. Besides, the weakness of the Palestinian economy maintains the Territories in a state of enduring dependence on external aid. The Palestinian Authority thus appears as a rather malleable partner, who is obliged to be more receptive than others to Western discourses and practices encouraging, or forcing, political reform.

### *The case for democracy in the Palestinian context*

In the case of the Palestinian Territories, the democratisation task is narrowly associated with state-building, even if a time-gap could be observed between these two priorities as advanced by external donors. Since the signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993, the Western community of donors has indeed progressively converted to pursuing simultaneously these two objectives in its co-operation with the Palestinians. The first objective, emerging in the immediate aftermath of Oslo, was to simply establish sound and viable Palestinian institutions, and to gradually empower them with the instruments of sovereignty. The second objective, which can be spotted from the period following the beginning of the second intifada, and reinforced especially after 2002, was to turn this embryonic Palestinian state into a decent democracy. The traditional formula inserted in all European CFSP declarations thus stresses that the EU is working with in collaboration with the PA to build up the institutions of a future democratic, independent and viable Palestinian state that will be able to leave in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours<sup>34</sup>.

Furthermore, since democracy promotion came into fashion, the Palestinian field is seen by both the EU and the US as exemplifying the Arab world's most promising democratic transition. According to Nathan Brown, the Americans actually made Palestine a test case of political reform in the region a year before the invasion of Iraq, with President Bush declaring in June 2002 that « if liberty can blossom in the rocky soil of the West Bank and Gaza, it will inspire millions of men and women around the globe who are equally weary of poverty and oppression, equally entitled to the benefits of democratic government »<sup>35</sup>. On the EU side, the pressure for Palestinian reform has become a chief concern since 2002, and the democratic imperative has been constantly and openly reaffirmed ever since. This outspokenness is a very rare case when one looks deeper into the network of bilateral relationships that the EU has consolidated with its Mediterranean neighbours.

Finally, the democratisation of the Palestinian territories remains a stone block for the EU and the US in their vision of how to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict. The US regularly stress that progress in the peace process will depend largely on Palestinian efforts to democratize and reform, and the EU seems to have at least partly converted to this conception of things<sup>36</sup>.

Three major parameters can be listed that should make the Palestinian case a crucial experiment for Western democracy promotion experiments. First, the topic of reform has been put on the table from the outset and discussed in continuity with the Palestinian Authority. Second, the recently created Palestinian institutions are effectively prone to be more flexible and receptive to external pressure than historically rooted regimes in the region. Third, the massive amount of external assistance concentrated on the West Bank and Gaza Strip does influence the balance of power in favour of the donors, especially as they have managed to keep a rather co-operative approach toward the Palestinians.

### *The European contribution for democratization in the West Bank and Gaza*

Since Oslo, the European Union associated to its member states have become the number one donor for the Palestinians. One third of European aid disbursed in favour of the Palestinians is conveyed through the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation framework (MEDA budget line), complemented by many other co-operation channels (contribution to the funding of the UNRWA, programmes under the label of the European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy...). One should note that the ordinary set of administrative procedures that prevail under the MEDA frame does not apply to the West Bank and Gaza: no Country Strategy Paper, no National Indicative Program, can be elaborated to meet the rapid and evolution of the situation on the ground. From 2003 on, the Commission has invited the PA to participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU-PA Action Plan was endorsed by the foreign ministers at the Association Council in December 2004 and entered into force in May 2005. Yet no tangible developments can be accounted for after this date.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Botiveau, *L'Etat palestinien*, Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 1999; Asad Ghanem, *The Palestinian Regime: A 'Partial Democracy'*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2001; Mushtaq Husain Khan, George Giacaman and Inge Amundsen, *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance During a Social Transformation*, New York, Routledge Curzon political economy of the Middle East and North Africa series, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> For a complete exposition of the EU's stance, see « The EU and the Middle East » on the official website, [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/mep/faq/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/mep/faq/index.htm)

<sup>35</sup> Nathan Brown, « Living with Palestinian Democracy », *Carnegie Endowment Policy Brief* No. 46, May 2006, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Kristin Archick « European Views and Policies Toward the Middle East », *CRS Report for Congress*, RL31956, Updated 9 March 2005, p. 15.

The EU's democracy promotion strategy regarding the Palestinian Territories essentially relates to its effort in supporting the PA's internal reform process. In the aftermath of the second intifadah (2000), and particularly in the period preceding the adoption of the Road Map (2002-2003), the achievement of Palestinian reform has become a leading concern for most of European member states and for the European Commission. Direct budget assistance was provided in 2001 and 2002, before the establishment of a Reform Facility, allowing for the disbursement of aid closely linked to progress in reform efforts and earmarked for specific needs identified in co-operation with the PA Ministry of Finance. At the time, the EU started to attach conditions to its financial assistance package to the PA and elaborated specific technical assistance programmes to accompany the reform. The budgetary reform of the PA has been one focal point, with EU support and conditions playing an important role to ameliorate Palestinian fiscal responsibility, transparency and financial accountability.

In 2005, the EU's contribution to the Palestinian reform process fell into two essential categories as listed by the Commission. First, « Support for the Palestinian Authority, including reforms » (€70 million), with Europe contributing as the first donor to the Public Financial Management Reform Trust Fund managed by the World Bank. Second, « Building the institutions of a Palestinian state », (€12 million), providing support to the strengthening of the PA's reform process and to the creation of conditions for an environment conducive to Palestinian economic recovery in the areas identified as priorities in the EU-PA Action Plan. These priorities include good governance and the rule of law, financial control and audit, but also trade liberalisation and development, private sector development, reform of revenue administration<sup>37</sup>.

One should also mention the €7 million judiciary programme launched end of 2003 with an aim to strengthen the rule of law in the West Bank and Gaza. The European Commission hereby seeks to reinforce the Palestinian judicial institutions providing training to judges and prosecutors and funding the refurbishment of selected courts. Part of all EU financial assistance programmes in the Palestinian Territories is also systematically devoted to capacity-building for private sector institutions, civil society and local authorities.

Finally, one should recall that the EU provided extensive support to the preparation and implementation of the Palestinian electoral process in 2005-2006.

#### *The American vision of democracy promotion in the Palestinian case*

American intervention for the promotion of democracy in the Palestinian Territories is affected by strong political constraints. The close political and strategic relationship established over the year between the US and the state of Israel obliges the American administration to monitor its co-operation with the Palestinians with particular care. At the same time, the US have become since Oslo the leading bilateral donor to the West Bank and Gaza. The amount of American assistance, its priorities and monitoring procedures are in fact directly linked to the evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The USAID mission in the West Bank and Gaza Strip hence explicitly states that its bywords for year 2006 have been « flexibility and rapid response to immediate foreign policy opportunities »<sup>38</sup>.

The US Congress imposed from the outset strict conditions on the delivery of financial assistance to the Palestinians, in order to guarantee compliance with agreements with Israel. American law thus prohibits providing aid directly to the PA, so as to ensure that it is not diverted to terrorist groups. Aid has been heavily scrutinized by Congress throughout the period following Oslo, leading to the 2nd intifadah and more legal restrictions were imposed in the aftermath of 9/1139.

The official priorities of USAID co-operation in the area of good governance and democracy are « the maintaining and strengthening key institutions of a modern, inclusive Palestinian democracy »<sup>40</sup>. It has developed under its Democracy and Governance program a very extensive set of activities, addressing at large the wide scope of all imaginable democratic concerns, namely: the Rule of Law; decentralization; elections and leadership; institution-building; and the capacities of civil society.

The USAID is the primary donor to the Palestinian Legislative Council and has provided training to 80 % of the Palestinian parliamentaries. Its Rule of Law programme focuses on the strengthening of the Palestinian judiciary, helping to build and develop Palestinian courts, legal offices and law schools. The Tamkeen programmes targets Palestinian civil society organizations, providing grants to promote reform and defend citizen's rights; its is notably

<sup>37</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm#2.2](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm#2.2)

<sup>38</sup> USAID/West Bank and Gaza, «Operational Plan FY 2006 », June 12, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> According to Nathan Brown, « Existing laws have already gone too far, making it impossible for policy makers, nongovernmental organization leaders, and the private sector to figure out what is legally permitted when dealing with Palestine »; *art. cit.*, p.6.

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/program\\_democracy.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/program_democracy.htm)

supporting Palestinian think tanks intervening in the public debate to monitor public opinion, promote policy and legislative change. USAID also assisted Palestinian organizations in the process towards elections and provided technical assistance on the administrative conduct of elections, focusing particularly on women's inclusion in all aspects of the electoral process.

The MEPI operates in the West Bank and Gaza following the same priorities and guidelines fixed for other Arab countries (e.g. the four pillars described above). It has not developed significant programmes in the Palestinian Territories yet. One should nonetheless note as a curiosity that a specific envelope was earmarked to target the Arab minority in Israel.

#### *After Hamas: political interference to prevent a political crisis*

The very complete electoral process that took place in the Palestinian Territories in 2005-2006 could be considered as an essential output of Western democracy-promotion policies applied to the Middle East. Yet the result of the Palestinian legislative elections at the beginning of 2006, bringing an Islamist majority in power, questioned the very essence of the democratic process in the Territories. The Quartet issued a statement shortly after the elections, threatening to suspend financial assistance, should the new government refuse to comply with a set of three political conditions: renounce violence, recognise the right of Israel to exist and accept previously existing agreements with Israel. Upon negative response from the newly constituted Hamas government, all Western donors finally decided a temporary suspension of aid. They are now working in co-operation to design a new mechanism in order to resume assistance, bypassing the Hamas government.

The content of the three conditions imposed on Hamas is not narrowly democratic, even if all three could be considered to indirectly contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the frame of the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian relationship. In any case, the suspension of aid makes political sense and certainly deserves to be assessed against the hitherto consistent political design exposed by the Western powers vis-à-vis the nascent Palestinian state. The fact that the decision was commonly agreed inside the Quartet illustrates the background convergence of Western objectives and strategic approaches to monitor the political dynamic in the Palestinian Territories.

Americans and Europeans have in fact shown a common intention to interfere into the internal affairs of the PA to prevent a political crisis. They have expressed a stronger will to control the outcomes of state-building in the Palestinian context: no unconditional aid will be provided in the future regardless of the regime's behaviour. Even if the donors do not readily accept this phrasing<sup>41</sup> the decision to suspend aid can certainly be considered as a sanction, proving that political conditionality is not necessarily condemned to remain an abstract expression. And the paradoxical effect of this decision is that it is perceived by local stakeholders, as we will elaborate further on, as a sanction *against* democracy.

What do we learn from a comparison of the Western modes of intervention in these two different contexts? American and European choices of areas for cooperation and their methods do not appear as really dissimilar, and the programmes implemented are certainly not competing. Yet if the democratic issue has become a common obsession of Western donors, on the average it does not seem to foster greater co-ordination to reach shared objectives.

## Western efforts in perspective: compared strategies and tentative bridges

#### *EU and US democracy promotion strategies: compared priorities and methods*

A comparison of EU and US intervention in the Jordanian context reveals a great similarity in approach. Both donors insist on supporting Jordanian autonomous democratic agenda and work on close co-operation with the Jordanian government. The American agency nonetheless does more general capacity building than the EU, who is going more specific and trying to design *ad hoc* solutions on a smaller scale. This can indeed be explained by the difference in the amount of funding available on the US and the EU side, and also by the closer ties existing between the US and Jordanian administrations. Both the EU and the US fund civil society initiatives but do not advance it as an alternative to public service. Both tend to focus on women's rights and their position in society as a way to promote social and political rights. As we will develop further, interviews and polls reveal that on the whole the EU has better reputation with the Jordanian civil society and the larger public.

41 At least EU officials insist that "suspension" is the official technical expression. Interview with a French diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 2006. The European Commissioner for External Relations also insisted that the principles enshrined in the Quartet ultimatum have underpinned European cooperation with the Palestinians for many years; Benita Ferrero-Waldner, « Suspension of aid to the Palestinian Authority government », European Parliament Plenary, Speech 06/260, Brussels, 26 April 2006.

In the Palestinian context, one should not forget that the EU remains largely a dominated player. Since Oslo, its role has been essentially to bank for patterns designed in common by the wider international community. Its sticking to the issue of Palestinian reform can be interpreted as strict compliance with the Road Map agenda. In contrast, the US seem to be able to adopt a more independent stance. Regardless of early concerns expressed by Javier Solana over the victory of the Islamists in the general elections, one could argue that the decision to sanction the new Hamas-led government was largely inspired by American concerns. One should also presently acknowledge the fact that the level and quality of US commitment on the Palestinian file has substantially downgraded under the Bush administration<sup>42</sup>, and that the present American administration acts cautiously to keep its priorities in accordance with the political line set by the Israeli government. On the ground, a sort of division of labour is apparently operating between the EU and the US, the latter theoretically avoiding direct contact with the Palestinian Authority, while the former are in charge of reforming the PA through a kind of direct contracting system, implying the providing of direct budgetary assistance and continuous dialogue over technical issues, notably concerning the Palestinian budget. At the same time, American claims to work in close contact with the Palestinian civil society organizations should be nuanced taking into account the very restrictive legal framework under which the USAID is operating.

*Do these strategies appear as complementary or competitive? The state of transatlantic co-operation for democracy promotion on a local scale*

EU and the US seem to work in parallel in both cases studied, and to develop rather complementary or symmetrical frameworks of operation. Their intervention could not be described as competitive, especially as the US still remains a leading player for democracy promotion in the region, still setting the essential direction and pace of co-operation.

Systematic co-ordination has not become part yet of the Western code of conduct in the democratic realm. Yet some informal mechanisms have appeared over the last years, especially in specific areas where both the EU and the US intervene. The example of the reform of the judiciary in Jordan is quite telling in that regard: American and European agents sat down together and compared notes on how to best set on a plan for reform, then distributed the tasks in order not to cause inconvenience to each other, and also to maximise the outcomes of their efforts. In the Palestinian case, all co-operation programmes are planned in common by the international community, which also implies background dialogue between the EU and the US over priorities and the methodology to best convey assistance. Concerning the specific issue of Palestinian reform, the donor community established in July 2002 a joint Task Force on Palestinian reform, under the auspices of the Quartet. It comprises representatives of the EU, Russia, the UN Secretary General, Norway, Japan, Canada, the World Bank and the IMF. Mechanisms of dialogue have been established with the US and the Israeli government to ensure the continuity of the international position. On the field, some of the EU member states representatives admitted that they felt uneasy to communicate with American officials after the decision to suspend aid, especially as the image of the US government was deteriorating rapidly among the Palestinian public.

The reception of democracy promotion programmes by local stakeholders should certainly be a matter of concern for both Western powers, inasmuch as they systematically insist on the importance of taking advantage of the spontaneous impetus for reforms in Arab countries, and ensuring ownership of all co-operation programmes. Two levels of perceptions by local actors will be distinguished here to facilitate the analysis: 1. the perception of democracy promotion programmes by the public opinion at large and by civil society organisations; 2. the interference of these external initiatives with the national, governmental planning of political reform.

Such a differentiation is essentially driven by the assumption that in some contexts, the aspirations of civil society actors may come at odds with the official conception and monitoring of the democratisation process. Finally, we would like to comment briefly on the perception of current sanctions against the Palestinian by neighbouring Arab governments and public opinions.

The perception of Western efforts for democracy promotion by the public opinion in Jordan and in the Palestinian Territories can be notably assessed using a variety of opinion polls that have been recently conducted in both places.

#### *In Jordan*

A poll dealing specifically with democratic issues was conducted by the Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies in July 2006<sup>43</sup>. In order to measure public opinion regarding barriers to democracy, the CSS asked respondents to pick the largest barrier to democracy in Jordan from a list of possible barriers. A majority of the people polled chose the « lack of regional stability » as the first barrier to democratic reforms in Jordan (17.6%). Adding this with other answers fitting into the category of regional stability—such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, instability in Iraq, among others, regional stability in fact makes up to 37.3%. Yet what is especially relevant to our study, 11.0% of the people polled consider that « USA does not want democracy in Jordan », this explanation ranking third on the list of obstacles to democratisation.

As perceived from the field, the methodology of EU's co-operation for democratic reform is apparently perceived more positively by the Jordanian public than US efforts. The EU's method remains to try and be as clear as possible with every stakeholder on its goals and incentives. EU's officials thus keep a good relationship with Jordanian NGOs and EU's policies are well accepted by the Jordanian public at large. Doubtless, some organizations who would otherwise reject international funding have exceptionally and readily accepted EU funding for their projects.

#### *In the Palestinian Territories*

Polling the Palestinian public has become a routine activity for a variety of local institutes approximately since the starting of the second intifadah. Consistent series of surveys are thus available to provide the analysts with reliable data concerning the perception of external interventions in the Palestinian Territories<sup>44</sup>. Some more feedback on Palestinian perceptions could also be caught through interviews with Western officials, Palestinian analysts and members of NGOs.

At a very general level, it is acknowledged that the Palestinian public has a contrasted perception of EU and US political intervention in the region. A survey conducted by NearEastConsulting in March 2006 for instance showed that in the aftermath of the legislative elections, and the decision to suspend aid on Ismail Haniya's government, 17.1 % of the people politically trusted the EU and only 1.6 % trusted the US. At the same time, 37.3 % affirmed that the EU had a more just policy towards the Palestinians, while only 2.1 % thought it was the US; yet 39.3 % considered that both powers had a just policy towards the Palestinians<sup>45</sup>.

On the other hand, the need for reform of the Palestinian institutions, as advocated by external actors, is widely admitted. A poll conducted by the PCPSR in April 2003, corresponding to the period when external donors started to unfold a rather strong discourse on Palestinian

## 3. Democracy promotion as seen by local actors involved in the reform process

### How is democracy promotion perceived by grass roots actors

<sup>43</sup> CSS, Public Opinion Polls Unit, <http://www.css-jordan.org>

<sup>44</sup> One should refer to the material gathered by the Development Studies Program at Birzeit University (<http://home.birzeit.edu/dsp/opinionpolls/>), the surveys conducted by the Survey Research Unit of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR, <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/survey.html>), and the polls regularly made available by Near East Consulting (NEC, <http://www.near-eastconsulting.com/>).

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.near-eastconsulting.com/surveys/intl/out/>

reform, showed that a majority of 86% supported internal and external calls for wide and fundamental political reforms<sup>46</sup>. A poll realised by the polling unit at Birzeit University in February 2003 also showed that 94% of the people felt that reforming PNA institutions was necessary, 88% mentioning the reform of local councils and NGOs as well, and 83% the reform of political groups. At the same time, the international and donor institutions were not considered as the most reliable partners to work on such reforms, as 83% thought that reforming the work of international donor institutions was also necessary. In addition, 79% felt that the U.S.A. had to reform their approach to the Palestinian issue for comprehensive reform to be feasible<sup>47</sup>.

A more qualitative appraisal of Palestinian perceptions can be elaborated through interviews. In the very recent period, the financial sanctions taken against the Hamas-led government did certainly have a very strong negative impact on Palestinian feelings toward the democratic discourse of the Western powers. The sanctions were taken at the end of a long electoral process that was essentially monitored by the EU and widely recognised by the international community as very transparent and democratic<sup>48</sup>. All the Palestinians that were met during interviews did share the feeling that suspension of aid on political grounds was an unjust punishment.

Moreover, the reaction of the grass roots to Western democracy promotion programmes is very much linked to the co-operation methods and procedures adopted by the EU and US bureaucracies. Since 9/11, the strict political constraints imposed on any contracting with the US administration did sharply affect the perception of USAID activities in the Palestinian Territories. In line with general political requirements voiced by Washington in the context of the « War on terror », all Palestinian NGOs receiving US funding now have to sign an anti-terror clause known as the Anti-Terrorism Certification (ATC). This certification is aimed at guaranteeing that they do not promote or support terrorist activities<sup>49</sup>. Some American officials would admit that these new practices have substantially complicated their job, altering the quality of long term partnerships with some Palestinian NGOs, when it did not put a blunt end to some of them: many NGO's workers would consider it as a substantial political compromise for them to comply with the American rule and would refuse to sign<sup>50</sup>. On the other hand, the EU is perceived as more tolerant, even if the funding is often considered as a kind of rent, re-attributed on a regular basis to the same beneficiaries. The relative continuity of some European national programmes of co-operation, event after the official decision to suspend aid, did also raise the popularity of the EU compared to the US.

## How are external efforts interfering with national initiatives for reform

It is also of utmost importance to examine the way external democratisation efforts concretely combine with endogenous impulsion for reform at the central, governmental level. Aside from the abstract ideal scheme where Western democracy-promotion programmes would flawlessly support internal efforts, with a perfect correlation of objectives and methods on all sides, various plans can in fact be pursued in parallel. Above all, one should not avoid considering that external pressure could eventually trigger resistance from national governments.

### *In Jordan*

The specificity of the Jordanian national pattern of reform is that it is essentially driven from above, with the monarchy closely monitoring political reform in a top-down process. The political interactions essentially take place between the Palace and the Parliament, with government proposals often facing strong resistance from Parliament. This doubtless makes it more bureaucratic for foreign agencies to work with top institutions than with regular civil society, also due to the difference in size: small NGOs can operate at a quicker level and be more focused than governmental actors.

We noted that both the EU and the US are following the same line of conduct, primarily supporting the Jordanian National Agenda of reform, as promoted by the Palace. The EU's contribution through the ENP is particularly representative of such an approach. The Jordan ENP Action Plan was designed prior to the National Agenda and they are both compatible for the most part. Following its usual rationale, the EU has affirmed its willingness to use the ENP to support the Jordanian government in the implementation of the Agenda, as it sees it as an ambitious project that is in line with EU goals for Jordan. Drawing on other countries experience, no major clash should occur there, as EU officials are very cautious not to go

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2003/p7a.html>

<sup>47</sup> <http://home.birzeit.edu/dsp/opinionpolls/poll11/analysis.html>

<sup>48</sup> On the electoral process, see ICG, « Palestinians, Israel and the Quartet – Pulling Back From the Brink », *Middle East Report* n°54, 13th June 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Besides, the planning and reviewing system of USAID-funded projects includes consultation with the Israeli government, as well as with other governments and donors. For a general description of the anti-terrorism system applied to the Palestinian Territories, see « Testimony of James R. Kunder, USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East / US Policy toward the Palestinians, Before the International Relations Committee », U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC, March 2, 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, USAID, Jerusalem, June 2006.

contrary to endogenous priorities when they have the chance to operate in partnership with a reform-oriented regime<sup>51</sup>. This concretely means that the content of political dialogue with the Jordanian government is thus prone to be rather inoffensive, as the Europeans couldn't afford to really interfere with burning issues, such as the form of electoral law. The EU would certainly not utter public dissatisfaction with the direction or pace of political reforms, unless some national policies would openly violate international human rights regulations. Regarding the substance of co-operation programmes, one should also recall that the Europeans always privilege the concept of positive conditionality, especially as far as democracy promotion goes.

#### *In the Palestinian territories*

As stated earlier, one of the characteristics of the Palestinian reform agenda is that it has been designed from the outset in close co-operation with the PA itself. Western donors initially urged the PA to elaborate a reform plan and a consistent dialogue was sustained since the adoption of the first wide-ranging programme of reforms in June 2002 (through the various « medium-term plans » finalised from 2003 on). A clear and shared agenda of reform was thus regularly produced, highlighting both parties' commitments. Remarkable evidence that both sides have been working in synergy is that the Palestinian administration has undergone restructuration in 2003-2004 in order to match the donors' own organisation, with the creation of a Co-ordination support unit working under the authority of the Prime Minister. An advisory National Reform Committee, including members of the NGOs, was established in 2004 to supervise the bureaucrats' task.

Despite these constant interactions, some resentment is often expressed on the Palestinian side that the donors have not been attentive enough in assessing the achievements of Palestinian reform. Officials from the previous governmental team would thus at the same time praise the long-term involvement of external donors in favour of Palestinian reforms, and complain about the severity of their appreciation of Palestinian results<sup>52</sup>. For some prominent officials, constant criticism from the international community and a relative lack of financial support in the period preceding the elections to the Legislative Council would in fact account for the Fatah's defeat<sup>53</sup>.

Some observers have lately warned about the impact of the sanctions taken against the Hamas government on the perception of Western democracy promotion policies by other countries from the Middle East. Commenting about the results of several electoral processes in the region, Jonathan Steele states that "the moral in Palestine is not that democracy brings instability, but that it is the failure of powerful forces to accept democracy's results that causes instability", later concluding that no general conclusions should be drawn and no global policy responses should be designed on the basis of singular electoral experiments in the Arab world<sup>54</sup>. This warning underlines latent worries on the other side of the negotiation table: the suspension of Western aid was clearly re-interpreted by some protagonists in the region as a backwards move from the West, symbolising a rising anti-democratic trend.

It is first the fate of the Palestinians that is being debated as a blatant case of injustice. Even Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan explicitly supported this opinion by saying that "if the intention is to discipline the new structure in Palestine through economic methods, this will not bring democracy (...) This will be a controlled democracy, and this stance disregards the Palestinians"<sup>55</sup>. But the effect of the Palestinian backlash goes beyond the borders of the West Bank and Gaza. Some analysts avvert that the sanctions might be considered as a severe setback for U.S. regional democratization efforts. Both governmental and opposition actors in other Arab countries indeed witness the American reaction to the Palestinian elections as a test of the consistency and integrity of U.S. democracy promotion<sup>56</sup>. If the first electoral defeat of a governing Arab party provokes the US government to halt the democratic process itself, the fear of Islamist electoral victories elsewhere could lead them to more interference vis-à-vis other regimes. The message conveyed through the Palestinian affair could finally be as negative as the one emanating from military intervention in Iraq.

## **The case of the « democratic backlash » on Palestine as seen from other Middle Eastern countries**

<sup>51</sup> For a very clear illustration of this principle in the case of Morocco, see Dorothee Schmid, *European Community: Policy and Practice on Governance and Democracy, Research in Morocco*, London, One World Action Reports, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), June 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Salam Fayyad, former Minister of Economy and Finances of the Palestinian Authority, Ramallah, June 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Jonathan Steele, "Lessons from Four Elections" *Bitterlemons International* Ed. 23, Vol. 4, June 22, 2006

<sup>55</sup> «Erdogan blasts Israel's sanctions against Hamas», *The New Anatolian*, 22 February 2006 <http://www.thenewanatolian.com/tna-1255.html>

<sup>56</sup> Nathan Brown, *art. cit.*, p. 2.

## 4. The relevance of Western democracy promotion programmes to regional geopolitical visions

### The contribution of democracy promotion to regional peace or stabilisation designs

Some analysts currently worry that the transatlantic relationship is fraying, and see the democratic imperative applied to the Middle East as major bone of contention between the US and the EU<sup>57</sup>. The causes of such disagreement could be found in their differing perceptions of what is actually democracy, and what are the best ways and means to support and spread it abroad. But the specific implications of the democratic debate in the context of the Middle East might also feed more strategic divergences.

One of the purposes of this study was to try and evaluate the concrete adaptation of Western democracy promotion programmes to the conditions met on the field in different political contexts. We generally admitted that a good deal of standardisation was the rule for the US as for the EU's intervention in the Mediterranean perimeter, with the exception of the Palestinian Territories, where the donors are working under very specific constraints that forces their methods into more reactivity. Our observations also showed that there are more commonalities than is usually admitted between the Western powers' global understanding of the issue of democratisation in the Arab and Muslim world. Some shared perceptions and fears, matched with an uneven balance of acting capacities, finally seems to ensure the slow convergence of US and EU strategies, arguably aligning on an American line.

In order to explain such progressive alignment, it seems relevant to consider the issue of adapting democracy promotion strategies to the local context against the wider backdrop of the US and EU strategies for regional stabilisation in the Middle East. Democracy indeed seems to stand as a key component of both Western powers' vision of a peaceful and stable Middle East. The discourse on reform is bolstered on both sides by an appeal to the forces of peace. The democratic peace thesis is an indispensable element to take into consideration to understand the long-term search for political reform in the Middle East. Both the grand American democratisation project and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership do ultimately rely on the assumption that shared democratic institutions and values are a necessary prerequisite to establish an enduring peace in the region. The BMENA initiative itself has at least formally sealed the American-European reconciliation over the democratisation issue<sup>58</sup>.

These regional strategies are very comprehensive and intrinsically flawed by their global character. They have been designed very rationally and are still monitored from Washington and Brussels, along top-down processes eventually weakening their concrete relevance on the ground. Moreover, these global approaches are riddled with internal contradictions that come blatantly into view at an implementation stage. Both the US and the EU are presently confronted to the major democracy/security dilemma, or the fear that security conditions might downgrade in the process leading to regional democracy<sup>59</sup>. Political reform might indeed generate instability during transitional political phases, and the ability of external players to cope with such instability has been crudely questioned by the developments of the Iraqi crisis.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war in Iraq are obviously two essential roadblocks here, feeding growing worries on the Western side that regional instability might completely escape control. Insofar as our country case studies are concerned, we consider that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an outstanding parameter accounting for the hesitations and somewhat sinuous evolution of American and European democracy promotion strategies both in Jordan and in the Palestinian Territories.

On the other hand, one should not forget that, for years, the authoritarian ruling regimes have used the Israeli-Palestinian dispute as a pretext to precisely reject political reform. If one wants to think of a consistent democracy promotion strategy on the long run, this should encourage the US and the EU to prove that they are committed to finding a long-term, fair solution to the conflict, in order to build mutual trust with their Arab partners and remove this perpetual excuse. Volker Perthes underlines that, without such serious public commitment to tackle the Israeli-Palestinian file, Western credibility is bound to remain very low in the region<sup>60</sup>.

### The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the new democratisation dilemma

The aggravation of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute thus presently works against the democratisation/stabilisation rationale which remains the official Western motto. Present political and security conditions on the field seriously impair the capacity of the Near East to work as a laboratory for the democratisation of the Arab and Muslim world. Recent events in the Middle East, with endemic violence brusquely turning into an open war, has at least very much altered the conditions under which the experiment is led, if not completely dismissed its necessity.

First, the aggravation of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute acts as a weakening factor for the regional democratisation-stabilisation plot. The growing spiral of violence between Israel and its Arab neighbours is bringing again short-term security concerns highest on the agenda. Under such exceptional circumstances, the relevance of the regional democratic stabilisation design is dramatically contested. Democracy is not as much a priority in times of strategic crisis; and strategic adjustments can also be considered regarding the very contents of democratic objectives.

Second, the recent evolution of the Palestinian scene has effectively revealed another type of internal flaw of the Western reform strategies. The situation is now one of a democratisation dilemma. In the Palestinian context, some level of democracy was achieved, but democracy simply did not deliver. In the post-Arafat transitional period, the Palestinian Territories have gone through a long and sophisticated electoral process, testing the complete institutional package that the Western powers had theoretically agreed upon. But the Palestinian vote deceived both the EU and the US, as it did not produce the expected results. These results were actually a surprise to most external players, as well as to some Palestinian key political figures<sup>61</sup>. So the final and rather novel issue raised by the victory of the Hamas in the legislative election was: what is to be done when democracy does not deliver, or when democratic practices do apparently go against the strengthening of the democratic environment?<sup>62</sup>

Some analysts would sustain that participating in a free and fair election does not allow you to claim for a democratic marker *per se*<sup>63</sup>. Yet one could note that this democratic dilemma takes a very particular form in the case of the Palestinian Hamas. The conditions edicted for the maintenance of external aid to the new Palestinian government do only partially meet classical democratic exigencies. The first condition is the recognition of Israel, not necessarily matched with and Israeli reciprocal recognition of the Palestinian state. The second condition asks for the renunciation to armed struggle against the Israelis. The third condition is to endorse the previous Fateh government agreements with Israel. Despite all accompanying discourses, the appreciation of the Hamas as being non-democratic appears here as very much linked to its particular positions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and even more specifically to its background stance contesting the legitimacy of the state of Israel. IN contrast, Nathan Brown estimates that Hamas's electoral victory is not incompatible with political reform, especially as the party has « subordinated its religious agenda to the immediate tasks of establishing clean government and ending chaos in the streets »<sup>64</sup>.

Since the post 9/11 events, it seems to have become impossible to deal with the Middle East outside the democratic perspective, be democracy taken essentially as a discourse or as a political practice. Most local actors are becoming increasingly sensitive about the issue and they are by now used to regularly refer to democracy and integrate it at least in the spectrum of their political analyses. Such behaviour could in fact be analysed as a new strategy of resistance: in some countries, taking on the democratic agenda might be simply a way to avoid slander or sanctions. In the Jordanian case, it at least appears as a necessity to ensure the continuity of the flow of external resources. Westerners might get too easily used to the old regime paying lip service to democratic commitments. In the beginning of the 1990s Ghassan Salamé spoke of « democracies without democrats » in the Arab world, arguing that existing democratic dynamics were condemned in absence of strong supporting elites<sup>65</sup>. The present time seems to be more auspicious to « democrats without democracy », with the elite playing with the idea of democracy without giving it much substance.

An open authoritarian backlash could probably not be admitted by the Americans or the Europeans in any country of the region. At the same time, the Palestinian case proved that the democratic experience remains under constant control and is likely to take unexpected directions in order to satisfy the stability imperative. Despite their shared appeals to the reinforcement of autonomous democratic impetus in the Arab world – which was one of the strong prerequisites of the initial BMENA *manifesto*, one has the feeling that Westerners are very keen in closely monitoring the political developments that they have supposedly triggered. The taming of democracy may have become the next step on the reform agenda of external powers in the Middle East.

## Taming democracy?

57 Jeffrey Kopstein, *art. cit.* ; see also Ronald D. Asmus, Larry Diamond, Mark Leonard and Michael McFaul, « A Transatlantic Strategy to Promote Democratic Development in the Broader Middle East », *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 28, n°2, Spring 2005, p. 7-21.

58 Kristin Archick, « European Views and Policies Toward the Middle East », *CRS Report for Congress*, RL31956, Updated 9 March 2005, p. 22.

59 Katarina Dalacoura underlines that the US democratic commitment has definitely had to compose with their security interests in the region; *art. cit.*

60 He affirms that « Western credibility in the region will be measured by our willingness to work toward a peaceful and fair resolution of the Middle East conflict »; Volker Perthes, « A Strategy for Democratic Reform », *Internationale Politik* vol. 7 n°3, Summer 2006, p. 62.

61 ICG, *op. cit.*

62 Martin Indyk and Tamara Cofman-Wittes, « Dual Dilemmas: U.S. Policy Options for the Israeli-Palestinian Predicament », Brookings policy paper, May 2006.

63 Steven A Cook, « U.S. Policy: Hypocrisy, Principles, and Reform in the Middle East », *Arab Reform Bulletin* July 2006, vol. 4, n°6.

64 Nathan Brown, *art. cit.*

65 Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *Démocraties sans démocrates. Politiques d'ouverture dans le monde arabe et islamique*, Paris, Fayard, 1994.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Volker Perthes bluntly judges that « so far, the US and the EU have lacked a strategy to deal with the unexpected consequences that have arisen from political openings in the region »<sup>66</sup>. The outcomes of our research project could indeed bring us to share such a pessimistic view, insofar as it tends to question both the integrity and consistency of Western democratization approaches to the Middle East. This background study has in fact helped us identifying at least two major challenges facing both European and American democracy-promotion policies for the years ahead.

First, democracy promoters should from now on be confronted with the first results of hard democratic work undertaken particularly in the years following 9/11. The debate about democracy-promotion has thus now largely moved from the issue of legitimacy to the issue of efficiency<sup>67</sup>. A comparison of European and American methods does not deliver very convincing results in that regard so far. A rather high degree of confusion is indeed observed, with variants that cannot be completely accounted for by the local context, but rather have to do with changing environmental circumstances, security remaining the *ultima ratio* of the whole process. All of the Western players could easily acknowledge that democracy remains an objective to reach in the Middle East, and only a reliable and shared system of indicators, implying the participation of local stakeholders, could assist the analyst in deciding upon the relevance of different devices mobilised on the ground.

At the same time some social and political changes are undeniably under way, with an immediate effect to disturb previously designed regional schemes of stabilisation. The second challenge for the Western powers therefore relates to the ability of existing political forces, be they local or external, to manage reforms without violence. The Iraqi experiment has shown how difficult it can be to involve local leaders and elites at a late stage to take over on democracy-building. In such a context, Western decision-makers are prone to privilege a « fine tuning » approach, systematically assessing to what extent the democratic imperative is sustainable against other foreign policy priorities, and should be played down at least on the short run. In times of utter political crisis, the democratic rhetoric thus remains at the heart of Western political discourses regarding the Middle East, but policy practices can quickly adopt a repressive twist which could easily encourage authoritarian relapses.

In order to temporarily wrap up this discussion with a pragmatic note, we will try to summarise the initial assumptions that underpinned our report and to confront them with the main conclusions that emerged essentially from field work. Then we will attempt to issue some basic recommendations to ameliorate the consistency and efficiency of both the EU and US policy frames for democracy promotion.

### Initial assumptions and hypotheses

Our basic assumptions before starting the research were mainly the following.

- Democracy promotion has become a prominent objective for both the EU and US external policies vis-à-vis the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Since 9/11, it is ranking high among both actors' priorities in the region.
- Western democracy promotion policies generally take place in the wider frame of regional stabilisation strategies. They should thus be observed on a wider scale, and comparison between different countries taken as case-studies can teach a lot about the background rationale pursued by the EU and the US.
- EU and US approaches, methodologies and tools do differ in some areas but important similarities can be identified. EU and US respective methods are generally standardised and designed to be applied to different countries in the region. They can nonetheless adapt to the local context, taking into account specific internal and external parameters. Observable differences between the US and the EU strategies partly reflect the two actors' respective conception of democracy, both as a set of institutions and as a political process.
- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one important parameter interfering with the designing and implementation of Western democracy promotion strategies in the Middle East, particularly for countries directly involved in the dispute.
- Western efforts for democracy promotion are generally perceived in a rather unitary way by Middle Eastern actors, even if they keep a clear distinction between the US and the EU's status as international actors.

<sup>66</sup>Volker Perthes, *art. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>67</sup>Dorothee Schmid, « European Efforts for Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A Legitimate Emergency? », to be published as policy paper, Civility / Foreign Policy Center, 2006.

- The context under which the study is being conducted has significantly evolved since the month of March 2006. The decision to suspend aid to the Palestinian Authority should be considered as a turning point to interpret the strategies of intervention of the Western powers in the Middle East.

### **Main lessons learnt from field work**

Some of these assumptions had to be qualified against deeper examination of facts and data gathered in the field. The particularities of both case studies – Jordan and the Palestinian Territories – do allow for a wider reflection on the local relevance of Western democracy promotion strategies and programmes. Some of our findings brought in new principles and can inspire new types of critique concerning both the EU and the US concrete approaches. The most interesting aspects could be listed as follows:

- Western democracy promotion policies are evolving over time and on a local scale. Over the last two years, the Palestinian case study has regularly provided scholars with particularly important material to analyse EU and US experiments as regards democracy promotion.

- The publics targeted and actions undertaken under the democracy promotion programmes do partly reflect different Western assumptions on the meaning of political reform and what is democracy (co-operation with business communities, programmes targeting women, minority rights...).

- The evolution of democracy promotion policies on the ground only partly translates the reactivation of the programmes to local political reality. The US frame of intervention tends to align rather strictly with the general objectives set by the State Department. EU policies tend to suffer from their greater degree of inertia. The ENP frame, which was supposed to bring new emphasis on the issue of political reform, will probably not develop all its possibilities in the short run.

- Democracy promotion has to be considered only as an intermediary objective for the US administration, within a more global vision of security and stability for the region. Democracy can thus be subject to a trade-off under particular political circumstances (strategic crisis, political instability). Such an inclination can be also observed, even if to a lesser extent, in the case of European policies.

- No formal frame for co-ordination exists to harmonise EU and US efforts for democracy promotion on a regional scale and in the long run. Information is regularly exchanged but it is neither exhaustive, nor fundamentally significant. Co-operation, when there is any, is intensified in times of political crisis. Some specific and regular co-ordination efforts do mobilise the entire community of international donors in the Palestinian Territories. Therefore, there is a greater degree of interactions between US and EU officials intervening in this specific context.

- The decision to suspend external aid to the Palestinian territories seems to signal a growing convergence of Western strategies both at the level of discourses and practices. The decision may point towards a common will to unify Western efforts for an effective implementation of the Road Map. It may also be interpreted as a trade-off between democratic and security objectives, and exemplify the growing influence of American regional priorities on the EU rationale.

- The legitimacy of Western intervention in favour of political change is contested in both countries observed. Yet European credit remains higher than the American, as long as the EU is considered to be a weak political actor.

### **Recommendations: working on the consistency and effectiveness of Western democracy promotion strategies in the Middle East**

Finally, this study can suggest some rather general recommendations to hopefully improve both the consistency and effectiveness of democracy promotion programmes and strategies in the Middle East, especially in the countries presently concerned by the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

*Clarify objectives and strategies to seize the democratic momentum*

- A more explicit and consistent definition of democracy is certainly needed to legitimise the Western discourse on necessary political change in the region.
- Both the US and the EU should work on the overall consistency of their approach, making it congruent both in terms of objectives and timeframe.
- They should not shun the democracy/security dilemma and work to enhance the compatibility between these two objectives, trying from the outset to think on how to « democratize but stabilize »<sup>68</sup>. Hence, it is imperative to build on their initial conception of democracy as a long-term, non linear process.
- They should also take advantage of the democratic momentum that is presently observable in the Middle East. Democracy has become a rather popular concept there and some new partnerships could emerge in such a transition period.
- The negative influence of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute on democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East should encourage both Western powers in resuming common efforts in search of a final settlement.

#### *Ameliorate and adapt procedures on the field*

- Both EU and US policies would gain in focusing better on local political conditions so as to adapt their strategies and methodologies. The case of Palestinian reform indeed shows that expressly designed and closely monitored strategies can be very efficient to foster change.
- The level of assistance may have to be re-assessed given the enormous needs in some areas.

The European scale of commitment specifically on democracy-promotion is relatively low. The American effort through the MEPI also needs to be obviously reinforced.

- The quality of local democratic partnerships is essential to ensure the ownership of democratic objectives on the long term.

It is of utmost importance to identify the local actors who might be in a position to make real change.

All explicit or implicit restrictions implemented in dealing with local civil societies should be reassessed against the local political backdrop and concrete balance of power observed between local stakeholders.

A systematic reflection should be undertaken to better manage the relationship and interactions between governments and civil societies in the countries targeted.

- Incitement should always be preferred to radical negative measures.

Financial sanctions are bound to be efficient only when the recipient is highly dependent on external assistance, as in the Palestinian case. But then such sanctions can heavily damage the quality of the relationship between donor and recipient, thus seriously weakening the democratic message.

#### *Avoid conflicting interventions but do not systematically merge the Western frames of intervention*

- The democratic message might be conveyed in a more efficient way by the EU if it expresses it independently, or in synergy with some of its member states.

The American image and political credits of the American government and administration have not been fully restored yet in the Middle East after Guantanamo and the Iraqi episode.

- Parallel intervention on the field can sometimes bring about better synergies than a commonly designed strategy.

Regular channels of communications should thus be established, and frames of coordination can be imagined on an *ad hoc* basis.

68 Roberto Menotti, « Democratize but Stabilize. Democracy in the Middle East », *The Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 13, n°3, Summer 2006, on <http://www.meforum.org>

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