

BRIDGING THE GAP

The Role of Organized Liberalism in Europe and
the Arab world in promoting Freedom and Democracy



Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG FÜR DIE FREIHEIT

Edited By
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Founded in the fall of 2007, the European Liberal Forum is the non-profit European political foundation of the liberal family. ELF brings together liberal think tanks, political foundations and institutes from around Europe to observe, analyze and contribute to the debate on European public policy issues and the process of European integration, through education, training, research and the promotion of active citizenship within the EU.



Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty (FNF)

Established in 1958 by the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Theodor Heuss, FNF is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization that is committed to promoting liberal policy and politics in Germany, Europe and worldwide. Based in Potsdam, Germany, the Foundation has seven offices in Germany and more than 40 projects worldwide through which it promotes its core concepts such as the protection of human rights, civil society, market economy, free trade and rule of law.

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The “Forum for Greece” is a non-profit organization with liberal, democratic and reformist ideas, wishing to contribute to open and democratic developments in the European Union. The “Forum for Greece” has been registered under the Greek Law as a non for profit organization with headquarters in Athens and a branch in Thessaloniki, at North Greece. The “Forum for Greece” is aiming to work in the liberal-thinking sector in Greece helping to form a critical mass of citizens aiming at a liberal reform of Greek society.



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The “Democratic Review” is a quarterly published academic review specialized in topics such as democratic development, human rights issues, comparative politics, and studies of public opinion and the promotion of liberal values in the Middle East. The magazine, written in Arabic language, is part of Al-Ahram Enterprise.



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Introduction

Dirk Kunze and Friso Rip

In May 2014, Cairo once again became the center of liberal debate and attention, as politicians, academics and NGO activists from Belgium, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Palestine, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia and the United Kingdom came together for the 2nd Arab-European Liberal Dialogue Forum. It was a follow-up to a similar conference held in 2013 during which liberals from both sides of the Mediterranean discussed the basics of liberalism. After the historic changes in the Arab world, it was now time to further this institutionalized Dialogue and focus on the organizational and institutional aspects of liberal politics, thus dissecting the whole spectrum of “organized liberalism”: Political parties, civil society organizations, political foundations, networks and transnational federations. What are each of their roles in promoting freedom and democracy? How important are the interrelations between the democratic ideal of political parties and their actual internal organization? Where are the roots of those organizations and are there major ideological or programmatic divergences between the different political and cultural environments?

Some of these questions were answered and can be reviewed within this publication. However, the astute reader will quickly discover the contrast in the perception of “organized Liberalism” in both the Arab and European worlds. In the case of Western Europe for example, organized Liberalism is seen as a tool for change and safeguarding the rule of law. Political parties in particular are not only important instruments within the context

of legislative elections, but “key actors within the system of democratic politics as such.”¹ The situation in the Arab world, however, is portrayed remarkably far more different: “[with the exception of Tunisia and Morocco] all political parties in the Arab world are ineffective and weak”². The “Gap” - as referred to in the title of this publication - between the European and Arab worlds proved therefore to be rather big.

However, while ‘political parties’ are not an organic component of democracy for some, liberals on both sides of the Mediterranean commonly and fortunately agree that the minimal procedural definitions of democracy such as fair and free elections are not an end in itself. Especially since practical experience following the historic changes in the Arab world has shown, that people's despair at – and abandonment of – freedom pose the biggest threat to advancing towards a liberal democratic future. The reason for this political reality is manifold and the solution seems to be both simple and difficult at the same time: Political parties – and liberal parties in particular – must work together to battle for their goals – goals usually deriving from a coherent ideology. In order to find consensus on advancing the common good, co-operation, inclusivity and coalitions could provide the answers to many, if not all, current problems. After all, “representing the people is more than defeating the opponent”³.

One highlight from the discussions at the conference was certainly the assurance that cross-border political cooperation is not only in the core interest and heart of the liberal mind, but is

¹ refer to: "The institutional framework of European party politics: Constitutions, party laws and party statutes" by Oliver W. Lembcke in this publication

² refer to: "The role of parties and democratic liberalism in the Arab world" by Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan in this publication

³ refer to: "Winning consent is winning the future" by Tamara van Ark & Jock Gesellschaft in this publication

also a very liberal tradition: It was the European liberals who were the very first to establish a European transnational party federation in the 1970's. One fine example of such continuous cooperation is the mutual engagement in regional MENA activities of FNF and The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). Cross border political party cooperation is enshrined in VVD International's MATRA (societal change) program, through which fruitful cooperation's with liberal parties from Morocco to Georgia have been established for more than two decades. In particular the partnership of VVD and FNF exemplifies both the added value of cooperation and the possibility for different perspectives to be shared. As the Arab-European Dialogue includes more and more parties from Europe and the Arab world, the voice of dialogue grows stronger; consequently, we expect to see the Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AAFD) growing stronger.

The "Arab-European Liberal Dialogue Forum" has created something truly exceptional: The only institutionalized Dialogue Forum where like-minded liberals from both sides of the Mediterranean can further their knowledge and learn from each other on specific intellectual topics. However, neither this conference series nor the book you are holding in your hands would have been possible without the generous support of the European Liberal Forum (ELF). The Regional Office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is very grateful for this ongoing cooperation with our European partners.

Organized liberalism: A small European historical synopsis

Andreas Andrianopoulos

The organization of liberalism refers to the existence and functioning of liberal political parties. However, the essence of liberalism is currently burdened by generalities and the promotion of vague concepts. To revitalize liberalism and make liberal parties powerful and government-oriented we need to change certain political priorities.

All policies promoted and supported by liberal political parties have to adhere to specific policy criteria. There has to be two root bases on which policies should be judged as to whether they are liberal or not. One should be the promotion of less state intervention. It has to be finally recognized that the public sector is not any longer part of the solution but the problem itself. Limiting the state is a first step towards achieving reforms, unburdening markets and thus approaching development and welfare.

The other base should be the adamant respect of freedom. Whatever limits a person's ability to deal independently with his or her future and life in general should be refuted as non-liberal and condemned as conservative or social democratic. All policies pursued should be evaluated and judged through these ideological guidelines.

The essential objective of organized liberalism is the defense of private property and the fostering of the entrepreneurial activity of private individuals - easy access to money, guarantees of raw materials, less state intervention (taxation/regulation), ample energy sources, and an available labor force. National

competitive advantage relates to the low cost of goods. But all of the above issues have to be observed. Not only, for example, the guarantee of low labor costs. It goes without saying that respect for human rights falls within the scope of liberal policies. The above objectives, nevertheless, comprise the core of the human rights defense that liberals should struggle to uphold.

The idea of capitalism, within the framework of a liberal and democratic society, surpasses all other forms of effective social organization. History has proved it. Recent events (after World War II) glorifying and justifying state intervention and purporting Keynesianism have blurred and undermined it.

Free market capitalism (in the form of modern liberalism) confronted historically the landed aristocracy to promote the interests of commercial city vendors and emerging - at that time - entrepreneurs. Faced later with the challenge of organized labor, liberals turned to “leveling” ideas (i.e., pursuing equality by means of income redistribution), promoting regulation of the economy to force the market to become “fairer.” This meant regulation and “distribution” from above. It was the beginning of the decay of liberal parties and the termination of their relationship with government office.

Inevitably, this brought their downfall and long standing weakness. Conservatives and socialists fought for control of the (nanny) state and thus the commanding heights of the economy. Liberal ideas lost their distinctive power. Liberals became well-wishers and worshippers of something not clearly observed.

There is a need for a return to the fundamentals of liberal thought. Separate roads have to be followed relative to conservatives. Based on suspicion of the state, liberals have to turn their backs to consensus politics, fight without restraint for private property rights, uphold the privacy of individual life, believe in the inviolability of constitutional and human rights, and exclude from the eye of the state control over economic transactions or the recording of private consumer habits and practices. Liberalism is a way of life, not just an ideology.

Liberals can never be two-faced hypocrites. Liberals need to be firm in their beliefs and clearly different from all others. This is the only way to prove without doubt that liberalism is the most effective tool of development and for bringing countries quickly to the path of prosperity and welfare.

Let us observe some political features that distinguish liberal ideas from other ideological currents:

- In *conservatism*, everything is forbidden unless specifically allowed.
- In *socialism*, all is the responsibility of the state, which also defines what can be allowed or tolerated to be private.
- In *liberalism*, unless specifically forbidden, all is allowed.

Conservatism differs from liberalism because it is authoritarian, willing to use the state machinery to achieve predetermined ends. It believes in an omnipotent state able to “protect” its citizens even against themselves. This autarchic paternalism defines conservatism’s ideological profile. Whereas conservatives do not trust entirely the people and their free choices, liberals believe that man is the measure of all things. He is free to decide his future and realize unobstructed his destiny, even if it differs from what others believe is bad for him.

In all political considerations, as Ludwig von Mises has stated, there is only the choice between communal ownership and private ownership of the means of production. It is thus capitalism (everything privately owned) - the only feasible system of social organization, based on the division of labor - that brings results and desirable economic and social outcomes. The productivity of the capitalist mode of production is the outcome of the capitalist mentality aiming at the satisfaction of man’s wants. It is also a result of modern technology, insofar as the development of technology must - of necessity - follow from the capitalist mentality.

It was capitalism that created technology, not the other way round. Economic activity can no longer be carried on rationally once the prevailing mentality has reverted to traditionalism and faith in a top down authority. The entrepreneur, the catalytic agent of the capitalist economy and also of modern technology, is inconceivable in an environment in which everyone acts on the basis of state plans and directives.

If one characterizes as unfeasible every system other than that based on private ownership of the means of production, it follows necessarily that private property must be maintained as the basis of social cooperation and association and that every attempt to abolish it must be vigorously combated. It is for this reason that liberalism defends the institution of private property against every attempt to destroy it.

The continued existence of society depends upon private property, and since men have need of society, they must hold fast to the institution of private property to avoid injuring their own interests as well as the interests of everyone else. For society can continue to exist only on the foundation of private property. Science has succeeded in showing that every system of social organization that could be conceived as a substitute for the capitalist system is self-contradictory and unavailing, and thus cannot bring about the results aimed at by its proponents.

Liberalism does not claim that capitalism is perfect. It simply maintains that for the attainment of the ends that men have in mind, only the capitalist system is suitable, and that every attempt to realize a socialist, interventionist, agrarian socialist, or syndicalist society must necessarily prove unsuccessful.

There are distinctive views that distinguish the policies of liberalism from its adversaries in specific political fields. In the economy, for instance, socialists have a set of beliefs very different from liberalism. They maintain that they support a market system, in which however government regulates heavily the economy. Government must protect citizens from the greed of big business. Unlike the private sector, the government is

motivated by public interest. Government regulation in all areas of the economy is needed to level the playing field.

Liberals reject these views. They insist that public sector entities pursue sectorial interests very different from the aspirations of the average man in the street. Public organizations and enterprises serve the interests of their members with unions becoming the tool for achieving their specific ends. Liberals are convinced that the free market system, competitive capitalism, and private enterprise create the greatest opportunity and the highest standard of living for all. Free markets produce more economic growth, more jobs and higher standards of living than those systems burdened by excessive government regulation.

In the field of education, the socialist view, at opposite ends to liberalism, is that public schools are the best way to educate students. Vouchers take money away from public schools. Government should focus additional funds on existing public schools, raising teacher salaries and reducing class sizes. Liberals, on the contrary, believe in school vouchers that create competition and therefore encourage schools to improve performance. Vouchers will give parents the right to choose good schools for their children, not just those who can afford private schools.

Liberalism is rooted in a form of bourgeois or “possessive” individualism. Running through liberalism, in fact, is a persistent conviction that political stability presupposes a moral community of individuals who cooperate in the pursuit of common objectives. Early radicals and Whigs, notwithstanding their differences, shared the belief that private property tends to create in its owners the moral discipline and mutual tolerance through which a free and integrated political order is sustained.

At the present time the effort should be to battle heavy taxation and avoid at all costs the alleged purpose of the public sector to achieve social cohesion through distribution of income and the pursuit of equality. All such efforts usually fail. Equality is never achieved. In the meantime, freedom is endangered. The

effort should be to pursue policies that aim in the direction of establishing a social order in which freedom is without limits and equality is pursued without coercion. It is also important to establish the fact that religious beliefs influence the formulation of social culture, which, in turn, purports specific political values and attitudes. The protestant movement in Europe, for example, asserted the goal of happiness in this life and not the next. This meant that protestant societies became active, businesswise and achievement oriented. They provided also a fertile ground for the emergence of democratic capitalism. If religion teaches passivity and waiting for the afterlife there inevitably appear many obstacles to open societies and dynamic free markets. Clientele relationships are very probable to appear as well as mentalities asking for subsidies and government handouts.

The pursuit of equality cannot be normally included within a liberal platform. A desire for such a quest should remain within the political framework of socialist or social democratic parties. Populist and extreme rightist groupings claim also to work towards attaining equality vis-à-vis capitalism. These therefore are not ideas relating to liberalism or to a society grounded on the respect of freedom. Liberalism cannot be a movement to simply copy ideas strong in Western societies and attempt to implement them to a developing country setting without some clear understanding of their inner workings. Being a liberal does not mean being someone who is “nice.” It means political fighters who want to change society by pursuing specific reformist policies.

It is also important to clarify that liberals are willing to defend human rights. But the human rights of all individuals. Not only of those who agree with their principles. If a society decides to enter a mental hospital by voting against democracy, freedom and tolerance it is the people’s right to do so. Who can decide that action has to be taken to protect them from themselves? It is at least ironic to believe that constitutions can

avert tragedies since constitutions can easily be violated by those who claim to defend them.

Liberalism is not an abstract concept plunged in theory and well-to-do generalities. It represents obviously sectorial interests and the aspirations of various social groups. I insist that liberalism is not a concept for social debate and for helping people to feel nice. It is a fighting ideology aiming to conquer political power and implement its distinctive political program. Harold Laski has said that liberalism, “in its living principle, was the idea by which the new middle class rose to a position of political dominance.” It is necessary that today’s liberals discover a new footing, clarify their position, align their supporters and aim to regain power. Liberalism needs to be newly positioned in contemporary societies taking into consideration the problems of poverty, stagnation and peoples’ justified anger. To achieve this, it has to be organized in politically efficient forms able to effect changes in the economics and politics of advanced as well as developing societies. Liberals have to persuade voters that they are the key to attaining for struggling publics success and welfare.

Organized liberalism can be an effective political tool for those aiming to bridge the gap between the West and the developing world, provided that the concepts acquire meaning and that party organizations become instruments of change and reform.

The role of parties and democratic liberalism in the Arab world

Dr. Gamal Abdel Gawad Soltan

Partisan pluralism is a main characteristic of democracy, and without partisan pluralism democracy cannot be established. There can be no single instance of a democratic political system that is void of an active role for parties in elections, legislation, and the exercise of power, and therefore parties enjoy a fundamental role in any democratic political system. The opposite, however, cannot be said to be true. The existence of political parties is not sufficient, *per se*, to establish a democratic system. Political parties do exist in most countries of the world, whether politically democratic or totalitarian or anything in-between, and this just proves the point that the existence of political parties is essential but not sufficient for achieving a real democratic system.

The experience of successfully democratic systems shows that political parties perform multiple political functions to support the success of the democratic system: they represent the interests of different social and political groups; they compile and crystalize interests of different social groups into joint programmatic frameworks; they initiate and mobilize political elites; and they contribute to promoting social integration of different social groups. The success of political parties in performing such functions strengthens the success of the democratic system, and to the same extent the failure by parties to properly perform the same functions aggravates the failure of democracy. The experience derived from different attempts to establish various democratic systems shows that the weakness of partisan institutions could be a leading factor in the failure of

democratic transitions. Providing full opportunity for political parties, on the other hand, with minimal limitations on their establishment and communication with citizens via different activities, is the best route towards establishing effective democracy.

The presence of powerful political parties that are capable of performing their functions as effectively as they should in a democratic system helps make successful transitions to democracy, and moreover contributes to democracy consolidation. While established democracies seem to be in a better position compared to societies undergoing transitions towards democracy, the latter raise important challenges, which will be the focus of this paper.

Authoritarian systems in their normal practice channel their efforts to restraining the formation of powerful political parties, in order to avoid the emergence of political powers that may challenge their rule. The incapacity of political parties slows the transition to democracy. In scenarios where the system falls apart due to deeply entrenched authoritarian practices, and before the emergence of powerful parties, the opportunity emerges for a democratic change, but the weakness of political parties - among other factors related to institutional incapacity and lack of a democratic culture - may result in the opportunity for a democratic shift being missed. Elements of this scenario have been witnessed in attempts at democratic change that took place in some Arab countries since 2011.

The relationship between political parties and democratic transition is a complicated question - most probably as complicated as the question of the chicken or the egg as to which came first. In this paper the question will be discussed from a pragmatic, liberal perspective, being the perspective that provides the best crystalized ideological framework for democratic systems, in regards to governing values and institutional relations. Liberal philosophy inspired the establishment of democracy in the best-established democracies. It is still inspiring current democratic transitions in developing countries. As for pragmatism, it means having a

realistic vision for the current affairs of countries undergoing democratic transition, particularly Arab states. An ideology, such as liberalism, may easily overshadow a proper perception of reality. The necessity of having an ideology as a source for an intellectual and ethical, harmonized framework does not substitute the need for a sociology as a direct mechanism for understanding reality, and thereby redirecting it to better fit with an ideological vision.

Parties and democracy

Democracy can be defined in several ways, and it is worth noting that “political parties” do not qualify as an organic component in most of the acceptable and common definitions of democracy. This is applicable with the minimal procedural definitions of democracy, which regards to “fair and free competitive election” as the only requisite for establishing democracy; and applicable as well with substance-based definitions that require a package of civil and political rights developed within the framework of liberal philosophy, and known as liberal democracy.

In definitions of minimal procedures, political parties come as a consequence of electoral competitiveness. This is an uncertain outcome; no logical conclusion can be reached in this regard. Some political systems do run regular, competitive and fair elections, yet without having political parties. Kuwait is an instance. Parties, moreover, may not have a pivotal role in nominating candidates or mobilizing voters in certain cases where people in power are being elected from parliamentary members and executive officers - it is rather the role of networks and local bonds. Parties, in such cases, are more in the way of confederal, unstable organizations, and this is the situation in many countries in Latin America and Africa.

On the other hand, in maximal definitions of liberal democracy, “political parties” are an additional outcome resulting from enjoyment of freedoms and rights of organization

and expression as fundamental liberal rights. In this context, it is essential to emphasize the right to form or join political parties, as part of a package of rights including, but not limited to, freedom of belief, expression and assembly, and personal freedoms and the right to self-determination. This package requires, as well, the citizen's commitment to a number of civic duties, topped by "tolerance." Partisan pluralism, in this sense, comes as part and parcel of a holistic system of political pluralism.

At this point, a dilemma surfaces in dealing with political currents that deny civic duties - the same classical dilemma of freedom's antagonists, and whether or not they have the right to enjoy their own freedom. This is a dilemma that can only be addressed in each context independently, because it touches upon practical politics while being an ethical and theoretical dilemma as well.

Parties, democratic shifts, and liberal politics

Active parties have certain functions in political systems and therefore they are main pillars in democratic systems. When parties are absent, a question arises on their functions: What should be there? What is the best way to help establish parties to perform those functions? Who can facilitate establishing these parties, and for what reasons? Should there be a guardian who helps certain parties and screens out others? At early stages of the development of democratic systems, and amid a lack of political parties capable of performing their due functions, the establishment of a partisan system is more likely to become part of a process of political engineering, formulated and controlled by the ruling authority according to its own vision.

In such a situation, a spectrum of scenarios is possible. In the first case scenario, the ruling power sets all the rules governing the establishment of political parties unilaterally, and also determines

which parties are allowed to work lawfully and which are not. This scenario normally takes place when the grip of authoritarian regimes loosens and the regime starts to accept new political parties, but imposes tight limitations on, or bans, any parties that would threaten the survival of the ruling elite and regime, and even more limitations - legally and even illegally - on the activities of established parties. When the cost of maintaining the old authoritarian system rises, especially in a changing sociopolitical environment, established party-pluralism is crippled; left managed and controlled by the ruling system only to ensure its survival. Hence, party reform becomes cosmetic political reform that influences the structures of power and authority only in a limited manner, to enable political elites - or available political parties - to share with authorities some of the benefits of power.

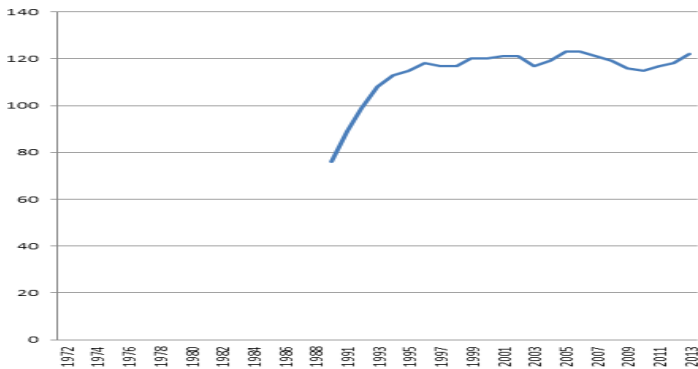
At the other end of the spectrum lies the exact opposite scenario: all limitations on the establishment and activities of parties are removed, with only number of simple procedures for registration remaining. This scenario usually takes place in the wake of revolutions and uprisings, when a broad coalition of civil society organizations, unions and political entities collaborate, and the authoritarian system falls apart. Revolutions and uprisings of that kind lead - in most cases - to a broad space of civic and political freedoms previously banned by authoritarian systems. Such broad spaces of rights in the beginning only result from the collapse of oppressive power, yet there is a second milestone to be passed in order to have a developmental breakthrough towards deep liberal democracy. This milestone is to have that package of rights and freedoms entrenched, formulated and protected in legislation and regulations.

These two extreme scenarios represent the poles, and between them exist a variety of scenarios that are more radical than cosmetic reform under an authoritarian system, and less liberal than a liberal democracy. Most of the political systems that witnessed their transition in the third and fourth waves of democratic transition - which started in mid-1970s - have

experienced some of these scenarios. This applies, in particular, to the democratic transitions that happened following the collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union. In this context, democratic transition was mostly reached by a complex negotiation between opposition and ruling parties; a mechanism that proved to be more efficient in democratic development than the two extreme scenarios, while at the same time focused on developing electoral policies at the expense of liberal freedoms.

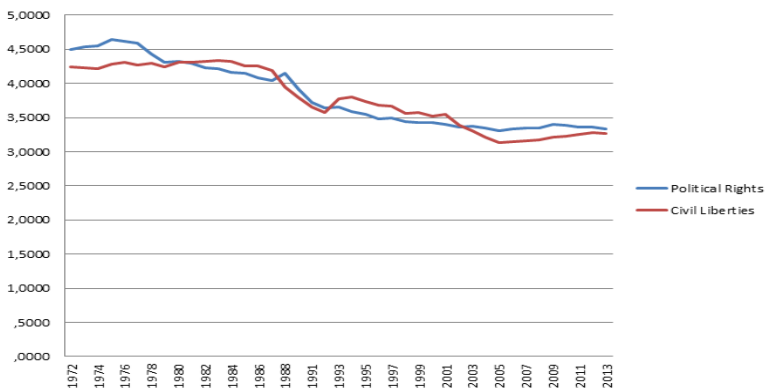
According to Freedom House, the number of electoral democracies increased in 2013 to 122, compared to 69 in 1989 (See Figure 1). This significant increase, however, did not lead to proportional rise in political rights and civil liberties. The annual average score for political liberties improved by 19.7 percent over the same period, while the annual average score for civil liberties improved by only 17.34 percent over the same period (See Figure 2). Such improvements lag far behind the increasing number of electoral democracies, which shows that the shift of authoritarian systems into electoral democracies was not associated with equal entrenchment of the liberal component in political rights. The conclusion is that a considerable number of new democracies only reflect a shallow democracy with minimum procedural requisites, and standing far from the liberal model of democracy.

Figure 1. Number of electoral democracies worldwide



Source: Freedom House, <http://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Electoral%20Democracy%20Numbers%2C%20FIW%201989-2014.pdf>

Figure 2. The state of political rights and civil liberties (annual average score computed using Freedom House statistics, 1972-2013)



Note: Freedom House's average score for political rights and civil liberties uses a rating based on a 1-7 scale. Rating 1 equals the highest degree of political and civil rights, while rating 7 equals the lowest.

The abovementioned raises an important controversy on the correlation between democratic shifts and liberal rights. While

the correlation is obvious, it is neither big nor spontaneous. This poses a number of questions on underlying causes beyond this correlation, and the possibility of crafting both a democratic shift and political reform in a manner that guarantees stronger enhancement for the liberal pillars of democracy, and the role of political parties and regulations for their activities.

Democratic shifts and political parties in the Arab world

When addressing issues of democratic shifts in Arab countries, the answers to these questions become all the more important. The reason is the political reality of Arab societies and its characteristics, which cannot go disregarded while considering political reform targeting democratic and liberal progress in these societies. As for these characteristics, they can be summed up as: ineffectiveness of political parties in general; dominance of ethnic or sectarian mentalities (particularly in political parties of ethnically or religiously divided countries); and the distinguished status that religious parties enjoy vis-à-vis their counterparts (non-religious parties with secular programs and ideologies, be it leftwing or rightwing). Other than religious parties, all political parties in the Arab world are ineffective and weak except in Tunisia and Morocco. The ineffectiveness of Arab parties can be seen through their elitist tendency, limited number of members and size of supporting grassroots bases, limited ability to nominate candidates for political office and mobilize support for them, divisions and internal conflicts, and failure - at least among most of them - to develop programs that detail their general policies and go further than general outlines and populist frameworks. These features are noticeably common in Arab parties in Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Jordan, Syria and Iraq.

On the other hand, religious and ethnic parties take the lead in the political scene of ethnically and religiously split countries such as Lebanon, Iraq and Sudan. Ethnic and religious parties stand mainly upon programs that enhance the interests of

members of their respective sect or ethnicity rather than programs that defend the public interest, or the interest of all citizens.

The largest and most deeply entrenched parties in most of Arab countries are the Islamic parties. This is the situation in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen and Jordan, and even in countries with no political heritage or previous experience containing political parties, such as Libya, where the main political factions are para-partisan groups with Islamic backgrounds. Most of these parties believe in the ideology of restoring Islamic society and state to what they were at the beginnings of Islam 14 centuries ago, an ideology that questions the nation state concept and considers it a tool to dismantle the nation of believers, while focusing on virtues and disregarding equality among all citizens, undermining women and puts them in the back lines behind men, and resisting individualism as a danger to the unity of believers.

The conclusion of this analysis is that a deep democratic development to a healthy partisan sphere faces a number of challenges due to the dominance of ideological parties (whether ethnic, religious, or sectarian) over the partisan sphere in Arab world.

Codifying ethnic and religious parties is a matter of concern for many, because ethnic and religious drives can be easily stirred up by their activities in a manner that may jeopardize the national peace and territorial integrity of Arab countries. Lebanon, Iraq and Sudan are all discouraging models that embody the devastating consequences of ethnic politics on established states. On the other hand, Islamic parties may pose other concerns, in blocking the progress of values, culture and politics in Arab countries, and preventing the establishment of liberal values both in society and the political system, and leading - consequently - to the imposition of tight limitations on political development, disallowing it from going beyond the shallow level of procedural democracy, in the best case scenario.

Liberal and leftist currents are non-ideological, in principle. Having liberal and leftist currents opens horizons for deep liberal democratic development in Arab countries. The evident problem in this regard is that political parties stemming from such currents are ineffective, as explained earlier, in most Arab countries. In many cases, liberal and leftist parties are regarded as mere factions rather than fully functioning political parties. These factions are unable to develop themselves into political parties for two different sets of reasons: on the one hand, citizens in general believe that political parties represent their members' own interests rather than the public interest - a belief that creates a deep sense of mistrust between citizens and political parties. Opinion polls have been conducted at different times in Egypt and other Arab countries and have revealed that citizens' confidence in political parties lags behind their confidence in other political institutions. Such a negative outcome can be attributed to the elitist nature of existing political parties, or to their discourse that differs from the sets of values and traditions of large segments of citizens, and also to the oppression and policy of authoritarian systems of manipulating political parties and the media, as was the practice for a long time. On the other hand, liberal and leftist political elites consider parties as constraints to their freedom of movement and expression, and therefore they prefer to keep their independence, or quit their partisan activities. Such attitudes can be attributed to the fact that political parties - mostly - are ideological reflections of intellectual groups, rather than being a reflection of broad spectrum of social segments. Ideological coherence, hence, becomes a first priority, and even comes before partisan cohesion; particularly given the values and psychology of intellectuals who are broadly governed by principles of free self-expression, individuality, and independence.

The dilemma of politics

This presentation highlights the dilemma that faces liberal powers while addressing the issue of political reform and political parties in particular in the current situation in Arab countries. Developments in the aftermath of the Arab Spring outbreak showed evidently the difficulties of putting into effect established principles of political reform, especially in societies whose political, cultural, economic and social histories differ from other societies around the globe - particularly from the history of Europe, the homeland of liberalism - where democratic principles have become embedded.

While such frustrating experience might be used to challenge the universality of liberal democracy, from a different perspective it could draw attention to the importance of translating liberal principles into culturally, politically and socially contextualized policies, so they can pave the way in different societies to gradual progress towards liberal democracy. The universality of the model and the principles do not contradict the variation of policies, paths and paces through which they can be implemented.

Liberal principles have successfully developed the most comprehensive human rights package to ensure human dignity and freedom. But limiting politics and sociology to human rights will only lead to marginalizing the intellectual arms of liberalism in the favor of its human rights approach, and will result in dangers of transforming liberalism into socially and politically disconnected power in many contexts.

As a way out of this dilemma, underlining the integration and balance of liberal rights and principles could be an answer to the question of practical politics. In the case of a situation that may require an incomplete implementation of the rights and duties package, maintaining a balance could be preferable to having imbalanced progress where anti-freedom ideologies may benefit and present hurdles to proceeding towards a more comprehensive implementation of the liberal rights package.

Emphasis on integration and a balance of liberal rights opens doors to reconsidering democratic development paths, and helps - most probably - in rehabilitating the negotiating, gradual reform path vis-à-vis the revolutionary and radical path, as witnessed in many instances in the Arab world. When social conditions are not mature enough to fully tolerate a package of liberal rights, a gradual, liberally inspired reform path could be preferable to a radical shift.

Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring, it has been evident through practical experience that people's despair at - and abandonment of - freedom poses the biggest threat to proceeding towards a liberal democratic future. Moreover, this practical experience showed that chaos and lack of security, happening in the wake of revolutionary changes, prepare citizens for a setback into authoritarian states of mind that prioritize the value of rules and security above any other considerations - a setback that benefits authoritarian powers, gives them an opportunity to restore their dominance, and slams the door in the face of societies that aspire to a life beyond authoritarianism. Therefore, effective liberal policy should be one that does not enable authoritarian powers to link freedom and chaos - one that can only be achieved through balanced gradual reform rather than revolutionary spikes, proven susceptible to adverse outcomes.

Liberal democracy in Arab countries faces two serious challenges. The first comes from authoritarian powers and their endeavors to maintain the status quo in order to enhance their control and promote their interests. The second challenge comes from anti-freedom ideologies that oppose authoritarian powers in order to have their chance at establishing their own fascistic and semi-fascistic systems. To overcome these two challenges, liberal powers must create their own mentality to walk the tightrope between the two poles.

The fortunes of liberalism in Greece and Western Europe

Professor Emeritus Dimitris Dimitrakos

To a large extent, the birth of the national idea went hand in hand with the growth of liberal ideas in modern Greece. Both nationalism and liberalism were foreign imports from Western Europe. They can be viewed as a complex, and ultimately successful, effort to cope with modernity as perceived in the Balkans in the 19th century. I shall try to give an account of this process, as I think that at least in this respect, constitutional liberalism in the Arab world developed *pari passu* with nationalism in a way that is comparable with that of Greece.¹ The historical and cultural differences, of course, are enormous, but the logic of the situation² renders them comparable.

The idea liberalism as a theory and political credo has gained ground in Greece lately in spite of the fact that it did not obtain but in a very limited way when the modern Greek state was founded. The Greek state emerged in 1833 after the Greeks revolted in 1821 against Ottoman domination. It was a tiny piece of land that did not exceed 47,000 square kilometers. The constitution it adopted, even before the state was formed, was based on liberal principles.

¹ Lewis, Bernard, "The Idea of Freedom in Modern Islamic Thought," in *Islam in History: Ideas, Men and Events in the Middle East* (London: Alcove Press, 1973), pp. 267-281.

² The term is used in Karl Popper's sense as explained in his *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957) p. 149. In a general way, it means that aside from the subjective element in history, there is an objective need to solve concrete problems that leads to or suggests certain actions because they make sense within a given situation.

Subsequent constitutions in the history of modern Greece were also permeated by liberal ideas.¹

This was a natural outcome of the fact that Enlightenment ideas reached Greece before the revolution of 1821. There was, in fact, a modern Greek Enlightenment expressed by certain intellectuals, mainly among Greeks of the diaspora.² They had a profound effect on elites in mainland Greece during the years of the revolution, 1821-1827, and thereafter. Thus all constitutional charters from 1822 onwards contain principles that are in substance liberal. The same applies to the text of constitutions after the Greek state was founded, beginning with the 1844 Constitution to the last one of 1975. These principles were accepted without resistance, mainly because they were part of the ideological panoply of the new state. There was no specific social class that advanced them. There was no bourgeoisie - no middle class in the modern sense of the term.³ There were local elites of notables and clergy that adopted liberal ideas.

Liberal ideology was connected intimately with the founding myth of the Greek national idea.⁴ According to this myth, the Greek people were yearning for liberty, as Greece was the birthplace of democracy and the idea of freedom was coextensive with Greekness, as it were. Therefore, the new state should embody liberal principles as emanating from the people as a whole.

Yet most Greeks at the time did not conceive of freedom in the classical liberal sense. What most Greeks meant by freedom at the

¹ Alivizatos, Nicos, *Introduction of the Greek Constitutional History: Volume I* (Athens, Antonis Sakkoulas, 1996).

² Kitromilides, Paschalis, *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

³ Koliopoulos, John and Veremis, Thanos, *Greece: The Modern Sequel* (London: Hurst & Co. 20020, pp. 209-215.

⁴ The term "myth" as used here is not necessarily a false account of what has taken place in the past, but a narrative related to a social practice or a web of belief. A founding myth is supposed to explain and justify an event or the birth of a collective entity - such as a nation - and it is inscribed in the historical past by established tradition, or even by political *fiat* rather than based on historical evidence.

time was state independence, or more generally a refusal to be subservient to Ottoman rule. To be more precise: new elites were formed, opposed to the traditional ruling elites. The latter had a stake to defend in the old order, yet newer ones were formed, especially amongst those who were better informed about the world outside, or were dissatisfied with the status quo under Ottoman rule. Merchants, members of the lower clergy, local notables and seafaring islanders found a new perspective in ideas coming from the West, connected to the Enlightenment and the principles of the French Revolution.

But there is a great distance between refusal of submission to Turkish rule on the part of certain freebooters on the mountains, and the desire to create an independent state. This was the central tenet of nascent nationalism at the time, influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and Napoleon. To create a new state one had to accept the new ideology of rights of the citizen and the liberal agenda that went with it. The principles of democracy, popular sovereignty and freedom of thought were thus inscribed in the first constitutional texts that were voted by groups of revolutionaries assembled successively in parts of the Peloponnese.¹ This was presented not as an import from the West, but as a “return” of these ideas to their birthplace. They belonged to the inhabitants of that land, *as of right*.

Thus, the new state claimed to be the institutional embodiment of ancient ideas of liberty that “returned” to their place of origin via the West. It was a thoroughly romantic idea, typical of the period, reinforced by the Philhellenic movement in France, Italy, England, Germany and the United States. The idea was that modern Greece was the expression of liberty in its very essence, and the institutional arrangements that provided for this freedom on paper were seen as emanating from the will of the people as a whole. Yet these ideas were never seriously examined. At best, they were taken for granted by the intellectual elite. They did not strike deep root in the masses.

¹ Koliopoulos and Veremis, op.cit. pp. 47-48.

I shall dwell on some basic principles that are constitutive of liberal ideology and show that they hardly applied to the new state, even though elite thinking accepted them and appealed to them as part of a common culture. These principles are individualism, rights, liberty and the rule of law:

- *Individualism*: The idea of individualism is that the individual is the basic unit of social existence; therefore it is individuals that are bearers of rights and responsibilities. The individual is sovereign in his own domain insofar as he/she possesses *rights*. In the new Greek state, it was rather the family in the large sense - or the clan - that was considered the basic social unit.
- *Rights*: Persons enjoy individual, inalienable rights that constitute their ethical domain, as it were, and which should be recognized by the powers that be. These rights are neither given by nor wrested from the state, but inhere in the human person. These rights are life, liberty and property. It is not an arbitrary triad. It is logically arrived at, once one accepts that the basic unit of society is the individual self. Selves have bodies, thoughts, possessions of which they are rightful masters, and are autonomous; that is, free within the limits set by their circumstances or by institutional arrangements to prevent harm to others. In the newly founded Greek state, such ideas were completely absent. Individual persons were not thought of as possessors of rights, except as those possibilities were granted by way of gift by the state.
- *Liberty*: Liberty is, of course, a notion with multiple meanings. But liberty in the political, not metaphysical, sense is no more than the absence of obstacles laid down by the state, or other powers that be, on the exercise of an individual's rights. It is not related so much to the question "Who is to govern me?" as to that of "How much am I to be governed?"¹ It means not to be interfered with by others, so

¹ Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. xvii.

long as I exercise my *rights*. In fact, liberty thus conceived is inherent in the idea of being an individual self.¹ In the Greek state, liberty meant local autonomy or the exercise of voting rights. At best, it was associated in the minds of the elite with some version of the rule of law as embedded in the constitution.

- *Rule of law*: The principle of the rule of law states that no one is above the law, including the sovereign; that the liberty of each person is liberty under the law; that the law protects citizens' rights and that it expresses accepted norms developed over a long timespan.² In Greece, this hardly applied either, since the executive always had the upper hand in relation to the judiciary.

These ideas flourished in places where citizens existed already and fought in defense of liberty and rights: England, France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and America. They did not have these ideas given as a package deal of state building. The opposite took place in Greece. The new state adopted these liberal principles from the start. They were in this sense foundational. But these principles were general and vague.

The people who became citizens saw themselves recognized *qua* citizens, possessors of rights and of liberty of movement and thought. Even in its later development, liberalism in Greece remained a vague set of ideas. Citizens' rights and liberties were mainly voting rights - i.e., the possibility of participating in appointing the governing class. The social base for doing this was not assemblies of free and equal citizens, members of autonomous associations, clubs, opinion centers etc., but fragmented communities where power was concentrated on local personalities. The set-up was more or less "tribal."

¹ *Ibid.* p. 134.

² In the modern conception of the rule of law as intimately connected with liberty cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 235ff.

Yet liberal ideas grew gradually, with the progress of education. Elites had to rely and deepen their thought on liberal principles. A liberal party was formed in 1910 and its founder, Eleftherios Venizelos, is recognized as one of the most important historic figures of modern Greek political history. Of course, liberal principles were never applied in full. Greece remained fundamentally statist. And as its history was troublesome, having participated in two world wars and a very bloody civil war, and having gone through many changes of regimes and two dictatorships, the progress of liberalism met many obstacles. If it did experience some success over the last two decades, this is to be found in solutions to concrete problems that modern governance and European integration imposed. Mostly, however, that concerns individuals and groups that understand some of these problems and/or are in positions of responsibility allowing them to take decisions or influence opinion in matters relevant to liberalism.

Liberalism started its career in Greece as part of a foreign culture, which nevertheless was incorporated in the new culture created with national independence. But it started on a wrong footing. Why? Because liberalism in its full form is unable to catch the imagination of the masses. It is anti-paternalist, it advocates tolerance and peace and absence of constraints, unless to protect against harm to others. It is mostly negative. As such it cannot work as a formula that will elicit consensus for an ideal or a better form of social organization. It is not a utopia. On the contrary, it preaches the avoidance of utopia - i.e., a positive idea of a final aim verging on perfection. On the other hand, liberalism is a proposition of tolerance in the most general sense, where people with different points of view and diverging interests can cohabit with minimum conflict. To be more precise: minimizing institutionally the cost of conflict. This may be accepted as universally desirable. In this sense, liberalism may be perceived as an evolutionary universal, to use a term of Talcott Parsons. An evolutionary universal is not a cultural trait or a custom that is contingent on the history of a society, but a necessary attainment in the evolution of mankind, which is universal in its scope, independent of its having been directly discovered or imported.

Parsons considers language, the discovery of fire and, much later, the discovery of democracy as examples of evolutionary universals.

The point to emphasize in all this is that the progress of liberalism can certainly be hindered or encouraged by the culture and/or institutional set up of the society with which it comes into contact, but to the extent that it is a proposition for organizing coexistence in a world where a multiplicity of competitive and often incompatible beliefs and interests obtain, it is a necessary path. It is independent of cultural and historical context. But as it is only elites that can handle it, it can aim mainly at capturing their attention, in the modest hope of having some of its ideas adopted by decision makers.

The role of organized liberalism in promoting the values of modernity and freedom in the Arab region: The case of Tunisia

Professor Maâti Monjib

The text before you is a verbal intervention made by the author on 17 May 2014 in a seminar organized by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation on Arab-European liberal dialogue and the role of liberal organizations and trends in the Arab world and Europe. In this intervention, I will cover two main points:

- Introduction: It includes some initial remarks and an overview of the major milestones of thinking in the Arab region and the position of liberal thinking in it.
- Some roles and results of liberal thinking and organizations in the Maghreb with a focus on Tunisia.

Introduction

The Arab region has recently experienced an increased attraction to liberal thoughts, which became clear during the Arab Spring that prevailed over most Arab countries in 2011. As a result of this new situation, some organizations and trends that were previously against liberalism are now trying to establish some liberal values in the history of movements that were leftist, nationalist, or religious conservative. But before delving into the core of the topic, let me introduce some preliminary remarks:

- Non-liberal secular ideology and the organizations advocating it failed for about half a century to defeat and weaken the adamant traditional culture on which dictatorial regimes of different forms depend. Despite their announced modernity and control over authority, or over at least administrative and educational bodies in several Arab countries, these trends failed. One reason behind this failure is the difficulty overcoming an ideology of certitude with another. Dogmas support one another at the social and value level, and even if hostility between them is entrenched at the level of discourse, they feed on the same traditional and authoritarian mental structures.
- Liberalism has never been able to become a grassroots ideology that is deeply entrenched in Arab society because of the weakness of its societal and cultural density as a result of its links in the Arab collective imagination to colonial control, at least until recently. If we compare the liberal trend to some other modernization trends, we find that it perceived socialism, for instance, as an anti-Western ideology for being more universal and global than liberalism. On the other hand, Arab nationalism is considered by definition against occupation and the West, and the same can be said about religious ideologies of different forms.
- Liberalism is diversified and lacks centrality, for liberal Islamists, liberal seculars and liberal socialists can be found. Liberalism has in general remained superficial without delving deep, except in some environments, including among some businessmen and professional clubs.

With regards to the milestones of Arab political thinking, the liberal trend was the first modern trend to achieve some popularity in the Arab region. Moreover, some men of literature began to look up to the European West since the French

Revolution and Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. This trend never took the form of organized forces but stayed among elite intellectuals, including some men of state and businessmen, and especially businessmen working in international trade. However, the Arab liberal trend would see some growth during the last third of the 19th century, its growth going hand in hand with the crumbling of the structures of the Ottoman Empire. Writers, journalists and members of religious minority groups published multiple treatises on liberal values related to modernity, political participation, and freedom and irreducible value of the individual. They also defended values of citizenship and equality, and rejected injustice, tyranny and superstition. This movement took place in several Arab urban communities, in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Tunisia. The last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century entrenched this trend that was adopted by several currents, including the following:

- The religious reform trend is represented by Jamal Eddin Al-Afghani, Abdel Rahman El-Kawakabi and Mohamed Abdo, as well as Khayr Allah Al-Tunesi (1810-1899) who provided a conducive environment for Habib Bourguiba - the first president of the Republic of Tunisia - by pursuing educational, political and economic reforms. They believed in reform ideas and instead of rejecting the West under claims of infidelism or occupation, they tried to reconcile Western modernity with Arab Islamic values. Moreover, they proved that reconciliation could be achieved between faith and mind, religion and science, and the duties and freedom of citizens. They called for liberating people from ignorance, poverty and tyranny. In his book of *The Nature of Despotism*, for example, Abdal-Rahman Al-Kawakibi said: "A tyrant is an enemy of right and freedom and kills them. Right is the father of humanity and freedom is its mother, while the publics are sleeping orphan boys who do not know anything and scientists are their adult siblings. If they wake them up, they awaken, and if they call them, they respond. Otherwise their

sleep will be prolonged to death and their appreciation of tyranny hastens God's vengeance of his subjects.”¹

- The modernizing secular liberal trend called for benefiting from and citing Western experience with no inferiority complex. The main point of weakness in this is that it is difficult to be embraced by the people, especially if it coincides with times of occupation. As a result of the failure of this process, a new reform and reconciliatory trend emerged during the first half of the 20th century and was represented by the Egyptian Ali Abdal Razeq, followed by Ahmed Lotfy El-Sayed and Taha Hussein.

It is also worth mentioning that Arab thinking developed considerably throughout the second half of the last century. Nationalism appeared during the 1950s and 1960s, followed by the leftist trend that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, while the beginning of the 1980s saw a surge of Islamism that has regressed in the last five years in favor of liberal youth in several Arab countries.

The liberal trend - which I propose to call “postponed,” implying that the environment is not conducive for liberalism - must be driven by the state's modernization policies at the eco-educational (whether cultural or social) levels until the historic conditions are appropriate for building a state of integrated liberal democracy to be represented by Arab men of state such as Bourguiba and others in Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait and Bahrain, etc. I propose the term “postponed” because democracy and political freedoms are postponed to the next generations, while focus is on modernization and non-political individual freedoms.

¹ Al-Kawakibi, Abdel Rahman, *The Nature of Despotism* (Edition Kalimat Arabia for Translation and Publishing, 2011).

Roles and outcomes of liberal thinking and organizations in the Maghreb: The case of Tunisia

I begin this section with a reminder of the historic background that paved the way for a secularized liberal generation to emerge to represent a wide sector at the demographic and socio-professional levels in Tunisian society.

In 1864, a popular rebellion erupted against Tunisian authorities due to the prevalence of economic and financial crisis that forced the government to impose taxes on citizens, aggravating the public crisis in Tunisia. This public crisis influenced large groups of the popular and middle classes. However, as per El-Basheer Telly, a historian of Tunisia, the reasons behind the popular revolution were not only socioeconomic, but had a clear political component. For that reason, Telly added: “The rebellion was not a concern for the Bey’s authority only, but for France as well.” The revolution ended without realizing its goals of achieving freedom and justice. One reason for this failure was the fact that Tunisia saw monstrous police suppression and interference by the French navy.¹

Because of foreign interference, relative public freedoms that were born from a liberal trend that enjoyed some power within the state body in Tunisia in 1861 were suspended. It is worth mentioning that Tunisia did not fall with the French occupation, because it was not made a protectorate until two decades after these events. In the beginning of 2011 - one century and a half after its military and political interference in the affairs of Tunisia - France tried to repeat the same scenario three weeks into the Jasmine Revolution led by mostly liberal youth, and three days before President Zein El-Abidine Ben Ali’s escape. It expressed its concern over its interests in the region and

¹ Monjib, Maâti, “La Tunisie: Une modernité arabe” in Zamane, *Histoire du Maroc* (Casablanca), No 5, Février 2011.

proposed, through French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, providing “security” aides to Tunisia to maintain order in the country.

Certainly, history does not repeat itself this accurately except in rare occasions. But it could be said that the Tunisian democratic revolution that started in December 2010 has its origins in collective memory linked to the last two centuries of the country. From the perspective of political sociology, the expansion of the middle class in the socioeconomic pyramid contributed to the growth and dissemination of liberal values and a democratic culture. In other words, the pursuit of freedom in Tunisia has not come out of the blue, but has greatly been influenced by the course of history, leading to the Tunisian Revolution of 2010-2011 that represents the first partly liberal popular revolution in the Arab world.

The social groups that played a critical role in sparking and making the Tunisian revolution a success are the proactive educated youth and the army, which strongly refused to participate in suppression. If we study the recent history of the country, we find that these two arenas (education and the military) benefited from the policy of modernization undertaken by Tunisian reform leaders in the 19th century. The polytechnic school for military sciences in Bardo was the first institute of modern education in the country. Established in 1840, the subjects taught were not all military, but included the humanities - a branch of knowledge effective in the dissemination of ideas of freedom and openness.

Sadiki College: A true liberal beacon

Khayr Eddin Pasha, a leading Turkish-Tunisian reformer, established Sadiki College for modern education in 1875. Meanwhile, he took the initiative to reform education at the traditional Ez-Zitouna University. The initiative to establish Sadiki, whose only job was teaching modern techniques, was based on a progressive approach in which Khayr Allah Pasha

believed. Being able to understand French, the latter was influenced by the writings of Saint Simon and Barthélemy Enfantin and followed in the footsteps of religious reformer Refaat Tahtawi. Khayr Allah asserted that the progress of countries could never be achieved without educating people and their political elite.¹ He also said that institutionalized liberalism was the ideal system capable of setting Tunisia on the right track towards cultural, economic and sociopolitical development.

Compared to its neighbors at the end of the 20th century, with its relatively large middle class, adequately equipped hospitals, schools that are productive at the technical and knowledge levels, and women who are relatively free from the restrictions of tradition, Tunisia became the most modern and liberal Arab community in North Africa. Even at the Arab world level, only Lebanon competes with and exceeds Tunisia, if we exclude its confessional political regime. Also, if compared to surrounding African countries, together with South Africa, Botswana and Mauritius, Tunisia represents a model in state building. Here we must underline that the relative development achieved by Tunisia at the cultural and political levels is due to the partially liberal reforms introduced during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The two founding fathers of modern Tunisia are Khayr Allah Pasha (1821-1890) and Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000). The name of Jules Ferry can also be added to the list as a contributor to the modernization of the country. When Tunisia became a French protectorate, unlike Morocco where the first public instructor had an extremely conservative approach, Jules Ferry was minister of public instruction, then president of the Government Council. He was an enlightened colonialist who believed in the message of civil France for Tunisia, believed that the role of the French Republic was to achieve local cultural development, and attacked French colonialists every now and

¹ Cf: Khayr Ad Din Al-Tunesi, *The Surest Path to Knowledge Regarding the Condition of Countries* (Al-Game'ya Foundation for Studies and Publishing, 1985).

then to remind them that the locals were not created to serve them.

Before the French occupation (which was much less violent than it was in the neighboring countries of Algeria and Morocco), Khayr Eddin, minister of the navy at the time and who became first minister later, introduced deep reforms between 1850 and 1870. The administration, sequestrated property, and agricultural sector were reformed. The cultivated area of Tunisia increased tenfold to more than one million hectares in the 1870s. In addition to these reforms, the road network, public utilities, and tax system were improved, while the relationship between the justice system and the executive authority became clear.

These reforms had a considerable impact on the political imagination of the elite that drafted the constitutional declaration of 1861, which was the first constitution in the Arab world. This was one century before Morocco announced its constitution in 1962. The first Tunisian constitution included a chapter on authorities, reduced the powers of the Bey (or monarch), declared Tunisians equal before the law and with regards to taxation. It also gave a strategic position to the higher council responsible for the legislative authority. One of its powers was to depose the Bey if he excessively violated the constitution. Additionally, it provided for official remuneration and specified civic bylaws for the ruler to put an end to the mixing of public and private money.

The historic importance of these liberal reforms does not only lie in their outcomes at the levels of practice and institutions, but also in their influence on the collective imagination of the Tunisian nation, including the legitimization of modernity to resemble a pure local Islamic outcome.

National political organizations and their role in establishing liberal thinking

It is worth mentioning that political and social organizations played a major role in helping establish liberal thought among the elite and some popular groups. The first organized political group was the Tunisian Youth Movement that was established in 1907 by El-Bashir Seft, Abdal Galil El-Zawash, Ali Bash Hamba, and others. Its discourse was a combination of religious, nationalist and liberal elements. The founders of the first Tunisian national party - the Free Constitutional Party ("free" as in "liberal"), commonly known as Al-Dostour - was founded in 1920 by liberal and nationalist figures led by Abdal Aziz El-Thaalebi. Representatives of free professions, such as doctors, lawyers, and men of literature represent a significant percentage of its founders and first members. Some of them are Ahmed Tawfik El-Madany, Salah Farahat, and Mohey Eddin El-Qaliby. The party's first program, which was presented by party leaders to authorities through the party newspaper *Le Tunisien*, and its famous delegations to France, included several points and demands, most of which were of a liberal nature. The other points were drafted to alleviate the severity of colonialism on the people of the country. The party's most important liberal demands were for:

- The constitution to stipulate the separation of powers - executive, legislative and judicial.
- The election of a legislative council and appointment of a government accountable before the council.
- The free election of municipal councils in every town and municipality.
- The guarantee of individual freedoms, and the freedoms of the press, assembly, and forming associations.
- Tunisians to be accepted in all administrative positions with equal wages for all employees, regardless of nationality.

- Ensuring the right of Tunisian citizens to participate in the purchase of lands allocated for builders.¹

The Free Constitutional Party split in 1934 into two different parties supporting the dissemination of some liberal ideas among popular groups. The New Free Constitutional Party, which was led by Mahmoud El-Matery, then Habib Bourguiba, adopted an approach of getting close to Tunisians and opened its doors wide for the residents of marginalized neighborhoods in Tunis and Sfax, as well as the residents of villages close to major cities. We must say that all of these organizations were not purely liberal, but were originally nationalistic with some effective and significant figures that believed in and advocated for liberalism. Moreover, Tunisian parties and organizations that did not claim to be liberal and might even stand against liberalism in the economic field unknowingly carried some values of liberalism in their discourse, especially on the religious level, which was the case of the Communist Party in Tunisia. As a result, Jewish Tunisian patriots preferred to join this party rather than Al-Dostour Party that was more conservative at the religious and ethnic levels.

For a deeper understanding, we must remember that modernity and liberal values were established late at the social, cultural and political levels in Algeria and Morocco due to:

- The absence of popular organizations that were fully independent from colonialism and supported one another's liberal demands.
- Liberalism and value-based modernity came to Algeria and Morocco with foreign colonialists and in the popular imagination became linked to one another and to colonialism, its violence and injustice. When liberalizing

¹ Cf: Martin, Jean-François, *Histoire de la Tunisie contemporaine: De Ferry à Bourguiba*. 1881-1956 (Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 2003).

modernity is imposed from the outside, it is perceived as a state of estrangement that must be gotten rid of. Therefore, Tunisia is an exceptional case in the Maghreb, where it was easy to localize liberal values through educational institutions such as the Sadiki College and through political institutions such as the Free Constitutional Party. One outcome of this localization is that political Islamic groups in Tunisia are less conservative not only among their kind in North Africa, but also in the entire Arab world.

- Ironically, Tunisian society, with all the characteristics mentioned, suffered during the first decade of the 21st century under a dictatorship that was far more authoritative than its two neighbors to the West. Ben Ali's regime resisted the wave of liberalization that started in the region about two decades ago. The huge gap between society, the values of its liberal elite, and the political dictatorship that tried to prolong its existence with violence, caused the regime to fall on 14 January 2011.
- In this regard, Al-Hassan II was more reasoned as his regime did everything it could to avoid the rapid cultural modernization of Moroccan society that might disassemble the social and value-based bonds on which the dictatorship was based. His rule went as far as shutting down the Sociology and Anthropology Institute in Rabat in 1972. He also marginalized the social sciences and philosophy in university and replaced them with traditional religious subjects. His regime simply perceived schools as his political and value opponent that needed to be ideologically tamed.

I refer to these historic events to conclude that Habib Bourguiba, who led Tunisia between 1956 and 1987, did not build his socio-political and cultural system out of nothing, or on virgin land. He himself studied at Sadiki College and learned the principles of modernity for which this school was a beacon.

Despite the dictatorial nature of his regime, which is ironic, Bourguiba's policies played a major role in the mainstreaming of liberalism and the modernization of mentalities and structures.

Bourguiba ran an effective administration relying on his patriotic past and challenging the conservative criticism directed to him. He gradually implemented his modernizing program that was based on changing mentalities and perception of the world (*Weltanschauung*) without any prejudice to the foundations of the Islamic creed. To legitimize his policy, the Tunisian leader depended on the first article of the 1959 Constitution stating: "Tunisia is a free, independent and sovereign state. Its religion is Islam, its language is Arabic and its type of government is the Republic."¹ An ambiguity was deliberately included here. The legislator left room for interpretation on if the pronoun accompanying the word "religion" referred to the state or the country of Tunisia, which could result in a huge social and political difference. The legislator, which was none other than Bourguiba himself, averted this coercively, however, in Article 5 by providing a liberal interpretation of the first article of the constitution in recognizing the right of all citizens to freedom of belief: "The Tunisian Republic shall guarantee the inviolability of the human person and the freedom of belief."

None of the 64 articles of the constitution refer, directly or indirectly, to Islamic Sharia as a source of objective law as is the case in constitutions in the majority of Arab countries. Tunisia is the only Muslim country in the Middle East that did not employ such a formulation, since Sharia was dropped altogether from the constitution. In addition, aside from the first article, the word "Islam" - including any derivatives or elements of its semantic field - was used only once, when the constitution stated that the president of the state must be a Muslim.

¹ Refer to Article 5 of the 1959 Constitution: "The Republic of Tunisia shall guarantee the inviolability of the human person and freedom of conscience, and defends the free practice of religious beliefs provided this does not disturb public order."

A few months after the declaration of independence on 20 March 1956, and before the constitution was adopted, Bourguiba drafted a revolutionary law on personal status. We can say with no exaggeration that the law had a liberal basis and liberating effect for Tunisian women, for they no longer needed the approval of their guardians for marriage. The same law prohibits polygamy and divorce that is not based on civil law. Traditional communities, especially in rural areas, ignored the law. But in 1958, Bourguiba banned traditional common marriages that were performed by reading the *Fatiha*, making the registration of marriage contracts in the civil registry mandatory.

It is worth underlining that the policies of Bourguiba were based on an accumulation of reforms introduced by Khayr Allah in the 19th century. These reforms also had an impact on the Tunisian nationalist and reformist movement when the country was a French protectorate. In the late 1920s, the Tunisian progressive scholar Al-Taḥer Al-Haddad, who was a student at Ez-Zitouna, published a book titled *Our Women in Sharia and Society* whose liberal approach of the issue was more progressive than that of the Egyptian Qassem Amin with regards to the freedom of women and gender equality.

Relying on this historic heritage, Bourguiba faced up to religious society with three practical, deep and permanent measures:

- Abolishing and nationalizing religious endowments, which constituted about 30 percent of cultivatable lands and a good percentage of urban real estate. Regardless of the severe shock caused by this decision and its political, social and cultural consequences, it was an extremely important economic measure. The productivity of these properties was very low, mostly because they were mismanaged. The decision was good for Tunisian Gross National Product (GNP), while the majority of Arab world leaders did not dare to take such a measure.

- Earlier Bourguiba abolished Sharia courts, unified the judicial system across the country, and empowered women to become judges. The Tunisian government based civil law and the penal code on the French republican tradition.
- The national Tunisian government also reformed religious education in the 1950s and tamed traditional educational institutions by imposing modern curricula and coeducation.

These moves sparked strong reactions in traditional communities that sometimes echoed throughout the Arab world. The Saudi Sheikh Ibn Baz called on Bourguiba to repent and published a book on the apostasy of the “Great Mujahid.” This book was handed out for free in the 1960s to tens of thousands of pilgrims from Tunisia and other countries during pilgrimage seasons to the shrines of Islam.

In spite of these strong reactions, Tunisian political Islam remains one of the Arab Islamist movements most open to the values of political, social and ethical modernity. This is also considered the result of the cultural and educational choices made by Bourguiba, and Khayr Allah a century before him. Notably, Bourguiba showed political shrewdness, reasonableness, and a great ability of oratory maneuver. Thanks to his shrewdness, his modernization project was a success. Here, we can end with an extended quote by Mohamed Al-Sharfi who experienced Bourguiba’s cultural and social policy closely in Tunisia:

Turkey and Tunisia have gone a long way on the path of modernization with the Ataturk and Bourguiba experiences that were close but different at the same time. Things were clear for Ataturk, for he has decided to adopt French secularism as an extension for the Young Turks through the segregation of religion and the state in Turkey. This was implemented in an authoritative manner.

While Bourguiba's approach in Tunisia after the independence in 1956 was entirely different, despite having the same objectives as Ataturk. Bourguiba did not want to abandon or ignore Islam. Instead, he adopted an approach to modernize Islam relying on the ethical objectives of religion in the first place to reorganize society. Bourguiba was the combined product of two cultures: Muslim and Western ... On the one hand, he was knowledgeable of the Quran and Arabic poetry, and on the other he was a smart graduate of the French school. He was a scholar of Western philosophy and French poetry and literature. He was also influenced by the political culture of the Third Republic. His purpose was to mix Islam with the West and to modernize the country with Islam, not without it like Ataturk did. Bourguiba tried to modernize the country, law, and society.¹

¹ Cf: Entretien avec Mohamed Charfi réalisé par Héloïse Kalebka et publié in "*L'Histoire*", No 289, 2006.

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The institutional framework of European party politics: Constitutions, party laws and party statutes

Dr. Oliver W. Lembcke

Why parties? In a word: because democracy is what political parties make of it. Politics in modern democratic societies is a complex matter that needs organization and coordination by parties. This close connection between political parties and modern democracies has been spelled out by one of the leading figures of political science after World War II. Schattschneider proclaims in his well-known and often cited dictum that “political parties created democracy” and that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties ... Parties are not therefore merely appendages of modern government; they are in the center of it and play a determinative and creative role in it” (Schattschneider, 1942, 1).

In the light of European history, parties have become the central actor on the stage of modern politics because they - and only they - are able to perform certain roles within a democratic system. Two roles are of particular importance. First, they have developed themselves into the main representative of civil society by giving voice to the citizen's interest. Political parties are not only capable of articulating interests and aggregating demands, they are also capable of translating collective preferences into distinct policy options. By these means, political parties serve as the key “agent” of the citizenry that have become more and more the “principle” of the polity and its collectively binding decisions in the wake of the democratization process. Both the process of inclusion of “the

people” into the realm of politics as much as the process of integration of societal pluralism into the democratic decision-making process are closely connected to the rise of modern representation by parties. This is one dimension of the success story of party politics in Europe.

However, political parties do not only act as representatives of the people; they have also started to act as governors of the state. This governing role contains the function of organizing political decisions and giving coherence to the institutions of government. Political parties are mainly responsible for building up policy programs, but they are also in charge of executing these very same programs which then do not only claim to serve the interests of their supporters, but also of the wider polity. This governing function, next to the representative function, is the second role that is of key importance to modern democracies. In short, the success story of European political parties is mainly due to their capacity of *combining* these two roles. By developing these two roles and their interrelation within one organization, political parties were also solving one of the major challenges of representative government: the gap between the “principle” and the “agent” which endangers, at least potentially, the legitimacy of representation. In modern democracy this gap is “in principle” bridged by political parties. The agent has become the principle, and vice versa (Mair, 2009).

Reform and political parties

Against the background of this short account of the importance of political parties it does not come as a surprise that attempts at democratic reform (e.g., resulting from a growing imbalance between the representative and the governing function) are quite often directed towards political parties. The rationale behind this is quite straightforward: the democratic character of political parties impacts party competition and by extension the party system itself, which again is the core engine of the performance of democratic regimes. Within this line of

reasoning, a change of the institutional framework within which political parties operate “promises” a somewhat fast and manageable change that has (positive) impacts on the democratic quality of the political system. Unlike other changes (for instance, cultural or social changes of collective behavior) this kind of change by institutional means can be “constructed” or “designed” and it allows for a rational calculation of the benefits and costs involved. Of course, this kind of reform may become illusionary at some point. In any case, institutional designs - especially if induced by law - create in themselves expectations with a high potential for frustration. However, these expectations, together with the importance of political parties, help us to understand the evolution of party laws that has accelerated during the last decades.

What is meant by “party laws” here? On a functional account, party laws are defined as the set of legally binding rules for every political party being part of a given political community (Müller and Sieberer, 2006, p. 436). This rather broad definition allows, at least, for a clear distinction between party laws and party statutes: in short, the former rules are *made for* political parties, the latter rules are *made by* political parties, typically generated by each party for its own internal governance.¹ A different approach to defining party laws in particular is used by the project on “Party Law in Modern Europe.” It only includes constitutional provisions and legal regulations (self-)identified as Party Laws or Party Finance Laws.² The advantage of this technical approach is to be able to set up a clearly defined empirical database. On the basis of this

¹ Both sets of rules have their own logics, structures and (potential) benefits. However, in this paper the discussion is restricted mainly to party laws. Party statutes matter in this context only as a subject for regulation by party laws.

² Election laws, for example, are not included in the project’s sample. See the project’s homepage at www.partylaw.leidenuniv.nl and also www.partylaw.bham.ac.uk (project on “The Constitutional Regulation of Political Parties in Post-War Europe”).

database, three “waves”¹ of party law legislation can be differentiated (Casal-Bértoa, Piccio and Rashkova, 2012; Biezen and Borz, 2012):

The *first wave* already started immediately after World War II with the implementation of constitutional provisions of party regulations, beginning in Iceland (1944) and Austria (1945). However, it was the “novelty” introduced by Italy (1947) and Germany (1949) that proved to be of particular importance for the development of party laws in Europe (Biezen, 2012): both constitutional designs acknowledged the role and relevance of political parties. Within this new perspective, political parties were not only recognized as important instruments within the context of legislative elections, but as key actors within the system of democratic politics as such. During the 1960s, the first party regulations through party laws were adopted. The frontrunners were Venezuela (1964) and Turkey (1965) (Karvonen, 2007), followed by Germany (1967) and Finland (1969). One main incentive for these new legislations was the challenge of public funding for political parties to which the German, Finish, but also the Austrian (1975) party law explicitly responded. Among these different conceptions, the German model was seen as the “heartland of party law” serving as the blueprint for various other national laws on political parties (Müller and Sieberer, 2006, pp. 435-438).

The democratization during the second half of the 1970s inspired lawmakers of newly established democracies to come to terms with party regulation, generating the *second wave* of party laws. This happened in Greece (1975), Portugal (1976) and Spain (1978). The main aim during this wave was less concerned with regulations directed to the problem of public financing of political parties (which was introduced at a later stage). The attention was first and foremost related to the organizational challenges triggered by the rapid proliferation of political parties. Those party laws

¹ This way of presenting the material is inspired by Samuel Huntington’s *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

followed the purpose of controlling the creation and activity of parties and to protect the newly built democratic environment from potential undermining attempts by political organizations and movements.

The breakdown of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe gave leeway for the *third wave* of party laws.¹ During the early 1990s, these party laws were concerned with a broad range of regulation issues, including key elements of the previous waves (funding and party organization). However, the lack of confidence and the amount of distrust between the different ideological camps had an even bigger impact on the lawmaking process than before. For this reason, political actors dealing with party regulations were much more inclined to tie the role of political parties as tightly as possible to the democratic constitutional order and basic political rights.

What kind of conclusion can be drawn from this short overview and comparison of the different waves? In the past, the legacy of non-democratic experience has been a powerful stimulus of party regulation. Democracies of the second and third wave, as well as those reconstituted democratic regimes after World War II (Austria, Germany, and Italy), tend to regulate parties significantly more extensively than older liberal democracies. The incentives for such an extensive regulation approach seem to be twofold:

1. Democracies with an authoritarian or totalitarian past often do not restrict parties to their electoral role, but recognize them as key political actors responsible for the emergence of democratization. In this understanding, the newly designed democratic constitution is seen in close relation with the establishment of free party competition. For this reason, political parties are attributed a pivotal role in the

¹ Starting with Hungary in 1989. Few countries remained unaffected by this wave of party regulations. Latvia and Serbia came to terms with party laws only a decade after the rupture of 1989/90.

political process, which is typically manifested explicitly in a privileged constitutional position.

2. The legacy of non-democratic experience is also reflected in an interrelation between pluralism and political parties: political parties are not only seen as instrumental to democratic competition within the core of the political system, but also to the societal dimension of political pluralism. As a consequence, the freedoms of association, assembly and speech are related to (or even identified with) political parties - a perspective that confirms and even strengthens the constitutional character of party regulations. In addition, party laws reflect the complex relationship between the public and private realms that comes with a more exposed constitutional role of political parties. They typically contain provisions concerning the separation between parties and the state, and the private/public character of party organization and ideology.

Dimensions of regulation in party laws

How are we supposed to make sense of party laws? A closer look at the content of party laws reveals the complex and manifold character of this kind of regulation. At least four dimensions of regulation can be identified: the normative, functional, material and institutional dimensions.¹

The *normative dimension* of party laws refers to the ideal of political parties and their normative role within a political order. Provisions that fall into this kind of category deal with the interrelation between the legitimacy of political parties and that of democratic systems. In a strong interpretation of this interrelation, legal regulations lay the ground for associating political parties with key democratic principles, such as

¹ This four-dimensional scheme is based on the 12-dimensional scheme suggested by Casal-Bértoa, Piccio, & Rashkova, p. 7. For a somewhat different approach cf: Katz 2004.

pluralism, participation, representation, etc. In a liberal turn of this “democratic” interpretation, legal provisions may identify political parties moreover in terms of fundamental democratic rights and liberties, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, etc. However, the legitimacy of such a normative understanding of political parties stirs expectations that themselves can be made subject to legal regulations. What if political parties do not live up to the expectations that are raised by implementing an ideal character of parties by means of legal provisions? The answer leads to the complementary, but somewhat “darker” side of party laws, which can then also entail legal restrictions on - or prohibitions of - certain forms of behavior or party ideology. This kind of interference is typically guided by prescription regarding the respect of human rights, the prohibition of the use of violence, the spreading of hatred, or the use of non-democratic methods by political parties, etc.

The *functional dimension* of party laws concerns the various roles of political parties: (a) the extra-parliamentary (societal) party aggregating interests and articulating demands; (b) the electoral party as a vote and office seeker; (c) the parliamentary party structuring the process of decision-making under the imperative of majority rule in parliament; and (d) the governmental party as the power base for the executive, to set the agenda and enforce its policy program over its period of governance. Regulation can be distinguished according to these different roles (Casal-Bértoa, Piccio and Rashkova 2012, pp. 7-8):

1. Rules dealing with the *extra-parliamentary* party are usually concerned with the internal operational structure of the party. Their regulating scope encompasses, for instance, the elections of party bodies, their accountability, the resolution of party conflict and procedures for nominations to public office;
2. Regulations reflecting references to the party in competition are directed to the role of the *electoral* party. To this set of rules belong, among other provisions,

- campaign regulations, rules for candidate selections, party registration, etc.;
3. Rules guiding the conduct of the party in parliament, the *parliamentary* party, and shaping policy formation, e.g., through the party's participating in parliamentary committees, their staffing, etc.
 4. Regulations dealing with legal references on how the (multi-layered) executive is to be composed by the *governmental party*, by, for instance, prescribing the role of the majority and/or minority leader, etc.

The *material dimension* of party laws deals mainly with the question of resource management. This, of course, concerns first and foremost rules about the allocation, amount and administration of public funding (e.g., electoral campaign expenses) and regulations concerning the limits, transparency, and use of private resources (e.g., provisions limiting private financing) as well as rules of disclosure of funding and expenditures. In addition, in the era of media democracy, media access needs to be regulated by legislation - for instance, the allocation and restriction mechanisms for the use of public and private media during electoral and non-electoral periods.

Finally, modern party regulations often also give an answer to the difficult question of how to control political parties - the *institutional dimension* of party laws. Should this kind of oversight function be delegated to an external institution? And what type of monitoring process is effective and at the same time compatible with the guiding principles of democracy organized and coordinated by political parties? These are the key questions for provisions that, for example, refer to the examination of non-compliance with the purposes and activities of political parties in a given constitution by a constitutional court.

Standardizing party laws

The proliferation of party laws in Europe has initiated the quest for common European standards (Molenaar, 2010). This question was picked up by the European Commission for Democracy through Law by the Council of Europe (Venice Commission) which holds that “... basic tenets of a democratic society, as well as recognized human rights, allow for the development of some common principles applicable to any legal system for the regulation of political parties.”¹ Consequently, the Venice Commission has concerned itself with the purpose of building up legal groundwork that can be used as a guideline for political party regulation. One of the core beliefs guiding the work of the Venice Commission in this policy field is the interrelation between the democratic ideal of political parties and their internal organization. According to this interpretation, the former serves as a normative standard for the latter. Political parties are here no longer primarily seen as voluntary associations; they are still part of civil society - distinguished from the state and its institutions - but they also have to perform as responsible public actors.² They are acknowledged and privileged by the constitution, but at the same time burdened with the duty to meet basic principles of democracy and the rule of law. This interrelation between the different poles within the normative dimension may not determine, but certainly promotes, a protective and defensive understanding of the institutional dimension of party regulations.

The Venice Commission’s interpretation in this matter is emblematic for a reasoning that fueled the “constitutionalization” of party regulations. This process is growing and it easily connects with a broader process of standardization in the European policy realm that has been dubbed in the literature as “Europeanization.” In this light, the policy towards party regulation that has been promoted by the Venice Commission can be read as an Europeanization of the

¹ OSCE/ODIHR & Venice Commission, p. 6. This report was groundwork for the follow-up version published by OSCE/ODIHR in 2011.

² Biezen (2004) speaks of political parties as “public utilities.”

constitutionalization of party regulations (Biezen and Molenaar, 2012; Biezen, 2012). However, the standardization process is only one side of the coin; the other side concerns Europe's impact on the implementation of these European standards at the national level of the various member states. And in this respect another actor in this field of party regulation deserves attention. Over the time, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has shifted its jurisdiction quite substantially from a permissive stance ("immunized democracy") to a more inhibitive stance ("defending democracy"). The "liberal" principle of non-intervention, which was clearly the ECtHR's dominant paradigm in the beginning, is not the guiding principle anymore (Molenaar, 2010). Instead, judicial control has taken up the interrelation between the democratic ideal of political parties and their internal organization. Nowadays, the following reasons are criteria for party prohibition and party dissolution: (a) acts and speeches of leaders imputable to the party as a whole; (b) incompatibility of the party program with a "democratic society."

What kind of conclusions can we draw from the previous section on the content of party laws and from this section on the growing process of constitutionalization and Europeanization? First, the normative dimension has been proven to be a driving force behind these two processes. Second, the recent tendencies seem to try to get the best of both worlds with a somewhat paradoxical result: they maintain a clear and distinct separation between parties and the state by, for instance, underlining that party organization and ideology belong to the sphere of civil society; at the same time, however, they also want to constrain the internal organization of parties - including ideology - and/or the behavior (of the representatives) of parties by means of normative standards derived from the principles of democracy and human rights. Third, this specific normative interpretation seems to promote a more inhibitive stance in terms of the external control of party compliance towards the regulations regime.

A European model?

Back to the beginning: parties do matter - without them there is no organization and coordination of collectively binding decisions. Democracy in modern societies is necessarily complex, and parties have been able to cope with this multi-layered policymaking process and its many-fold political actors. In many ways, party laws reflect this kind of growing complexity by using legal means for mostly procedural and organizational purposes. In this sense, they are useful tools. But they can be more than that: party laws can also contribute to a (self-)understanding that even the center of powerful political actors - the elite of political parties - are actors *under* law. If modern democracies are complex democracies that need political parties, then party politics needs to be embedded in a legal framework that protects the political parties from the potential abuse of power. This assessment certainly does not only hold true for Europe.

However, the ambiguous, if not contradicting elements within the recent trends of constitutionalization and Europeanization of party regulations indicate already themselves that the European success story of party politics can only serve as a starting point for the hardship of institutional engineering in different countries with their different political cultures and their own historical experiences. In this respect, three last words of caution may be appropriate in order to put into perspective this brief sketch of the European institutional framework of party politics:

- First, Giovanni Sartori, former doyen of democratic theory in political science, said once: “democracy on a large scale is not the sum of many little democracies” (Sartori 1965, 124). These words can serve as a reminder that the costs of a (too) strict interrelation between the democratic ideal of political parties and the standards of internal organization may not be balanced by the benefits.

- Second, party laws should match with the incentives and logics not only of the party system in particular, but also of the political system in general. In terms of organization and ideological framing it matters a great deal whether parties provide for a choice of government (governing role) or of policy programs (representative role).
- Third, in the context of divided societies, the striving for internal democratization of political parties tends to empower activists who are often more extreme in their preferences. Yet, as Arend Lijphart (1968) pointed out, one of the recipes to maintaining democracy in a deeply divided society is elite autonomy from their followers.¹

¹ For a more detailed account of Lijphart's understanding of constitutional engineering in divided societies cf: Lijphart (2004).

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Liberalism in the Arab world: Between theory and practice

Mohamed Tamaldou

Can we speak of “liberal experiences in the Arab world” today? In fact, if we exclude the Arab Spring democratic “experience”, the reasons for which are still unknown, as we will see later, no existing independent full Arab liberal experience that is based on fixed principles, established values, and clear programs can be found.

Yes, there were serious but limited political attempts that sought to clarify the features of a new liberal breath in the Arab world, although they still clash with narrow-minded mentalities and deeply rooted wastes of a dictator regime, a traditional educational system, and a conservative societal combination. These are the elements that force themselves into any conversation on liberal “experiences” in the Arab world today, since we can never understand these experiences for what they are unless we look at this background in particular. It is entirely different spiritually, belief-wise, intellectually, socially, and politically from the backgrounds on which the liberal experience in Eastern Europe and Latin America are based.

Based on the aforementioned, the present Arab approach to the issue of experimenting in the field of liberalism and its values can be covered in three main sections. The first section is the liberal confrontation of liberalism. The second is the Arab democratic spring. The third is Arab networking to support liberal trends, and the new Arab liberal breath and its mechanisms.

The strategic confrontation of liberalism

No intellectual ideology or philosophical theory has ever faced the degree of disapproval, exclusion, distortion and hostility faced by liberalism in the Arab world. No single linguistic concept has ever been degraded to be meaningless like the concept of “liberalism in the Arab world.”

“Liberalism” as a deserted term

Out of all the Arabic words and terms referring to known philosophical and political theories, no term was ever transliterated into Arabic like the term “liberalism.” We know the Arabic term for “socialism”, which is a term that has its own denotations, connotations, and psychological and spiritual backgrounds. The same applies to the Arabic term for “communism.” These two terms were embraced and given their own connotations by the Arabic dictionary, and became deeply rooted in the general culture of Arabs, thanks to the conceptual origin of each of the values of “engagement,” “sharing” and “commonality,” which are values that indicate comfort and assurance in any case.

Per contra, “liberalism” remained a “vocable linguistique” that neither carries a concept nor relies on a knowledge-based or emotional background. It still maintains this status of linguistic circulation among Arabs.

This was certainly no coincidence; neither did it result from the inability of the Arabic language to find an Arabic equivalent for liberalism. It is also unlikely to be the result of simple neglect by Arab linguists. When we look deeper into the nature of language, we will find that words are alive and circulated, and just like goods are subject to supply and demand, and boom and stagnation. The more popular and used they are, the more valuable they get. Whenever they are ignored or obscured, they become dead and forgotten, as explained by Darmsteiter in his book, *La Vie Des Mots*.

But if we wanted to find a reason for the absence of an Arabic equivalent for the word “liberalism”, we will find that the Arabic equivalent in particular is what is annoying, since it is a linguistic term that in the Arabic dictionary refers to straining oneself to achieve freedom, which in the modern language is a call for struggle to liberate the self and liberate man. This is a strong concept that directly addresses the Arab human being in his personal capacity, invites him to look inside and to use his abilities to achieve personal freedom.

Undoubtedly, Arab leaders, especially dictators, realized the “danger” of this term and the threat it might pose to their essence and existence. They know how Arab people resisted colonialism to liberate their countries and are aware that these people are still hiding their frustration with incomplete freedom deep inside, because it went down the drain and never included the Arab human being.

This in particular may have been what pushed Arab rulers to distort freedom and consider it one type of stability threatening anarchy, and as a result face it with suppression or what they call “a security approach.” This approach paved the way for “conspiracy theory” by which they rendered the Arab world under constant threat. It is the same approach that justified “the Arab exception” that made the Arab human person unconcerned with democracy and human rights, and thereby allowed for the “leader of necessity”, or “necessary ruler”, who is indispensable and without whom things cannot go well.

Surrounding the term of liberalism with ambiguity and setting the term aside from the Arabic language was the first element of the strategy to face the liberal trend in the Arab world.

Demonizing liberalism and accusing liberals of being infidels

The second element was carried out by men of religion demonizing liberalism and accusing liberals of being infidels. To achieve that purpose, they followed two paths. The first path was to

strip liberalism of its established values by either “establishing the origin” of these values - i.e., look into their origins, or what is similar to their origins in religious heritage or Arab thinking, and eliminate the link to liberalism as Western thinking - or by reintegrating it into Arab thinking and finding justifications for this reintegration from culture, history, and Arab civilization. These two strategies have an unspoken purpose of fragmenting liberal values and separating them from the liberal system of thinking.

The second path is the stigma of “Westernization” - i.e., linking the values, whose origins could not be established or reintegrated, to a non-Arab environment (a Western environment to be exact). This does not only mean that they were inappropriate, but also contradictory with the system of “acceptable” values. It goes even further to the extent that the advocates of liberal values, or of a vision other than the vision allowed, are accused of infidelism or atheism with regards to originated or reintegrated values.

With this model of thinking and analysis, they considered secularism to be infidelism, freedom in general to be recklessness, and women’s freedom to be libertinism.

Liberalism and obscenity

Arab society is a conservative society. In addition to its deep-rooted conservativeness, it is very keen on protecting “family honor in general” and that of women in particular. The obscenity with which conservatives accuse liberal trends is enough reason to fight it and be hostile to those who advocate it. This attitude is deeply rooted in conscience and can never be rectified except by an ongoing, deep, communicative, educational and intellectual effort.

For those conservatives, obscenity accusations are not exclusive to honor, but also extend to livelihoods. They consider attempting to make profit and working hard to make a fortune shameful. They used the term “turning brutal” in the general sense to describe the capitalist and liberal economic system,

despite the unfairness of this term that denies any connection between liberalism and fighting poverty and between liberalism and social justice as perceived by liberals. This feeling is a barrier that still exists in the face of a successful Arab liberal experience.

To sum up, dismantling this confrontation strategy led by conservatives, socialists and extremist Islamists requires a corresponding strategy to correct the view of concepts related to liberal ideology, and to remove the fallacies spread around it. This can never be achieved but by an Arab movement that is set up to explain and simplify liberal concepts, and open room for discussion around them.

Can the “Arab Democratic Spring” be considered a liberal experience?

Was the Arab Spring an introduction to a serious Arab liberal experience, given that it has directly contributed to helping the Arab people lay the foundations for building a society that is based on the values of freedom, dignity, and the state of law, leading to it having these values?

Many think that the incident of Mohamed Bouazizi setting himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid was the direct reason for what was then called “the Jasmine Revolution” in Tunisia. But many more think that that the Jasmine Revolution reached the rest of the Arab world because it was infected - rather than influenced - by “herd behavior.” All these ignored an economic phenomenon known as “effets pervers” (adverse effects), for which something similar can be found in the social domain. Like several human communities, Arab communities experienced great development, if not a huge revolution, in the family structure. In the beginning, this development constituted the first sign of transition in the nature of Arab life and knowing the value of enjoying life.

Demographic transition was the core of the democratic culture and first seed in the Arab community

The size of families in Arab communities has gradually decreased from 10 members per family in the 1970s to less than five members at the beginning of the present century. No one knew that this reduction in the number of Arab family members would turn the prevailing system of family values upside down.

The higher voice in bigger Arab families was that of the father; the final wish was his, and the final word his. The mother and her children were mere followers to the dominating father. Girls were less fortunate and less favored than the rest of the children. No one would have ever thought that reducing the number of children to three, for example, would allow these children to express their opinion with complete freedom, “boldly” impose their choices, and restore the status of their mother who has started to mediate on their behalf to ease up their father’s positions and bring them closer. This reduction has even given girls opportunity that allowed for their equality and for listening to their opinions.

This demographic transition was the first seed and core of democratic culture, especially that it has allowed limited-income Arab families to gain access to better education and to become increasingly aware of the value of the person *per se*, before they acquire this value from the tribe or social body they belong to.

Democratic and communicative transition: An unprecedented organizing mechanism in the Arab world

The Arab world may be one of those regions where it was hard to establish the principle of freedom, and therefore achieve political and intellectual plurality. The absence of partisan structures may have influenced the ability of citizens to formulate common or different visions to build the society they wish to live in. Since

freedom is like a flood of water that can be stopped by no barrier, Arab citizens found “compensating spaces” and an “alternative arena” in digital communication and social networks to exercise their freedom of opinion and communication and to establish their natural role as a source of power.

The Arab youth’s passion for this mechanism has exceeded all boundaries. A national agency that is concerned with communications in the Kingdom of Morocco published that 47 percent of the children of Morocco under the age of 12 years use the Internet, and that 88 percent of them are interested in social networks. This raises questions about the force that can stop this liberal and communicative tide that is coming towards the Arab world through this digital, knowledge and organizational transition that is forming. Computers and smart phones contribute strongly today to establishing several democratic and liberal values in an indirect manner in the Arab world, and even in its regions and countries that seem more remote and isolated from the world and Western civilization.

It is true that this mechanism is also used to disseminate extremism, terrorism and dark ideas. Nevertheless, this is not caused by the nature of the mechanism as much as it is caused by the circumstances surrounding the user of this mechanism. The Arab Democratic Spring experience has taught us that we have not read the surrounding circumstances well, have not asked the right questions at the right time, and have not reached a consensus on appropriate solutions.

The Arab Democratic Spring experience has revealed structural disorders in Arab society

In his analysis of the status of Arab society during the Abbasid era, Al-Noweihy says a group of people were plagued at the time with poverty, emptiness and frustration, and therefore resorted to religion and abstention. Abu Al-Atahiya was a

representative of this group. Another group had money, emptiness and frustration, and therefore resorted to dissipation and indulgence in the pleasures of life. Abu Nawas was a representative and a symbol for this group.

The Arab world has not changed since the Abbasid era, but the proven common elements between the Abbasid dynasty and the present time are emptiness and frustration. Arab citizens have always run to either religion or the pleasures of life. Until today, Arab citizens still maintain the same reaction of escape, but to extremist forms of religious that have reached the point of specialization in terrorism, and extremist forms of addiction to drugs or whatever similar.

The question remains: An escape from what? Is it an escape from reality? Or escape from a situation? Or escape from a situation that an Arab person thinks he is imprisoned in; a situation that makes him a being that has no freedom or power because he bears no responsibility, and has no dignity because he has no rights?

What happened in Tunisia, Egypt and other Arab countries after the Arab Democratic Spring was caused by this phenomenon that has almost turned into a feature of the Arab world. This feature is a structural disorder in a socio-economic situation that is not consistent with the intellectual development of citizens. In a religious and educational system that has never managed to transition from the “transmission” approach of instruction to the mental approach, and with the rulers’ perception of the Arab person to be less than the “original value” that produces the rest of the added values, a man like Mohamed Bouazizi with the youth of Tahrir Square made it very clear.

Moreover, the difficulties that emerged after the Arab Democratic Spring obstructed laying the foundations of the reform and change everybody believes is inevitable. These difficulties resulted from an existing disorder in the value system where every party believes itself - or himself - to be the best to

introduce this reform. Clearly, there was disagreement between a system of conservative values and a system of modern values.

There is no consensus on the minimum level of the shared values on which reform and change can be founded in Arab society. I believe that unless agreement is reached on the minimum level of shared values, reform will remain postponed for good, and the Arab Democratic Spring will remain flowerless.

To conclude, the Arab Democratic Spring experience may not be a liberal experience when it comes to the application of liberal values. But it was certainly a liberal experience in the germination sense of these values. Therefore, this experience is far more important than other experiences, especially if we take into account the significance of the role Arab women played in this experience and the status given to youth from a security perspective on the one hand, and the value given to the individual and freedom on the other.

It is true that some of the Arab world's regions have seen liberal movements that were sometimes public, secret, organized, or spontaneous at other times. For the reasons I have explained before, the Arab world has not yet experienced the deep representation of liberalism to enable it to produce its own experiences that are filled with the ideologies, civilization and history of the region. Although this representation may differ in terms of origins and elements from the ideology, civilization and history produced by man in other regions, it complements it in certain aspects, elaborates it in other aspects, and contradicts it in still others. This is why building bridges between patterns of thinking and experiences in Europe and the Arab world is important.

In this particular regard, we can refer to an Arab liberal experience that has contributed to establishing and disseminating liberal values - namely creating a network for Arab liberals.

Is the network of Arab liberals timely or premature?

In May 2003, Liberal International held its first meeting in an Arab country. Casablanca hosted the first meeting of the organization's Executive Committee amidst an Arab-Western clash over the Iraq crisis. The first open discussion between Western and Arab liberals on a liberal vision of issues of the Arab region took place in this meeting.

In October 2003, the international conference of Liberal International was held in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, to discuss a paper on "Islam and liberalism." Also in this conference the accession of two parties from Morocco - the Constitutional Union and the Popular Movement - was approved. In 2005, in a meeting in Bulgaria, Liberal International approved holding its 45th conference in Marrakesh for 2006. The interest of Western liberals in Arab issues was translated into this acceleration of events. In fact, the first Gulf War of 1990 was a severe shock to the foundations of the prevailing perception of what was happening - and what was expected to happen - in the Arab world. Moroccan futurist Mahdi Elmandjra wrote at the time that the future of the Arab world had no more than three possible paths. It could either continue in the same status, which was a very weak possibility; become involved in a willful and quick reform approach that included areas of freedom, democracy and development, which was a very hard possibility with limited potential of success; or experience a wave of radical change, which was the possibility favored by Elmandjra at the time, and that he expected to take place in the beginning of the 21st century.

This shows the degree of awareness of the Arab world that Arab researchers had begun to reach, and the degree of interest in the Arab and Muslim world that the international liberal family had begun to express, from the beginning of the 21st century. This interest has increased in its awareness of the Arab

position and forced it to find mechanisms to enhance and disseminate liberal values.

Creating the Network of Arab Liberals (the Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy presently) in the beginning seemed like a reckless idea. How could a network be created from scratch? The Arab world does not know political plurality except in rare parts of it. If we excluded five or six countries, no trace would be seen of any system of political parties. The Cold War created single party-based dictatorships, while the tendency of Gulf communities is to prefer order in the form of tribal and religious patterns instead of order according to a partisan system. Despite all this, a bold project was started in an anti-liberal/liberalism environment, as we have seen. The creation of this network and the applied methodology resulted in a group of key findings.

First finding: Conviction and job loyalty

In a political context similar to the one that was prevailing before the Arab Democratic Spring, it was not easy to differentiate between a convinced liberal and a disguised non-liberal. The newborn network was at a high potential risk of collapse because of those who were assigned by their regimes to embrace liberalism and report to the intelligence bodies of their countries. Having these individuals around was enough to drive away liberals who are convinced of their tasks, or to impose further restrictions upon them in one way or another.

This fear continued to haunt us until the last stage of foundation. We were extremely relieved when we finally managed to bring in parties from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Algeria, and associations and individuals from Jordan and Palestine. This crew, with their backgrounds and the environment provided by the two sponsoring organizations of Liberal International and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, is qualified to make the foundation stage a success out of the firm

belief that freedom, dignity and democracy are the founding values for an Arab community that is coexistent with itself and open to the world.

Second finding: Dialogue does not eliminate difference, but allows for consensus

The Ain El-Sokhna session in Cairo, where the founders had to draft a declaration of principles, constituted the first test for parties to manage differences and deal with the opinions of others. This session produced findings that were not known to all, and the proposed title of the new organization was the first obstacle to consensus: the “Network of Arab Liberals.”

As some may have noticed, the word “network” does not carry a positive connotation in Arabic usage. In Arabic mentality, the term “network” is more linked to smuggling and crime than it is to interaction, cooperation and communication. Although the negative concepts circulated about liberalism in the Arab world have been brought back to debate, with liberal and liberalism becoming acceptable and used, the major difficulty emerged when the word “Arab” in the title was objected to. The reason behind opposition to the word was that Arab countries are not only inhabited by Arabs; there are also Amazigh and other races that are not of Arab origin. As a result of this opposition, the following phrase was mentioned in the document: “those who belong to Arab countries” in addition to Arabs.

There was disagreement on some concepts such as “the civil state,” “secularism,” “citizenship,” and other concepts. Although we managed to find a way to explain them in that session, they still need analysis, elaboration and deep explanation, especially that the connotations of these concepts in Western countries cannot be automatically copied.

Third finding: A crisis of understanding

The Network of Arab Liberals staged several international and regional events to analyze the different Arab situations. Furthermore, it held several meetings with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe on the issue of immigration, where it presented two documents, the first in the European Parliament in Brussels and the second was in the Moroccan Parliament in Rabat. This dialogue between liberals from Europe and Arab countries signified the beginning of efforts towards “bridging the gap” and laying the foundations for a common understanding of common social phenomena. We called for building a comprehensive liberal vision for immigration, for example - a phenomenon that is of prime concern to liberals - and we will continue to do so.

It is also true that the Network of Arab Liberals held regional meetings across the Maghreb to build a unified liberal vision on religion and politics, in order to bridge internal gaps in dealing with common realities.

However, the true gap has always remained the difference between those who embrace liberalism, the true basic values of this noble ideology, and the baseline of this ideology in the Arab experience. We sensed from the very beginning the need to work on concepts, on the one hand, and on practices, on the other. The Friedrich Naumann Foundation has once again taken it upon itself to publish a group of books and to hold several training courses to hone experiences and skills in areas of communication and electoral campaigns, training youth, mobilizing women, and so on.

Fourth finding: A lesson in the value of trust

This finding is about what was concluded by the leadership of the Network of Arab Liberals that was invited to visit Germany by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. The itinerary

comprised of several activities, including a meeting with Free Democratic Party (FDP) officials, a visit to a voting station given that it was in elections time, and then attending the results announcement ceremony. What the Arab delegation remembers the most are probably the moments we spent in the voting station - where it was mostly quiet. There were only three or four staffers attending to their business while voters came in, did their duty, and acted quietly. We inquired about the number of voters in the station and the number of ballot papers, and were told that the number of ballots is exactly equivalent to the number of voters. We continued to ask questions about mistakes in the counting, the taking of ballot papers, or anything else, and the answers were always: impossible! We realized there was a consensus on respect for regulation. It constituted a behavioral system that did not tolerate the possibility of deliberate mistakes or electoral maneuvers.

When we asked the reason why candidate representatives were not monitoring the process, the answer was there is no point to their presence, because each one does their duty and respects the laws and regulations. While voters were leaving the voting station, two young men were asking them whom they voted for, and gathered information for a survey agency. We wondered to what extent the statements voters made were reliable. In the evening, when everyone gathered in the room to hear the results, preliminary results were issued by the survey agency. The difference between these results and the official results was minimal.

At this point, we realized that the democratic process was far more significant than merely an electoral campaign, vote counting, competition between programs, or a ballot box. It was about trust more than anything else.

Features of the new Arab liberal breath

Can we really speak of the precursors of the birth of a “new Arab liberal breath,” the initial components of which are determined, as we said before, by demographic transformation and digital communicative transition? Can we consider the experiences of Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia in the field of establishing liberal values a serious start for a liberal experience in the Arab world?

Morocco was one of the first countries to try the rotation of power system in 1997. It is true that there was a reconciliatory rotation that produced a government led by a socialist and in which a liberal party, namely the Popular Movement, took part. However, it soon turned into a democratic rotation that is based on a democratic methodology that, as per the constitution, requires that the head of the government come from a party that has a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. This methodology produced a government that was led by an Islamist party after 25 November 2011 and in which two liberal parties, the National Rally of Independents (NRI) and the Popular Movement, in addition to a communist party, the Party of Progress and Socialism, participated. The experience also produced an opposition that is made of conservatives and socialists, in addition to a liberal party, the Constitutional Union.

Many observers believe that the Moroccan model is a case that needs study and analysis. This model raises the following questions. If the Moroccan Justice and Development Party claims to be a liberal party, but at the same time does not hide its ties to political Islam through the Arab and Muslim world, to what extent can the claims of this party be considered true and to what extent can it deal with the principle of individual freedoms and rule of law, while prioritizing the principle of citizenship like other liberals?

Experience has proven so far that its positions are very murky, and has shown the clear contradiction between open claims and conviction. Within this trend, roles are distributed

between an extremist preaching branch, and a political branch that uses a discourse of flexibility and tolerance. Hence, we wonder if the same applies to the rest of the political Islamic movements. The murkiness surrounding the answer given by Islamists to this question is what raises heavy suspicions about what Islamists intend from using democracy, freedom, and human rights, as internationally recognized.

The second question is about the reason why many liberal parties in one country failed to form a political force that is capable of facing other blocs.

The participation of the Popular Movement and NRI in all the former governments in Morocco could not produce a liberal policy, liberal positions, or special liberal measures that Moroccan citizens can understand and therefore make an evaluation of. This was what pushed the Constitutional Union to make several calls on the two Moroccan liberal parties to form a unified liberal front. It has gone even further by signing a document for an alliance with the NRI in 2011, which led to forming a joint parliamentary team despite the difference in positions of the two parties. The NRI was in the government while the Constitutional Union was in the opposition. This experience attracted significant interest and could have produced a balanced liberal movement, were it not for premature elections imposed by the circumstances of the Arab Spring.

The extent of knowledge of liberal parties in Morocco is no different from that of liberal parties in Egypt, for example, for they also lack a unified strategy to help them develop common visions and unified positions, and therefore present clear features to citizens on the value of liberalism in the daily management of public affairs and attending to citizen issues. The Arab world is currently looking for the ideal development model. There is the conservative Islamist model with its clear features, and there was the socialist model that was tried by Arab countries. The liberal model is the only model that has not been tried clearly yet. I may or may not be wrong to say that this model is being circumvented by some attempts to dissolve it into what is known as “social democracy”, liberal Islam, or new conservatives.

To end, now that the Arab world is prepared for the mechanisms of freedom and exercising it, which it was not prepared for before, can Arab youth look for a new liberal breath that brings Arab citizens back to the heart of human developments once more? This belonging can never be achieved except when a basic level of natural rights is recognized, such as the right to life, the right to freedom, and the right to ownership of all types, which is derived from the ownership of Arab citizens of themselves, their minds, and whatever property that results from them.

With that we could look to a new Arab liberal breath, as foreshadowed by the Arab Democratic Spring.

Winning consent is winning the future

Tamara van Ark &
Jock Geselschap

Someday, the realm of liberty and justice will encompass the planet. Freedom is not just the birthright of the few; it is the God-given right of all His children, in every country. It won't come by conquest. It will come, because freedom is right and freedom works. It will come, because cooperation and good will among free people will carry the day.¹

Coalitions are the best instrument for fruitful cooperation. If we want to accomplish our goals, the way forward is to include our adversaries, as democracy is more than “50 plus one.” In this piece, we will travel through North Africa, The Netherlands and Georgia to provide examples and to underline the importance of cooperation and inclusiveness. This is not a random selection; these are the countries where VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) has first-hand experience in facilitating change.

Taking a step back from day to day affairs we see transformations in the Arab world, gridlock in the US political system, growing concerns over migration and European integration, and increasing nationalism in the Far East mobilizes

¹ Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States.

voters to express their dissatisfaction. As fragmented, polarized societies are increasingly voicing their disapproval, politicians try to accommodate these difficult demands; easy, populist solutions often exacerbate issues. More sustainable tools, such as consensus building and incremental reforms, take too much time for a *vox populi* that is adrift and wants swift and mediagenic solutions. Thus far, politics has struggled to provide an answer, often acting as a spoiler for consensus and cooperation, as it is easier to accuse and blame than to construct. The question is: how to deal with voters' concerns? How can we make sure that we achieve our goals in fragmented political landscapes? Often politicians try to placate the population by providing populist promises and by creating the image of the *other* that harms the common good, promises on which they oft cannot deliver, thus harming the standing of politics in general, and political parties in particular.

Politicians can show that working together is the difficult, but the only and the best way. Perhaps the biggest contribution we can offer to define our liberal politics and represent our constituents is that inclusive politics will protect minority rights, increase stability and thus stabilize investor expectations, which will eventually contribute to more economic growth. This is the unique liberal story that needs to be told.

Looking at Libya, we find a fragmented nation where the people don't believe political parties will cater to their needs, where militants are usurping power and a central authority is shaky at best. Uncertainty is palpable in every area of society. Decentralization seems to be the answer for Libya, but without a consensus on a national level, infighting will continue. Libya seems to be the key to the Maghreb: from Libya the entire region is being destabilized. A lack of cooperation transcends the national dimension as it festers regionally, disturbing security in Egypt, endangering the democratic transition in Tunisia. We see the parliamentary gridlock in Lebanon causing the electorate to lose trust in politics, increasingly relying on non-state actors such as Hezbollah to provide welfare and

(social) security. In Egypt, we see a polarization of society that makes any cooperation impossible. If politics doesn't take charge, people will turn somewhere else for a solution - a solution that may very well be Islam, which could create a (perceived) dichotomy in societies between secularists and Islamists. We do not, it should be stressed, state that liberalism and Islam are incompatible. Liberalism is not anti-Islam; it is impartial about religion. However, we do register a widening gap in Arab societies between those who are perceived as Islamists and those who are not. As the brutality of ISIS (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) shakes the world and lashes the peoples in the Levant, the ideological divide in the Arab world is reinforced. We must address this polarization to protect our societies; as we are caught in the maelstrom of turmoil, we fear being dragged into a new world of uncertainty and insecurity. We must address these matters urgently. John F. Kennedy's rhetorical question arises in this hour of need: If not us, who? If not now, when?

Troubling electoral splits are mirrored by United States politics. The US electorate is becoming more and more disenfranchised, as voters do not recognize themselves anymore in their parties. A sign that this is a lose-lose situation is reflected in the historically low approval ratings for Congress. Less than 15 per cent has faith in Congress, as it fails to deliver on basic agreements, having already caused the government to shut down over relatively arbitrary differences. Politicians need to counter this development that rewards populism, punishes cooperation and ultimately encourages dissent and polarization. Although there are just two political parties in the US, compromising on a new state budget seems impossible. We need successful examples of cooperation and coalitions to win back the electorate and earn their trust. We can achieve this by making realistic (com)promises. As we¹ pressed: "We only make promises to our voters we can finance." And we

¹ Quote by deputy group leader of VVD and vice-president of Liberal International, Tamara van Ark, at the European Liberal Forum (ELF) Seminar in Cairo, 22 May 2014.

can only finance our promises if we agree on budgets. By way of an example, we will turn to The Netherlands where without a shared mission to combat our eternal foe - water - the Dutch Delta Works (a very expensive project) would not exist today; and nor would Dutch expertise in water management.

Below follow three examples that underline the importance of cooperation, inclusivity and coalitions to further one's agenda and implement political goals.

The Dutch consensus model

The Netherlands is famously a nation that has struggled to gain land from the sea. As the travel guide Lonely Planet puts it, "God created the world and the Dutch created The Netherlands." Napoleon's strategy to conquer was; "march divided, fight united". Our fight against water is a particularly good example of a cause where we must stand united. We choose to be independent as we are stronger as a society composed of responsible, individual citizens. However, there are days where we must sacrifice our independence to aim for the greater good - unite to overcome threats to the entire society. "Lose a fight in order to win the battle," to stay within the parlance of great military strategists. The Netherlands has benefited from its cathartic struggle against water, particularly after a tragic flooding of The Netherlands in 1953. Immediately after this disaster, the Dutch started working on the Delta Works, a dam project created to protect The Netherlands for once and for all from uncontrolled water. To attain this, the Dutch needed to work together, to succeed together. In contemporary politics, this tendency to cooperate - rather than confront - is reflected by the current coalition between the liberal, center-right VVD and the leftwing social democrats, where many new laws have been enacted in the past couple of years by exchanging policy priorities, rather than obstructing. Quid pro quo politics gives both parties something they want. Victories both can claim, showing the electorate that governments can work.

While The Netherlands needed dams to keep the water out, Egyptians needed to cooperate to make sure the Nile was bridled. This “Delta Works” of its own, the Aswan Dam, shows a willingness to work together. The recent plans to expand the Suez Canal could be perceived to be as much about jobs and economic growth as it is about unifying the country behind a prestigious national project. But we can find also traces of such cohabitation in ancient Egypt’s roots. Hatsheput’s ascent to power - her transition from queen to pharaoh - was, in part, successful because she was able to recruit influential partners from the *ancient regime*. Egypt prospered under Hatsheput’s regime because she chose economic progress and investment over conflict, not allowing herself to be distracted by conquering new lands.

Luctor et emergo

Building the Delta Works, the dikes, was only possible by a joint effort; it shows willingness to compromise. As we would like to put forward: “if I’m (or VVD is) not willing to compromise; I get nothing.”¹ Without compromise the Dutch would have lost the struggle to the sea. It is not without reason that *luctor et emergo* is a common Dutch proverb, adopted as its creed by Zeeland, the province where the 1953 flooding took place. “I struggle, but I will prevail.” This quote delineates the hardship to overcome challenges, be it water, the absence of water, frightening neighbors or political adversaries. While building dikes demands cooperation, Hatsheput’s example shows the necessity of inclusivity; as a transformation cannot be successfully completed when the *ancien regime* is excluded from power. A more recent example of a lack of inclusivity that causes unforeseen trouble is the dissolution of the entire Baath regime that preceded the collapse of the Iraqi state. When we wish to proceed on the escalator of reason, we have to leave the fear of the *other* behind, and we will realize that the only way

¹ *Ibid.*

forward is to cooperate, to overcome ancient tribal divisions. In an ever-closer world, interdependency forces us to work together, converge and compromise, or it will leave us the orphans of globalization.

The construct of the dangerous *other* is often reserved for Islamists. Koert the Beuf tweeted: “The biggest problem of Arab liberals - they see themselves solely as opposites to Islamists, [they] miss out on [an] own program ... ” We must try to persevere and cling to our agendas, up on the escalator of reason. We need not construct *the other* solely as opponents, as it will divide rather than unite our societies. Here the future of the Internet and social media can play a deciding role: Do we balkanize the Internet or do we allow ourselves to use emancipating tools such as Twitter and Facebook to build a public sphere? Social media is crucial to provide society with both a voice and a platform for debate; it can allow us to discuss rather than to entrench. We should use the public sphere to engage in discussions, and we should harness this instrument that is vital for any functioning democracy. Social media has changed the political landscape in an irreversible way, allowing political activists in emerging democracies to express themselves and change the status quo as never before. This new public sphere, this digital civil society, cannot, and will not, be suppressed.

A third example of productive politics by using compromise as a tool is provided by Fareed Zakaria¹, who noted earlier this year that:

Last month ... Tunisia’s Rachid Ghannouchi explained why his party, the Islamist party, willingly stepped down from government last year in Tunisia. “We had two choices,” he said. “Either we stay in power and we lose democracy ... or we gain democracy and give up power.” He chose the latter. It was a selfless choice, but

¹ Influential journalist for CNN and TIME, and author of *The Post-American World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

also a savvy one. It wouldn't be surprising if he and his party are back in power later this year.

The Tunisian model is not flawless, but it has powerful lessons for the rest of the Arab world. This is a country that has learned the most difficult lesson of democracy: how to be inclusive and how to compromise. It has learned this lesson without the West, without aid money, without compromising on its religious ideas ...

Zakaria believes that this kind of local leadership is "key in the Arab world." He stressed that such sacrifice will probably be rewarded. This example also distinguishes between areas where compromise is possible and where it is not. To achieve something, finding areas where compromises can be made is paramount, as dogmatic discussions lead nowhere. In the current Dutch coalition the liberals of VVD were able to secure cherished policy goals, while the social democrats also got what they wanted.

Winner takes all

The example from Tunisia shows that democracy is more than "winner takes all." If we do not acknowledge the other when we are on a high, we should prepare for bad weather when we are on a low. Although we may disagree on many topics, we owe it to our constituencies, our democratic way-givers, to find consensus to advance the common good. Because national wellbeing transcends party politics, we will be punished by our populations if we do not deliver. Representing the people is more than defeating the opponent; democracy is more than winning elections; it is about providing a cohesive, comprehensive, feasible program on which we will be judged by our constituents. Liberals protect the individual, not the majority. This foundation of liberalism prevents us from imposing majoritarian rule. It helps to factor in all interests. We will now turn to Georgia where we will see that winning elections is just

a small step, and that if we lose sight of the bigger picture, this may have far-reaching consequences.

Georgia: A country under duress

In 1992, Georgia became independent after the Soviet Union had collapsed. During the ten years following its independence, the country experienced a civil war and lost its agricultural edge as it went from exporting to importing agricultural products - consequentially becoming an economic backwater. After a revolution in 2004, the Western educated Michael Saakasjvili deposed President Shevernadze, a remnant of the fading Soviet past. Between 2004 and 2008, Saakasjvili reformed and liberalized the country, attracting new sources of FDI, and putting Georgia on the international map. Saakasjvili presented a cohesive program with well-delineated goals. He realized that rule of law, reform of the police, and the unilateral adoption of World Trade Organization rules were the only way to create a stable investment climate for entrepreneurs. Under Saakasjvili's guidance, the country climbed from rank 124 (out of 133 countries) to rank 49 on the transparency index in nine years, a remarkable ascent, marked by placing 8th on the "Doing Business Index" of the World Bank. After the 2004 revolution, Saakasjvili had a lot of political credit. He used this political capital to successfully drive through an entire new program to reform Georgia.

With a divided, not to say absent, opposition, Saakasjvili developed authoritarian tendencies over the years, driving Georgia in a dangerous direction. He antagonized Putin, ridiculing his powerful neighbor by calling him "LiliPutin." Something he would soon regret. As war with Russia broke out in the summer of 2008, the Georgian leadership had clearly lost touch with its main adversary, failing to placate its breakaway regions and losing touch with both geopolitical realities and society as a whole. Corruption resurfaced and torture (of political enemies) re-erupted. Saakasjvili's presidency never fully recovered.

Building bridges

In 2014, a broad coalition of political parties joined forces, defeating the weakened Saakashvili in elections, thus marking the first democratic transition in the history of the Caucasus. The Georgian example should teach us three lessons. First, after a revolution it is possible to achieve much, thanks to a lot of political capital. Second, when we do not create sufficient checks and balances, a new authoritarian ruler can arise. Thirdly, only an inclusive pluriform political party system that is able to form coalitions can defend the greater good, and is able to implement those much needed checks and balances. Over the past decade, Georgia has become an important ally of NATO, fighting in Iraq, providing an important hub for troops to Afghanistan, cooperating closely with neighboring country Azerbaijan. Together they could provide a new Silk Road - a corridor for the West that runs from Europe to Central Asia without being interrupted by the adverse entities of Russia and Iran. Regional cooperation is the only way to deal with new threats and challenges that are increasingly supranational. This counts both for the Caucasus and the Middle East, as both regions deal with frozen conflicts that prevent economic progress and cooperation.

Not only has Georgia become a force for good in the region, acting as a bridge between East and West (where Kipling's twain do meet). Their reforms often also provide new insights for other nations. As Georgia is a country that is governed through coalitions, VVD often shares experiences about the wheeling and dealing of coalitions. A recent eye-opener was our partner's surprise about the way coalitions are forged in The Netherlands. In Georgia coalitions are proclaimed prior to the elections, as they find this more honest to their electorate, whereas in The Netherlands, we only do this after the elections. Georgian liberals perceived this as deceiving the voter. An interesting, fruitful discussion ensued. These exchanges take our cooperation to a next level and elevate both our appreciation of and insights into the political process, while providing new perspectives.

Inclusive politics: A driver for growth

The Georgian example shows that transparency and rule of law are vital for economic growth to take place. Hatsheput's case shows us the importance of inclusivity in times of transformation. However, there is another feature of Arab societies where exclusion hampers progress. This has to do with the exclusive economic character of many Arab countries. Yusuf Mansour writes that, " ... Arab regimes relied on pleasing a minority of elites that had become used to extracting the fruits of any economic benefit." Formal and informal institutions cause exclusionary practices and support elites that extract the wealth of the nation, thus preventing the majority from reaping the fruits of their labor. He adds that, "The reason that Arab economies have failed so far is due to the existence of exclusive and extractive institutions." This exclusive behavior cannot persist as it corrupts societies, enhances inequality and inhibits economic growth - growth that is needed to provide jobs for the next generation. The very generation that first started the revolution and remains largely outside the new power sharing system, it bears repeating, is the generation that represents 60 percent of the population. This exclusivity is not tenable - neither in politics, nor in economics. The emergence of a middle class is crucial for both economic growth and democratic progress. An educated middle class renders societies less fragile, as their survival depends on stability and just government. People that have something to lose are more willing to compromise in order to achieve a consensus that will protect their interests; subsequently they will be more likely to accept coalitions over a whimsical strongman.

The Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AAFD) shows that coalitions can transcend national issues. Coalitions can prove beneficial in supporting regional integration. Sixty-seven percent of Arabs think intra-Arab cooperation is too little, while three quarters support lifting travel bans. Economic and democratic integration go hand in hand as economic growth fosters middle classes. A growing middle class renders the

political system more robust. As the economic pie grows, thanks to cross-border regional trade made possible by small and medium enterprises, the middle class will eventually demand their share. Regional, bilateral trade will only transcend borders when trustworthy, open, and accountable regimes exist. James Madison noted that,

Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government, which impartially secures to every man, whatever is his own.

Property rights, the curbing of corruption and cessation of nepotistic practices are the prerequisite for emerging middle classes. The only way forward is democratization of the extractive power-sharing agreement. Liberals can play a decisive role in accommodating these wishes, as this is the area where liberal agendas and Arab demands meet. To become more effective we need to listen to the Arab voice, as noted previously; we should turn to available information that may not always be in the desired place, but can prove to be very helpful. This counts regionally, nationally and locally, as Wael Nawarra noted: “Cooperation and dialogue at the grassroots level in addition to the central level may be necessary to avoid fights fueled by candidates.”

“We must not forget that liberalism is much wider than liberal parties,” writes Nawarra. We need to listen to those voices. If we respect those voices we need to transcend our differences and unite the liberal voice - cooperate and, above all, build coalitions. When on the offense, we need coalitions to represent all interests of society; when on the defense, we need coalitions to be able to raise our voices and say: “We will never be silenced again!”

The relevance of cross-border political cooperation: A view from Liberal International

Emil Kirjas

“We live in the times of globalization. This is a globalized world! Modernity is characterized by the digital era. Think global, act local!” We hear these statement very often. As liberals, we even repeat them ourselves in our talks, debates and political speeches. However, there is a need to reflect and analyze if we indeed understand the true meaning of these statements, or whether we are able to harness all the potentials that the globalized world offers us as free people, and as political parties that advocate freedom for everyone and for all.

It is very interesting that liberals are reflecting on a conference in the “Mother of the World” - Egypt - on the importance and relevance of cross-border cooperation for domestic politics. Maybe a perfect speaker on that theme at the conference, someone that could have spoken with great passion and experience about it, would have been a representative from the Muslim Brotherhood. It is an ironic statement, but it is truly remarkable how the representatives of the political ideology that is behind the Muslim Brotherhood have understood that borders are irrelevant and that their actions are well rooted in the local politics of every community where they are involved. Criminals, too; they can teach us a lesson on cross-border cooperation, as they operate and cooperate smoothly and efficiently even when across borders that divide enemy entities.

When I was talking to a friend of mine from a country in the Arab world, who is not involved in politics, about my upcoming visit to Cairo and the theme of my reflection at this conference, I was asked a simple question: “If Qataris and Saudis have understood the huge importance of cross-border political cooperation, how come you as liberals are still debating its relevance in domestic politics?” Good question, and at first glance logical. But - and here comes the important “but” - it is logical for those who want to impose their views on the world, their policies, their ideology, their lifestyle and their beliefs on other people in another place or country. That is absolutely not what liberals stand for. Engaging in cross-border political cooperation has a very different meaning for liberals from those who do not believe in democracy. Liberals aim to set the people free, to promote diversity, to make everyone feel comfortable and non-discriminated against in their environment, to ensure people engage in free and direct exchange without intermediaries, to unlock everyone’s potential in accordance to her or his own skills and capacities.

In order to understand best what differentiates liberals from the others, one can refer to an important statement of Mark Rutte, Dutch prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party, spoken at the last Congress of Liberal International in Rotterdam: “We (liberals) are not afraid of the world! We embrace it!” In those words one can find inspiration and look into the possibilities that stand in front of liberals in terms of cross-border cooperation.

Democracy and democratic political parties

Before elaborating on the benefits of cross-border cooperation in domestic politics, it is important to underline that the focus is given on democratic forces. Democrats are more bound to look for political alternatives, successfully

implemented projects, best examples for good governance and how to ultimately provide more freedom to citizens and voters. To the contrary, populists are eager to look for know-how on how to tighten their grip on power and thus to keep the people and all segments of society under firm control.

A functional democracy is based on free competition among political parties, which in an open arena based on equal opportunities contest their visions and policies, offering citizens and voters a variety of choices for governance. True democracies are only those where political parties themselves are democratically structured and organized, set up internally in a way that once in public they would be able to govern democratically to the benefit of citizens in an inclusive and transparent fashion.

Democratic political parties, regardless of ideology, location or size, always seek to make their practices more inclusive and to institutionalize their operations. Therefore, in 2008 the three major political internationals, with a leading role for Liberal International, joined forces with the US based National Democratic Institute (NDI) and other political party foundations to set up the “Minimum Standards for the Democratic Functioning of Political Parties.” I was personally involved in those efforts, which resulted in a manual that brings together the best practices of a range of established and broadly democratic political parties.

All democratic political parties have certain common basic denominators. They all should in their internal and external behavior include: a) respect for human rights; b) respect for legitimate elections as the basis of government; c) respect for electoral processes; d) respect for other parties and free competition; e) commitment to non-violence; f) communication of principles, policy proposals and accomplishments; g) encouraging political participation; and h) governing responsibly.

One might say that this is a good set of orienting guidelines. However, as mentioned before, one needs to set up the parties in

a sustainable democratic fashion, in order to reflect the same kind of democratic behavior within public administration in the form of good governance. The structural elements that every democratic party must embody in its organization include: a) defining and protecting party labels; b) conditions for party membership; c) relations between party units; d) mechanisms for dispute resolution; e) transparent selection of party leaders and candidates; f) adherence to internal rules; g) accountability in party finance; and h) measures to tackle political corruption

The words spoken by the late speaker of the United States Congress Tip O'Neill that "All politics is local" resonate in every corner of the world. In the context of local political life, when functioning properly, political parties help place citizens' local concerns in a national context. Parties have the capacity to create common ground, especially in terms of compromise. Thus, democratic political parties can help societies unite and remain united. Political parties are not perfect, but no other national institution can serve as well to aggregate and represent citizens' interests or impede government by fiat. In over two centuries, there has been no democracy without political parties.

Gains from cross-border cooperation

The power of political parties to mainstream local politics in a national context can be further taken to a boarder regional or international dimension. International cooperation is key to promoting democracy effectively and efficiently. It also conveys a deeper message to new and emerging democracies that while autocracies are inherently isolated and fearful of the outside world, democracies can count on international allies and an active support system.

That is mentioned in most schools of political science. Something that those who are involved in party political work would have heard during training and educational sessions.

It would be good to analyze what a party gains from cross-border cooperation. From working within a political party for over two decades, and from almost as long working within the scope of cross-border party cooperation, I would categorize those gains in the following four categories (without any order or preference):

1. Reinforcing identity (the sense of belonging)

Working with peers from like-minded political forces provides:

- Self-confidence in developing, promoting and executing policies;
- Self-esteem in the capacity to be creative, innovative and effective;
- Energy to persevere in different phases of the party's life, knowing that others are facing similar circumstances, both in victorious times and in times when internal reflection is a priority;
- Endurance in ensuring that long-term strategies are being followed;
- A common/joint fight to achieve similar ultimate goals or objectives;
- Reassurance that the policies advocated and measures undertaken will yield results.

2. Empowering of the party

Very often, sharing best-practices with similar parties can have a key impact on the inner power that the party might need in order to go through difficult times or to make that “final little

push” needed to win majority support of the electorate. That can be based on:

- The glory of sister parties in other countries, or of their leaders, achieved through constant support of the electorate;
- Successes in implementation of policies and projects that, once adjusted, can be replicated in local or national contexts;
- The power of good governance, achieved through enhanced liberties of citizens and markets;
- Strength in terms of size, or support that political peers have achieved in national elections;
- Explicit reference from abroad to a person or party that enjoys sympathy and support among a domestic electorate.

3. Definition of policies (creating vision)

Parties that share the same principles and belong to the same political mainstream can vastly influence each other in the shaping of general political ambitions and setting up adequate policies, for example though:

- Mutual ideological guidance in analyzing whether the policies of a party are in line with the ideological matrix of the party;
- Solution-definition in terms of ability to understand better challenges that are not always of a national character, and that require a coordinated cross-border approach;
- Trendsetting - i.e., the ability to foresee trends and potentials in developments on national and international levels, and to adjust policies accordingly;

- Prioritizing of political themes, in particular once a party has changed its status from being either in office or in opposition;
- Estimation of outcomes based on already implemented policies or projects in other countries;
- Strategizing based on the experience of others, especially in terms of facing similar opponents or competitors in the political arena.

4. Assistance in building structures and organizations

Democratic political parties can learn a lot from each other, despite the different political systems in which they operate. That refers to the implementation of minimum standards for the functioning of political parties, which should never be taken for granted. Elements include:

- Internal organization, which is not limited to the way the party leadership is elected, but is to be seen in the broader context of inner democratic structures set up to ensure that policies are being developed with the active inclusion of all party members;
- Functionality of the structure to answer the specifics of national political systems and to respond to technological advancements and the need for permanent modernization;
- Local organizations and their significance, especially in terms of devolved power based on clear hierarchical structure and ability of local issues to be addressed by local party branches;
- Financing of the party through a wider range of donors and contributors, based on the attractiveness of ideas;

- Campaigning techniques in innovative and inclusive ways;
- Good-practice sharing in project management, resource management and motivating voluntarism within a party;
- Coalition building experiences based on numerical parity of coalition partners and the ideological discrepancies of the same.

The Middle East and its advantages

In the Middle East, cross-border cooperation among political parties seems to be self-evident, especially given the history of the region.

Let us make a quick comparison with other parts of the world:

- Asia is characterized by huge linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, by history that didn't speak about unity but of divides, by two nations standing out in terms of population size that comparatively creates difficulty for equal-parity-partnership;
- Africa has been engulfed in processes of nation building, which is still ongoing, characterized with very poor infrastructure or state capacity, with enormous diversity covered up by the official linguistic similarities reminiscent of the colonial era;
- Europe's history is marred by wars and conflicts that have led twice in the last century the entire world to major disasters, contains tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity, and is still healing after the Cold War divide;
- Latin America shares linguistic similarities, but has massive unpopulated territories and nations that are

bound to find ways to close the social gap that exists in all those societies.

The Middle East stands out in this context. The borders carved out of the collapsed Ottoman Empire were largely demarcated in an arbitrary way to serve the needs of colonial powers, and not so much the characteristics of the populations living in those areas. There are some important religious divides, but at the same time incredible cultural similarity. Nearly the entire region speaks one language. The region seemed as one in the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, when the people of the Middle East chanted with one voice requesting the same things - freedom and democracy - irrespective of the country or religion. Logical expectation would be that the Middle East would be the champion in terms of cross-border cooperation among democratic political parties. Yet the reality is exactly the opposite. Only the populists and religious fundamentalists have fully embarked on working together across borders, and unfortunately as it seems, it has not been to the benefit of the local people.

The role of Liberal International

Why has the message of the people not been taken up by the democrats, and is there something to be done in the Middle East? The question can only be answered by national political elites; there can be no external solution. For liberal parties at least, there can be at least an inspiration. Of course, there is the Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AAFD), formerly known as the Network of Arab Liberals. There is also Liberal International - the family of liberal parties from across the world - that can offer some ideas and guidance to democratic elites in the region. Its very objective is to assist and help liberal parties in cross border cooperation. Liberal International's constitution defines among its aims: "To provide the means of cooperation

and interchange of information between member organizations, and between men and women of all countries who accept these principles.”

Liberal International stands out among the political internationals, and provides a good reference to Arab liberal parties. It is:

- The oldest political family, founded in 1947 - older than the socialist or conservative international party groupings;
- The only political international that remained truly committed to its founding document, the famous “Oxford Manifesto”, often referred to as one of the most important political documents of the 20th century;
- An international federation of parties that is proud of its membership and partnership with over 100 parties in 80 countries. Liberal International does not have a record of shame when it comes its member parties, as for example the Socialist International had in Mubarak’s NDP or Ben Ali’s RCD;
- A truly global organization that does not only have membership from all continents, but its events take place across the world, giving a possibility to all nations to be actively involved;
- Enjoys recognized international status, in particular within the United Nations, where it is the only of the internationals that echoes the voice of its membership at every meeting of the UN Human Rights Council;
- An organization that organizes its congresses as main gatherings for political debates on burning global issues, but also for best practice sharing among its members;
- Strongly connected with developed regional networks in Europe (the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party), Asia (the Council of Asian Liberals and

Democrats), Africa (the African Liberal Network), Latin America (the Liberal Network of Latin America) and MENA region (AAFD).

The membership of Liberal International includes parties from the MENA region, from Morocco (Mouvement Populaire, Union Constitutionnelle and Ressemblement National des Independents), Lebanon (the Future Movement) and Egypt (the Free Egyptians Party).

The principles that unite member parties from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe are: respect for human rights; free and fair elections and multi-party democracy; social justice; tolerance; free market economy; free trade; environmental sustainability; and a strong sense of international solidarity.

In the multi-polar world and multi-cultural world, it is highly important for political elites to learn from each other, just as people do in their private or professional lives. Hence, Liberal International is structured and operates in a way that international/cross-border cooperation works for all. It is not a one-way street where one side benefits while another side has only to offer. Parties send their delegates to Liberal International events to learn from peers and to offer their knowledge. For example, Dutch liberals can share their experiences in the functioning of their liberal democratic system, but also learn from Moroccan liberals on how to address the needs of its growing Moroccan community. And within the region, Lebanese liberals can learn from Tunisian colleagues how to achieve political goals in a complex and hostile political environment, while offer counsel to their friends in Tunisia on how to manage broader coalitions in or outside government.

There are many similar examples that can be given. It is a good time for Arab liberal parties to truly seize the potential offered from their regional and international involvement. Or, to put it in the Dutch prime minister's words, it is a good moment

for Arab liberal leaders to show that they are not afraid of the world and to embrace it fully.

The role of the European Liberal Forum (ELF) in promoting liberalism

Felicita Medved

A political party at the European level is an organization following a political program and composed of national parties and individuals as members and which is represented in several Member States of the European Union (EU). The origins of first transnational European party alliances or federations go back several decades. The first cross-border European political family was created in view of the first European elections that took place in 1979. Three years before, in March 1976, 14 parties from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom as well as the Liberal Group of the European Parliament (EP) and representatives of the International Liberal Youth Organization gathered for the constituent congress in Stuttgart, Germany. European liberals were thus first to establish a transnational party federation that in 2012 voted overwhelmingly to change the name of the party from the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) to the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party.¹

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty confirmed political parties at the European level as important factors for integration within the EU. Their role is currently defined in Article 10 (4) of Title II on Provisions and Democratic Principles of the 1997 Treaty on European Union (Lisbon Treaty): “Political parties at the European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union.” Since July 2004, they have been able to receive annual funding

¹ Cf: the website of the ALDE Party: <http://aldeparty.eu/en/about/history>

from the EP. The rules of funding are laid down by Regulation 2004/2003 adopted by the Council and the EP.¹ This act indicated the funding schemes of political parties at the European level, distinguishing them from political party groups in the EP that are forbidden to perform election campaigns. These became the issues of political parties at the European level with help of national parties.

Since then there has been an academic debate about possibilities to define political parties at the European level - or often called Europarties - in conventional terms of party politics and about the models that could best describe their characteristics and functions, if such a definition is possible. In a short review of theoretical frameworks, Wojciech Gagatsek and Steven Van Hecke have shown that in a national context, a political party can be described and analyzed as relations at three different levels.² The first level is the so-called party in public office, consisting of people elected in national institutions. The second level consists of the party in the central office, while the third level is represented by its extra-parliamentary part (i.e., the party on the ground consisting of individual members). In a party at the European level, the party on the ground is represented by national parties as collective members rather than by individual members. For example, since the beginning of this decade individuals may join the ALDE Party as associate members. This may be seen as an important step towards a fully-fledged European political party. So far however, the ALDE Party still predominantly remains a network of national liberal parties.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regarding their funding, *Official Journal* L 297.

² Gagatsek, W. and Van Hecke, Steven, "Towards Policy-Seeking Europarties? The Development of European Political Foundations," EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2011/58 (Florence: European University Institute, 2011).

Furthermore, if we adopt the model of political parties as vote-, office- and policy-seeking, the question arises to what extent can political parties at the European level be described according to this model. They are certainly vote seeking since they wish to strengthen their role in the EP, but also office-seeking since they wish to be represented in the institutions of the EU. While the perspective of pan-European elections may seem to be far away, as members of the EP are elected from national parties, elections for a portion of seats in the EP may not be totally unlikely. In the 2009 - and especially in the 2014 - EP election campaigns, the largest parties at the European level made substantial effort towards improving their election abilities.

The 2014 EP election was the first in which the political parties at the European level nominated candidates - sometimes referred to by the German term *Spitzenkandidaten* ("top candidates") - for the president of the European Commission. Although the idea that the nomination of a candidate should be decided after taking into account the results of the EP elections has been accepted since 2004, it was now for the first time that parties strongly competed over this post. While this process, according to Gagatsek, can be described more as profile building rather than vote-seeking, transnational party alliances increasingly matter, particularly in office seeking.¹ Indeed, the European People's Party (EPP) remained the largest faction in the new parliament, implying that their top candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker, could assume the presidency, provided he was elected by a qualified majority of the European Council as well as a simple majority in the new EP. This happened and he is scheduled to enter office in November 2014.

Nevertheless, even if "the will of citizens of the Union" has been expressed in 2014 EP election, a functioning party system, as discussed by Luciano Bardi et al., requires a set of structured

¹ Gagatsek, W., *European Political Parties as Campaign Organizations: Toward a Greater Politicisation of the European Parliament Elections* (Brussels: Centre for European Studies, 2009).

relationships between the parties that is based on competition for political office and the means of political competition.¹ This means that political parties must develop a programmatic basis upon which to fuel such competition. Therefore, the changing nature of political parties at the European level also concerns a degree to which they are policy-seeking, thus trying to influence policies and politics of the EU through ideas and values linked to their political ideologies.

Until recently, parties at the European level were lacking resources, both human and material, to enable them to follow EU policy processes more closely. This was mainly the task of political groups in the EP that followed the substance of short- and medium-term developments related to the EP legislative agenda. Political parties focused on long-term programmatic work, primarily formulating electoral manifestos.² These manifestos form a basis for the policy agenda in the EP, but are practically insignificant in elections to the EP, which remain nationally oriented and are often, in a national context, considered “second-grade” elections.

Reasons for the development of political foundations

Naturally, there are some problems of political parties at the European level that are similar to those at the national level. One of these problems is a short-term perspective of politicians at both levels. As discussed by Enrico Calossi at an European Liberal Forum (ELF) conference in 2013, there are two main

¹ European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, *How to Create a Transnational Party System*, study prepared by the Observatory on Political and Representation, by Luciano Bardi, Edoardo Bressanelli, Enrico Calossi, Wojciech Gagatek, Peter Mair and Eugenio Pizzimenti (2010).

² Van Hecke, S., “Do Transnational Party Federations Matter? (... and Why Should We Care?),” *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol 6, No 3 (2010), available at <http://jcer.net/index.php/jcer/article/view/198/231>

reasons for the existence and establishment of political foundations at the national level.¹ With party politics being weaker than in the past, politicians want to be related to the performance of short-term policies, as the benefits of mid- and long-term policies are not seen soon enough. In addition, the importance of ideologies in party politics is decreasing while the role of pragmatic solutions is increasing. National political foundations do not have to think in a short-term perspective but can dedicate themselves to mid- and long- term perspectives.

There are different kinds of national political foundations - or political academies as they are sometimes called - across various countries in the EU. They differ in terms of their status, levels of resources and roles. The most known are well-established German and Dutch political foundations. They are politically related organizations, but nevertheless autonomous, particularly in legal terms. Officials of political parties are often among members of the foundation's board and there is a perception that political parties supervise the activities of these foundations. Their role is focused on providing policy expertise to political parties, on building networks of experts, academics and other social actors, and on supporting activities that encourage citizens to participate in the political process. Another role they can perform is to formulate pragmatic solutions, even if consisting of people of various ideological affiliations.

Some of larger foundations also perform as specific transnational actors facilitating party cooperation in countries in

¹ Calossi, E., "European University Institute: Monitoring European Political Foundations," presentation at the conference "Political Foundations in Europe: Mobilizing the Citizens and Raising political culture," Ljubljana, 9-11 October 2013, organized by the European Liberal Forum with the support of Institut Novum (Slovenia), the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany), the Academy of Liberalism (Estonia), the Democratic Initiative Foundation (the Netherlands), and the Liberal Future Forum (Austria).

transition from authoritarian rule.¹ For example, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom aims to promote the goal of making the principle of freedom valid for the dignity of all people and in all areas of society, both in Germany and abroad.²

In the EU, it soon became clear that European political parties would not be able to perform their role themselves. The question of what role political foundations affiliated to political parties at the European level can take, in order to complement their work, has been answered by EU policymakers and decision-makers in 2007, already four years after the establishment of European political parties. The Commission considered that such foundations do have an important role to play and that they can underpin and complement the activities of political parties by undertaking a range of activities that contribute to the debate on European public policy issues and European integration, including by acting as catalysts for new ideas, analysis and policy options. European political foundations may thus bring together all sorts of relevant actors - including national political foundations, and academics - who have the potential to enrich the public debate and to develop new and innovative policy proposals.³

In addition to similar reasons at both national and EU levels that have led to establishment of political foundations, there is a specific concern in the EU. This relates to the lack of direct links between citizens and EU institutions. As argued by Dorota Dakowska, the creation of political foundations at the European

¹ Dakowska, D., "German Political Foundations: Transnational party go-betweens in the process of EU enlargement," in Wolfram Kaiser and Peter Starie (eds), *Transnational European Union* (London, Routledge, 2005), pp. 150-169.

² Cf: the website of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom: <http://en.freiheit.org>

³ Commission of the European Communities, "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regarding their funding," Brussels, 27.6.2007, COM (2007) 364 final, p. 4.

level is part of the reorientation of European communication policies and an attempt to reach citizens who are somewhat indifferent to European affairs.¹ The idea here of the role of political foundations at the European level would be in building a European public sphere as a space of proximity and dialogue. From this point of view, political foundations are seen as part of civil society. Wojciech Gagattek and Steven Van Hecke, on the other hand, emphasize the issue of the development of European political foundations within the wider debate on EU party politics and argue that connections between political parties and political foundations at the European level could potentially be important for the development of a transnational party system.²

Political foundations at the European level

The legal basis for the establishment of political foundations at the European level is the amended Regulation (EC) 2004/2003.³ Article 2 (4) of this regulation defines “political foundation at the European level” as an entity or network of entities which has legal personality in a Member State, is affiliated with a political party at the European level, and which through its activities, within the aims and fundamental values pursued by the European Union, underpins and complements the objectives of the political party at the European level. This is done by performing, in particular, the following tasks: (a) observing, analyzing and contributing to the debate on European public policy issues and on the process of European integration; (b) developing activities linked to European public policy issues, such as organizing and supporting seminars,

¹ Dakowska, D., “Vers une politisation du débat public européen?” *Politique européenne*, Vol 2, No 34 (2011). <http://cairn.info/revue-politique-europeenne-2011-2-page-167.htm>

² Gagattek, W. and van Hecke, S., “The development of European political foundations and their role in strengthening Europarties,” *Acta Politica*, 49 (2014), pp. 86-104.

³ Regulation (EC) No 1524/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2007 amending Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regarding their funding, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 343/5.

training, conferences and studies on such issues between relevant stakeholders, including youth organizations and other representatives of civil society; (c) developing cooperation with entities of the same kind in order to promote democracy; and (d) serving as a framework for national political foundations, academics, and other relevant actors to work together at the European level.

The regulation lays down the criteria for recognition that shadow those regulating political parties at the European level. A political foundation at the European level must be affiliated with one of the political parties at the European level that is recognized by the regulation. A foundation must have legal personality in the Member State in which its seat is located. This legal personality shall be separate from that of the political party at the European level with which the foundation is affiliated. Furthermore, it must observe, in particular in its program and in its activities, the principles on which the European Union is founded, namely the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. The political foundation shall not promote profit goals and its governing body shall have a geographically balanced composition.

Any foundation meeting the abovementioned conditions may apply to receive a grant from the EP. The rules of funding are also laid down by the regulation, while the implementation rules are adopted by the Bureau of the European Parliament. The political foundation receives a grant from the general budget of the European Union only through the political party at the European level with which it is affiliated. Once applications are evaluated and approved, 15 per cent of the funding charged to the general budget of the EU is distributed in equal shares among political foundations at the European level and the other 85 per cent is divided according to signatures by elected members of the EP of a political party to which the political foundation at the European level is affiliated.

The grant can be used to meet expenditure directly linked to the activities set out in the foundation's program of activities, such as meetings and conferences, publications, studies and advertisements, administrative, personnel and travel costs. The general budget of the EU will fund each foundation not exceeding 85 per cent of the costs that are eligible for funding. The other 15 per cent, therefore, has to come from other sources such as private donations, national foundations and similar sources. Allocated funds cannot be used to fund, among others, campaign costs for referenda and elections, direct or indirect funding of national parties, election candidates and national political foundations, or debts and debt service charges. Currently, there are 13 political foundations at the European level from across the political spectrum, representing different opinions and traditions on European integration.¹

The European Liberal Forum

The European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the foundation of the European Liberal Democrats, and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party.

As briefly described above, a set of general rules concerning the aims, organization and funding is provided by EU law. As a legal person, ELF is based in Brussels as an International Non-Profit Association. Therefore, Belgian national legislation (i.e., the Belgian Act of 27 June 1921, amended by the Act of 2 May 2002) provides for specific rules on the financing and organs of the foundation.

¹ For data on political foundations, their affiliation to so-called Europarties and the amount of grants they receive see the website of the European Parliament: <http://europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00264f77f5/Grants-to-political-parties-and-foundations.html>

Purpose and objectives

In accordance with the aforementioned definition of a political foundation at the European level, the purpose and objectives of ELF are defined in the Statutes of the European Liberal Forum.¹ The ELF has, as a non-profit, the purpose of bringing together national political foundations and think tanks in the EU, EU candidate countries, EEA (European Economic Area) member states and the EU Neighborhood countries that, within the framework of liberal, democratic and reformist ideals, wish to contribute to the European Union. To achieve this purpose, the ELF will:

- Serve as a framework for national political foundations, think tanks, networks and academics and leading liberal personalities to work together at the European level;
- Develop close working relationships with and among our members, their national parliamentary groups, the ALDE parliamentary group in the European Parliament, the liberal, democrat and reform groups and alliances in other EU and international fora, with the European Liberal Youth (Ly mec) and Liberal International;
- Observe, analyze and contribute to the debate on European public policy issues and the process of European integration, through education, training, research and the promotion of active citizenship within the European Union, particularly with regards to young Europeans;
- Strengthen the liberal, democrat and reform movement in the European Union and throughout Europe;
- Seek a common position, as a transfer of experience gained from contracting members, on all important matters affecting the European Union;
- Support liberal democracy throughout Europe and its neighborhood;

¹ Cf: the ELF website: <http://liberalforum.eu/en/about/statutes.html>

- Inform the public and involve it in the construction of a united European democracy;
- Support and cosponsor European seminars and conferences and studies on such issues between the aforementioned stakeholders.¹

Membership policy

The ELF is open to those national political foundations, think tanks and institutes that promote liberal, democratic ideals and values and satisfy to criteria defined in our Statutes and, among others, adhere to the 1976 Stuttgart Declaration, the basic programmatic document of the ALDE Party.² They do not need to have connections to a national liberal party. In this sense our membership policy is more flexible when compared with the Centre for European Studies (CES), the largest political foundation at the European level, which is affiliated to the European People's Party (EPP) and only accepts those national member foundations that have obtained official recognition from one of the EPP member parties.

Full Members of ELF have to be based in the European Union, in a EU candidate country or in an EEA member state. Affiliate members can also be based in EU Neighborhood countries. Our admission process thus allows membership of liberal political foundations, think-tanks and institutes that are based in countries where liberal parties are weak or do not exist at all. We do not accept political parties as members, as do some other political foundations at the European level, for example the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), which affiliated the Party of European Socialists (PES), or the Institute of European Democrats (IED), which affiliated the European Democratic Party (EDP).

¹ Cf: Article 3 of the Statutes of the European Liberal Forum.

² The declaration is published on the website of the ALDE Party:
<http://aldeparty.eu/en/about/history>

Currently, the ELF has 39 member organizations in most of the EU Member States.¹ This means that the ELF is not present in every EU Member State while in some of them, as for example in Sweden, The Netherlands, Finland or Poland, even more than one organization are ELF members. Our members differ quite considerably in regard to their history, legal status and degree of institutionalization, affiliations to political parties, as well as their financial and human resources and their areas of work, policy foci, types of activities and expertise. This diversity of membership provides the ELF with a wealth of knowledge and is a constant source of innovation. In turn, we provide our members with the opportunity to cooperate across national borders and work together on European projects and at European level under the ELF network or umbrella.

Decision-making

Our membership strongly influences both the allocation of authority within the ELF and the kinds of activities ELF undertakes. The most important decisions are taken by the ELF General Assembly, consisting of all its full members. The General Assembly elects the Board of Directors for a period of two years and upon proposal of the board approves the common annual activity program, annual accounts, the annual report, the budget and any other form of financing. It also admits full and affiliate members and amends the documents of the ELF. Except for those powers that are reserved for the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, consisting of five members (the president, a vice-president and a treasurer as well as two other board members) is vested with the power to undertake any act necessary or useful to achieve the purpose and objectives of the ELF. The executive director of the ELF, who is entrusted with the daily management of the ELF, and the secretary general of the ALDE Party, are *ex-officio* members of the board while the

¹ For information on our member organization, cf: the ELF website:
<http://liberalforum.eu/en/about/member-organisations.html#organisation71>

president of ALDE has a standing invitation to board meetings, issued by the present president of the ELF board. In this way, the partisan element is present though less strong as it was in previous compositions of the board where the president and vice-president were members of the EP, the vice-president also being the president of the ALDE Party (then the ELDR).

Activities

Most of our activities consist of the organization of events (conferences, seminars, workshops and similar) and the production of publications (publications online, books, research or policy papers, and other publications). The amount and range of our activities is directly influenced by our size and our budget. In terms of grants received from the EP, our foundation is the third largest among political foundations at the European level. Grants from the EP have been steadily increasing since 2008 and in 2014 the maximum grant awarded from the EP to the ELF amounted 1,362,890 Euros. However, there is a large discrepancy in the amount of resources allocated among political foundations at the European level, as the two largest ones (CES and FEBS) receive more than a half of all available funds (56 percent in 2013).

Table 1. Grants from the European Parliament to the European Liberal Forum per year (€)

Year	2008 (Sept-Dec)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Maximum grant awarded	233.750	725.200	818.438	942.819	1.075.703	1.270.187	1.362.890
Final grant*	172.187	609.356	658.097	804.634	995.300		

* Final grant is established in the second half of the year following the year when the maximum possible grant was established. *Source:* European Parliament, Directorate-General for Finance: Grant amounts (foundations), March 2014, http://europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant_amounts_foundations_03_2014.pdf

In spite of its relatively small resources, the ELF has organized numerous events across Europe and beyond. Some 49 events were organized in the year 2013 alone.¹

It is correct to say that ELF is primarily a member-driven organization rather than an organization with a centralized, top-down approach. Nevertheless, the board and the secretariat, consisting of a managing director and three employees, constantly encourage our member organizations to seek partners within the ELF network to put forward joint project applications. Consequently, cooperation is improving. The number of qualified joint project applications increased and ELF annual activity programs became more diverse in terms of public policy issues covered and participating members.

There is a regular exchange of views with the ALDE Party, particularly on the topics of ELF events, on the fringes of ALDE Party congresses and councils. These events became regular over the past three years, aimed at providing delegates with a forum to discuss relevant EU public policy issues of liberal interest with distinguished experts. Furthermore, the ALDE

¹ For past and future events refer to the ELF website:
<http://liberalforum.eu/en/events/upcoming.html>

Party president, bureau members and secretariat staff have been engaged in ELF activities, so that the ALDE Party's views and opinions have been reflected in ELF programs, projects and publications. Many members of the EP belonging to the ALDE Party have participated in ELF events across Europe as well.

In view of the 2014 EP elections, the ELF has organized several regional seminars and workshops aimed to gather electoral volunteers, activists or potential candidates. Several experts presented best practices on how to engage activists in political activities, along with lessons learnt from past election campaigns, the use of new media as a communication tool, and a self-defense workshop on how to promote European liberal values in the face of challenges by populist politicians. Key contributions were compiled in the publication entitled "Communicating with Confidence and Clarity: Liberal Responses to Populist Rhetoric."¹ The ELF has also organized two other specific training events for liberals of Central Europe and the Baltics, and for those of Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans.

There is also a rather strong cooperation with the ALDE group in the Committee of the Regions. For example, the group closely considered ELF policy recommendations when drafting its own opinion on the integration of Roma in South East Europe.

As it has been already pointed out, the geographical scope of our action may extend beyond EU borders, particularly into the EU Neighborhood countries. Our extra-EU activities largely depend on the activities of our members, such as the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, as well as upon other links with liberal organizations and other liberal stakeholders in countries outside the EU. Since the statutory changes that allow ELF activities in neighboring countries, and also since links with the ALDE group at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council

¹ ELF publications are free to download at:
<http://liberalforum.eu/en/publications.html>

of Europe have been strengthened, as well as cooperation with Liberal International (LI) by holding roundtables on relevant topics on the fringes of LI congresses and LI Executive Committee meetings, this enables us to involve delegates from Europe and beyond.

Recently, we have conducted an internal evaluation of our work in the first five-year period. In 2012, the ELF General Assembly approved project selection criteria and in 2013 the establishment of “competence centers” that will provide a common policy framework to activities that will be carried out by our member organizations. To complement member projects, the “Ralf Dahrendorf Roundtables” series is taking a leading role in shaping and driving the ELF’s own agenda. As a flexible instrument it aids profiling the EU-wide visibility of the ELF. Under this heading, several series have been designed and implemented - for example, the European Values series, Pathways to Growth series, and the Future of Europe series.

Concluding remarks

The ELF as a political foundation on the European level is a form of organized liberalism that has been established by EU law and as such contributed to cross-border liberal cooperation. As briefly presented above, the activities of the ELF are coherent with the aims explicitly identified in the EC government regulation, meaning that that ELF contributes to the development of the European public sphere and to the integration of European and national spheres.

In this context, the ELF indirectly contributed to the establishment of national political foundations, particularly in South and Eastern Europe where there was no such tradition. In the context of international liberal cooperation and its influence on domestic politics, particularly in countries neighboring the EU, the ELF is becoming a necessary complement to the ALDE Party, better able to engage in direct contact with people because of its reduced dependence on national parties.

The coming years will be crucial for the process of European integration and its place in the rest of world. The main challenge and primary task for the ELF is to become an ever stronger actor in building a European public and political space - a European *demos* - and in providing new ideas and policy recommendations underpinning and complementing the objectives of the ALDE Party. In my view, in a changing political environment within the EU, particularly following the 2014 EP elections, and worrying developments in the EU Neighborhood, the ALDE Party ought to seize the opportunity to become a more policy-oriented, transnational party, and thus a genuine liberal Europarty.

One dimension of our role is thus political; that is to help develop a European consciousness. The youthful and dynamic nature of the ELF allows us to be at the forefront in promoting active citizenship, getting the citizen involved with European issues, and building an open liberal Europe. True, it remains difficult to reach people who are not already interested in these issues, or people that belong to different political cultures. But the other dimension of our role is cultural; that is, to spread not only the idea of Europe amongst people at large, but also to promote freedom and democracy and a political culture of civilized dialogue.

Biographies



Andreas Andrianopoulos

Andreas Andrianopoulos has served as a minister (trade, industry, energy, technology, foreign affairs and culture) in consecutive Greek governments of the conservative ND (New Democracy) Party and has been elected also mayor of the port city of Piraeus. He was educated in Athens, Kent, Cambridge and Harvard universities and he is currently director of the Institute of Diplomacy and Global Affairs of the American College of Greece (DEREE). He also teaches at the Immanuel Kant University of Kaliningrad and at the University of New York in Prague. He has been a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington and a visiting scholar at St. Edmund's College of Cambridge University. He has written many articles and books on liberalism and global affairs, as well as historical novels about medieval times.



Dimitris Dimitrakos

Dimitris Dimitrakos is a Greek philosopher, currently professor emeritus of political philosophy in the Department of Philosophy of Science of the University of Athens. He originally studied economics at the London School of Economics, taking part in seminars given there by Karl Popper, before obtaining a PhD in political philosophy at the University of Paris with a thesis on Antonio Gramsci. Since then he has taught at the universities of Paris, Reims, Thessaly and Athens and as a visiting professor at LSE. Dimitrakos' work focuses on a re-examination of Popper's political philosophy in contemporary terms, a critique of Marxism from a Popperian standpoint, the role of rationalism and liberalism in social, political and human rights theory, and the nature of contemporary political philosophy, in particular democratic theory.

**Jock Geselschap**

Jock Geselschap is the international secretary of the executive board of the ruling Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD). Geselschap coordinates all international activity of the party. He has a diplomatic background and served the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for several years. He has worked for the parliamentary committee on European Affairs and was part of the executive board of his district Kralingen-Crooswijk.

**Emil Kirjas**

Emil Kirjas the secretary-general of Liberal International, based in London. He was junior minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Macedonia from 2004 to 2006. He is a former president of the International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY), a position he occupied for four years. His past professional experience includes the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty (FNF). Kirjas was born in 1975 and holds a Master's degree in geopolitics from King's College London.

**Dirk Kunze**

Dirk Kunze is the Cairo based project manager in the Regional Office Middle East and North Africa (MENA) of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty (FNF). He holds a Master's degree in political science from the Free University Berlin, Germany. Mr. Kunze worked for many years for the German Bundestag (parliament) in Bonn, and subsequently in Berlin, and has conducted research on and at parliaments worldwide and published on parliamentary traditions. From 2009 to 2012 he was seconded by the Parliamentary Group of the Free Democratic Party to Brussels, Belgium, to liaise with the European Union.

**Oliver W. Lembcke**

Oliver W. Lembcke, PhD, MA Phil, is professor of political science at Jena University, Germany. His main research interests are in the fields of democratic theory, public law and comparative politics. He has published more than 20 books (12 as an editor) and over 90 articles, including studies on constitutional courts, modern constitutionalism, and on the history of European political ideas.

**Felicita Medved**

Felicita Medved is president of the European Liberal Forum and an independent researcher in the field of political geography, migration, and citizenship studies. She was vice president of Zares-New Politics, a Slovenian political party, from 2007-2010. She is also a founding member of the Slovenian Inštitut NOVUM, where she currently serves as president of the board.

**Maâti Monjib**

Maâti Monjib is a political analyst, human rights activist, and professor of history at the University of Mohammed V, Rabat. He is also coordinator of Morocco's branch of the Middle East Citizens' Assembly (MECA), founder and director of the Ibn Rochd Center for Studies and Communication in Rabat, and a founding member of the 20 February Movement Support Council, which sought reform in Morocco during the Arab Spring. He has taught in Morocco, Senegal, and the United States. In addition, he initiated and facilitated debates between Islamists and secular activists in Morocco between 2007 and 2014 and organized the "Press Now Investigative Journalism Prize" in Morocco for 2007-2013. He has published many books and studies on the Middle East and North Africa and West Africa.



Friso Rip

Friso Rip is the international officer of the Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD). Friso is responsible for the implementation of the MATRA Political Parties Programme in the Caucasus and the Arab Region. He has a master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies and holds a bachelor in European Studies, both from the University of Amsterdam. Friso has lived in Lebanon and Syria for six months, where he studied Arabic.



Gamal Soltan

Professor Gamal Soltan joined the Department of Political Science at the American University in Cairo (AUC) in the academic year 2006-2007. Before joining AUC, he had been served as senior research fellow in the Cairo-based Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, in charge of the center's programs on regional politics and survey research. Soltan earned his PhD in political science from Northern Illinois University in 1995. The topic of his dissertation was "Decision-making Under Stress: Iraqi decision-making during the Gulf War." He is a frequent contributor to a number of newspapers, including *Al-Ahram*, *Al-Hayat*, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, *Nahdat Misr*, *The Daily Star* and others. Soltan's specialization is the international relations of the Middle East and comparative politics of the Middle East.



Mohamed Tamaldou

Mohamed Tamaldou is a member of the Union Constitutionnelle of Morocco and a founding member and former president of the Arab Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AAFD, formerly the “Network of Arab Liberals”), comprised of Arab liberal parties and organizations. Mr. Tamaldou currently serves as vice president of Liberal International and treasurer of the Arab Center for Scientific Research and Human Studies in Morocco. He is author of several studies on the Arab world and has translated a variety of books from French to Arabic.



Tamara Venrooy-van Ark

Tamara Venrooy-van Ark is a Dutch politician and former alderwoman and management consultant. As a member of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD) she has been a Member of Parliament since June 17, 2010. She focuses on matters of care (informal care and the relation between labour and care) and emancipation and equal treatment. Tamara is vice-chair of the parliamentary group, vice-president of Liberal International and part of the Liberal International Human Rights Project. She was an alderwoman of the former municipality of Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel from 2004 to 2010 and also an alderwoman of its successor the municipality of Zuidplas in 2010. Venrooy-van Ark studied public administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam..

In May 2014, Cairo once again became the center of liberal debate and attention, as politicians, academics and NGO activists from Belgium, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Palestine, Sweden, Syria, Tunisia and the United Kingdom came together for the 2nd Arab-European Liberal Dialogue Forum.

After the historic changes in the Arab world, it was now time to further this institutionalized Dialogue and focus on the organizational and institutional aspects of liberal politics, thus dissecting the whole spectrum of “organized liberalism”: Political parties, civil society organizations, political foundations, networks and transnational federations. What are each of their roles in promoting freedom and democracy? How important are the interrelations between the democratic ideal of political parties and their actual internal organization? Where are the roots of those organizations and are there major ideological or programmatic divergences in the different political and cultural environments?

With this publication we aim to document the main presentations as a point of reference, future dialogues and debates.

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