

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Unit of Assessment: C21 Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: Reframing the EU's Middle East Democracy Promotion Policy
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>A key priority of the EU since the 1990s has been the promotion of liberal democracy in undemocratic and illiberal societies such as those of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Pace's work has furnished important insights to policy practitioners working on the EU's role in democracy promotion. She has provided advice and recommendations to the EU External Action Service, the European Commission and the European Parliament (EP) as well as the Swedish government (via the International Institute on Democracy and Electoral assistance [IDEA]). This work has directly informed the following decisions: an EP Resolution on Democracy Building in the EU's External Relations (dated 22 October 2009); and the European Council's Conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations (dated 17 November 2009).</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Michelle Pace (Professor in Politics and International Studies, University of Birmingham) has undertaken funded research on EU democracy promotion since 2007. That year, she was awarded a Research Councils United Kingdom (RCUK) Birmingham Research Fellowship on EU Enlargement attached to the European Research Institute at the University of Birmingham. She has also been the PI on two separate British Academy and ESRC funded projects on democratisation in the MENA region (see below for details).</p> <p>These awards funded fieldwork in Egypt and Palestine, and allowed access to key members of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Interviews with these figures (as well as a series of public events in both countries) shed new light on how Islamists have been thinking about political transformation in their societies; that, in turn, has allowed inferences to be drawn on the efficacy of EU democracy-promotion efforts.</p> <p>The key finding has been that the EU has misread the internal dynamics of regime transformation and so its democracy promotion efforts have been misdirected. Historically, the EU has worked with existing, often authoritarian, regimes in the MENA in the hope that these regimes would succumb to socialisation pressures leading to economic, social and political reforms. For their part, those same regimes have responded to the EU by introducing incremental and often cosmetic reforms (see output R5 below).</p> <p>What was not fully appreciated in EU policy was that even small moves toward the liberalisation of entrenched authoritarianism would lead to heightened expectations and the galvanising of popular movements for reform. By banking on regime-led change, the EU was consequently ill-prepared for the sudden political transitions occasioned by the Arab Spring - that is, the revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests against authoritarian rule that have occurred across the MENA region since December 2010 (R2, R4, R6).</p> <p>Pace's research made clear that Arab exceptionalism – a predisposition against democratisation – should not be assumed a priori. While the Arab Spring has suffered reversal since 2012, it is nonetheless clear that large sections of the population in the MENA region hold a deep-seated belief in government accountability and political and civil rights (R1). Further, Pace's research also served to highlight the fear harboured by the EU in regard to Islamist actors' involvement in the political process – namely that substantive political reform would empower anti-Western extremists (R3).</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>Research Outputs:</p> <p>R1) Pace, M. (forthcoming 2013) 'An Arab 'Spring' of a different kind? Resilience and freedom in</p>

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the case of an occupied nation', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 18, no. 1. [available from HEI on request]

- R2) Pace, M. (2011) 'Liberal or Social Democracy? Aspect dawning in the EU's democracy promotion agenda in the Middle East', *International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 15, no. 6, pp. 801-12 [available: <http://www.idea.int/resources/analysis/upload/Pace-2.pdf>]
- R3) Pace, M. (ed.) (2011) *Europe, the USA and Political Islam. Strategies for Engagement*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan [available from HEI on request]
- R4) Pace, M. (2010) 'Interrogating the European Union's democracy promotion agenda: discursive configurations of 'democracy' from the Middle East', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Special Issue, no. 15, pp. 611-628 [available: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/government-society/polsis/news-events/european-foreign-affairs-review.pdf>]
- R5) Pace, M. (2010) 'The European Union, security and the southern dimension', *European Security*, vol. 19, no. 3, September, pp. 431-444 [doi:10.1080/09662839.2010.534462]
- R6) Pace, M. (2009) 'Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits on EU normative power', *Democratization*, vol.16, no. 1, February, pp. 39-58 [doi:10.1080/13510340802575809].

Grants:

- Pace, M (PI) *Paradoxes and Contradictions in EU Democracy Promotion Efforts in the Middle East*, Sponsor: Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) First Grant Scheme large project. February 2008 – April 2012 (RES-061-25-0075) £294,632
- Pace, M (PI) *A 'Modern' Islamist Democracy? Perceptions of democratisation in the Arab-Mediterranean world*, Sponsor: British Academy (BA) Large Research Grant. April 2007 – March 2009 (LRG – 45504) £50,000
- Pace, M (PI) *The Arab 'Spring' Made Simple*, Sponsor: ESRC Festival of Social Sciences. November 2012 (RES-622-26-615) £1,120

4. Details of the impact

Pace's impact can be evidenced in three ways: (i) informing EU policy decisions; (ii) influencing the EU's policy agenda; (iii) contributing to public debate.

Informing EU policy

Pace was invited by IDEA in Stockholm to share research findings and insights from her British Academy and ESRC funded research grants in 2008. This gave rise to two commissioned papers (source 1 below) and involvement in a series of meetings between 2008 and 2010 under the heading of Global Consultations on the EU's Role in Democracy Building. The Senior Advisor to the project is clear that Pace's research input was influential - she states that it provided the project 'with deeper insights and additional legitimacy – and made **a very important contribution to the credibility of [the] project report**' (source 2). Under the auspices of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, the report that emerged from the IDEA initiative was subsequently 'used to **inform EU member states and institutional deliberations**, and with its substance **inspired the EU Council conclusions adopted**' (source 2): the EP's Resolution of 22 October 2009 on Democracy Building in the EU's External Relations (www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2009-0056+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN) and the 17 November 2009 European Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations (www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/111250.pdf).

Influencing the agenda of the EU

Pace's research has challenged conventional wisdom about the type of political reform that the EU has been promoting in the MENA region. Her research has **stimulated policy debate and has improved EU policy makers' understanding** of some of the deeper social issues within MENA societies. Pace has engaged with policy makers in a number of ways. In February 2012, she co-organised a Public Hearing under the auspices of the European Parliament's (EP's) Committee on Foreign Affairs, held at the EP building in Brussels (source 3). This followed an earlier invitation by the EP for Pace to present critical feedback on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy to Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy (Štefan Füle) at a Public Round Table on Making Democracy Promotion Work in June 2011 (source 4). One MEP involved in both

events noted that Pace's 'research produces factual solutions and approaches that can and have **influenced and guided real life policy making in the European Parliament and beyond**' (source 5 – see also sources 6 and 7, which confirm the position that Pace's research has been translated into 'tangible, effective policy' and has influenced individuals' 'inputs into the EU's policy making process').

Pace's research also led the EP to select her as an expert to deliver a commissioned briefing on the Social, Economic, Political and Geo-Strategic Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in October 2011 at the EP in Strasbourg. Further, Pace was commissioned to write a paper on 'The End of EU Democracy Promotion and of the Two-State Solution?' for the extended research arm of the Council of the EU, the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris (source 8). The EUISS *Chaillot Papers* Series in which her contribution was published was mentioned in the *Jerusalem Post* and *Le Monde* and cited by *Biladi* and *Publico* in February and April 2011 (source 8).

Contributing to public debate

Following Pace's published research work, and her appearance at the EP, she was contacted by a number of funding bodies in the UK and international media representatives for her views on political transformation processes in the MENA region. This latter contact has had an impact on the way in which journalists report on democratization in the MENA. The following are examples of these sorts of activity:

- In 2009, the *British Academy Review* commissioned Pace to write a piece on 'Democracy in Palestine and the Middle East Peace Process' aimed at a non-specialist readership.
- In December 2009, Pace was interviewed by *Danish National Radio* during an International Conference held at the Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Odense (at: <http://www.dr.dk/P1/orientering/indslag/2009/12/03/183739.htm>).
- That same year, Pace's research acquired affiliation status with the Council for British Research in the Levant in Jerusalem and was included in the ESRC's Catalogue of Projects with Research Impact.
- In February 2011, she was interviewed by the *Times of Malta* on the political unrest in the MENA (at: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110203/local/eu-has-lost-all-credibility-on-democracy-in-middle-east.348320>).
- In May 2011, Pace was interviewed by the Brazilian newspaper *A CRÍTICA*.
- In June 2011, after Pace's contribution to the EP's Round Table on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, she was interviewed by the *EUobserver* (at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFGeEJAD7RY>).
- In June 2011, she was interviewed by the BBC Arabic Service following her contribution to a workshop at Westminster University on 'Islamism and the Arab Revolutions: The Promise and the Pitfalls.'
- In June 2011, Pace was interviewed by Arild Foss on the 'Arab Spring' for the ESRC magazine, *Society Now* (at: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Society%20Now%20issue%2010_tcm8-16400.pdf).
- Demonstrating continuing contribution to the public debate with an article in *The Conversation* in July 2013 (<http://theconversation.com/morsis-authority-ebbed-away-but-egypt-is-dangerously-divided-15774>)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] 2009. Institute on Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden, reports entitled 'Liberal or Social Democracy? Aspect Dawning in the EU's Democracy Promotion Agenda in the Middle East', at: http://www.idea.int/resources/analysis/liberal_or_social_demo.cfm; and 'Perceptions from Egypt and Palestine on the EU's role and impact on democracy-building in the Middle East' and at: http://www.idea.int/resources/analysis/upload/Pace_low_2.pdf.
- [2] Factual statement provided by former Director, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden – currently Senior Advisor (democracy support), European External Action Service.
- [3] 1 Feb 2012 - joint event with the EP at: <http://www.franziska-brantner.eu/en/europaeische>

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aussenpolitik/mittelmeerraum-naher-osten/english-egypt-one-year-on-eu-must-rethink-what-we-offer-how-we-offer-it-and-who-we-engage/

- [4] 12 June 2011. Public Round Table with Commissioner Štefan Füle, at: <http://www.franziska-brantner.eu/en/europaeische-aussenpolitik/mittelmeerraum-naher-osten/heute-live-im-video-webstream-diskussion-uber-reform-der-eu-nachbarschaftspolitik-%e2%80%93-demokratieforderung-und-mehr-mobilitat/>
- [5] Factual statement provided by MEP, Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs of the Greens/EFA group.
- [6] Factual statement provided by Ambassador of Malta in Vienna, Austria (Former Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process at the European External Action Service)
- [7] Factual statement provided by Policy Advisor, European External Action Service
- [8] 'The End of EU Democracy Promotion and of the Two-State Solution?' in *European Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Edited by Esra Bulut Aymat (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies. Chaillot Papers, Series Number 124), pp. 87-95. At: <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/european-involvement-in-the-arab-israeli-conflict/>