

RETHINKING THE EURO MED POLICY: A COOPERATIVE APPROACH IN AN INCREASINGLY TRANSFORMING REGION

LOTFI SOUR*

Abstract. *The EU has played a pivotal role in the Mediterranean region so it has developed different approaches to regional integration. The EU sought to develop institutional integration through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), and the subsequent Union for the Mediterranean (UFM), however the Arab Spring has led to a critical assessment of these practices. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is a region encompassing approximately 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The term MENA covers an extensive region, extending from Morocco to Iran, including all Middle Eastern Mashriq and Maghreb countries. The term is roughly synonymous with the term the Greater Middle East. Nevertheless the MENA region has experienced internal uprisings, the breakdown of states, the growing presence of Islamism on the political scene, civil war, massive movements of population and an ongoing geopolitical power struggle. Faced with growing fragmentation the challenges that are emerging from a “changing neighborhood” in the region, the EU have opened a new policy window for the EU and called for a policy reassessment regarding the Southern side of the Mediterranean to respond to the new domestic, regional and global challenges MENA is facing today. In the text, MED refers to the eight Arab countries that were part of the Barcelona process and includes Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia. Hence, the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity and the “more for more” logic tried to accomplish this by contributing to the definition of a new framework in EU-Mediterranean relations that could go beyond the inconsistencies of the past. Overall, the Mediterranean policy, whether EMP, ENP, or new ENP, pursues both the declared interests of the EU as a whole or its individual member states and norms and values which cannot simply be reduced to such interests.*

Keywords: *Arab Spring, European Union, Mediterranean, Neighborhood Policy, security interests.*

* Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of Mascara; Associate Member at the Research and Political Studies Centre, University of Algiers III, lotfilem87@yahoo.fr.

Introduction

The EU has been an economic, diplomatic, and security actor in the Mediterranean for recent decades. The EU has played a pivotal role in the Mediterranean region. Although it never yielded the hard power of the United States, the EU's soft power and its deep social, political and economic ties with the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean have provided it with considerable sway in Mediterranean affairs. The concept of the "Mediterranean" has been a construction of the EU which first emerged in the 1970s and was then institutionalized in the 1990s as the result of a political process driven by European economic and security interests.¹ Through its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, first launched in 1995, the EU promoted the vision of an open and integrated Mediterranean region that was organically tied to and politically oriented towards the EU.

Having close historical, geographical, and cultural links with the region, the EU has been molding its policies vis-à-vis the Arab world for decades. The relationship today comprises an economic (in terms of trade, finance, energy, but also migration) and a political (predominantly security, stability) dimension. The 'Arab Spring' has an important impact within and beyond national borders that might change traditional power relations. Obvious are intergenerational tensions transcending the established political rifts. The notion of a Euro-Mediterranean political space implies that Europe is part of this space, due to dense interactions with its southern neighborhood, and not only the EU and its member states react in some way or another to cope with the changes outlined above. Non-governmental interactions, be it in the private, the cultural or the economic sphere, are also affected. The Arab uprisings presented some of the first real foreign policy challenges for the Union's post-Lisbon Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)². For more than two decades, EU policies towards Mediterranean and North African (MENA) countries made regional stability and security the cornerstones of a policy approach marked by the shadow of instrumentalism which were cautious changes marginally differing from past practice and slightly detached from a *status quo* that perfectly suited existing priorities.

The MENA region has experienced internal uprisings, the breakdown of states, the growing presence of Islamism on the political scene, civil war, massive movements of population and an ongoing geopolitical power struggle. Thereafter, Arab South Mediterranean countries (hereinafter referred to as (MED) have experienced dramatic changes in light of the Arab uprising that started in Tunisia in the end of 2010 and then was spread to some of the other MED. The impact of the Arab uprising differed from country to country and ranged from a change of the whole governing regime (Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya) to significant

¹ Federica Bicchì, *European Foreign Policy Making Toward the Mediterranean*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

² Ruth Hanau Santini, "The Arab Spring and Euro paralysis in the Levant and the Gulf", *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2012, pp. 120-123.

changes in social and economic policies (Jordan and Morocco) and to slight or no change (Palestine, Algeria, and Lebanon). The aftermath of the Arab uprising has proven that the transition is a difficult one. It started with high aspirations for better socio-economic conditions and political governance, but ended in a bumpy road full of additional significant political, social, and economic challenges.

The Arab Spring has led to a critical reassessment of the European Union's policies towards the southern Mediterranean. Since the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in 1995, the European Union has tried to encourage regional integration in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Moreover, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the subsequent Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) have also aspired to achieve this goal. The leading concern of these policies has been to bring about a more prosperous, and thus, a more stable and peaceful region. Unfortunately, the Arab Spring reminded the EU of how little these policies had achieved, precipitating the Union to adopt a new set of policies captured by its new strategy for a changing European Neighbourhood. However, many have expressed little hope that these new initiatives are likely to achieve fundamentally better results than their predecessors, and their impact on shaping reform in the Arab world appears to be extremely limited to date.

Eventually, The Arab Spring uprisings brutally demonstrated the limits of EU projection in the region and, by impetuously entering the European agenda, urgently called for a paradigm shift in EU policy. Indeed, the challenges emerging from a "changing neighborhood" opened a new policy window for the EU and represented a watershed, a new "year zero" in Euro-Mediterranean relations. The "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity" and the review of the ENP tried to meet such a need by contributing to the definition of a new approach that could go beyond the inconsistencies of the past. More importantly, the Arab Spring undermined the paradigm of stability that had long been the cornerstone of EU policies and paved the way for the uncertain and unstable change that the EU had always tried to contain by engaging with authoritarian rulers.

This research investigates in the first part the logics of action in specific MENA-countries and new actors within the Euro-Mediterranean political space that gained political leverage as a result of the 'Arab Spring'. Then in the second part this research explores genuinely 'transnational' actors and logics of action within the Euro-Mediterranean political space, analyzing whether and how the 'Arab Spring' impacted on this sphere of 'transnationality'.

Research Questions

This article tries to shed light on the EU's policy regarding the post Arab Spring toward the Southern Mediterranean which seems to have progressively declined in its normative objectives, particularly with regard to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, and the strengthening of civil society, as well as with regard to multilateral and south-south cooperation, specifically regarding its opportunities and constraints as an external actor for democratic change, on its response to the uprisings in the

search for a new regional role and on the renewal of its bottom-up strategies of democracy promotion in the MENA. At this stage, a fundamental question has emerged: what are the challenges and opportunities that regional integration faces in the wake of the Arab Spring, to what extent has the EU undertaken a real “paradigmatic policy change”, and will the ‘*Arab Spring*’ change European perspectives, interests and policies? Are legally binding treaties like the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements or the agreements on repatriation to be renegotiated? In the light of these questions, the orientations of EU foreign policy with its new theoretical basis and policy initiatives will be analyzed.

Research Methods

Methodologically, this paper adopts a systematic research approach, in order to reconstruct the main phenomena on the basis of qualitative data. In addition, the basic method used in the study will be the description of the events, factors and ideas on the basis of most prominent and contemporary authors. The method of researching documents gives the widest spectrum of opinions concerning EU policy in the field of international affairs and its foreign policy. Additional methods of analysis and critique helped in identifying objectivity from partial fragments written by authors to explore critical factors that may be used to support quantitative models.

Deconstructing the Arab spring: an etymological-epistemological analysis

The Arab uprisings: a causal analysis

Political psychologists agree that every consciously chosen course of action is almost always rationalized and every act is a mature cognitive image of reality. In addition, the complex nature of the Arab uprising and its causal dynamics has several methodological implications. In fact, the study of the Arab uprising requires the use of transversal, non-linear and multi-disciplinary approaches. These are necessary for the study of this multi-morphic phenomenon, so before addressing the European Union’s policies towards the Mediterranean after the Arab Spring, a few words need to be spent on the revolts that are likely to have a long-lasting effect on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and its relations to its external partners. The Arab Spring marks a historical turning point. Its implications go well beyond the countries in which we have witnessed the fall of decades-old rulers, violent power struggles or mass demonstrations and uprisings. In the end, none of the countries in the region will remain unaffected. This might entail not only regime change and a process of political and economic transformation.³

³ Lisa Anderson, ‘Demystifying the Arab Spring -Parsing the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, (3), (2011), available at <http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/06/Anderson- Demystifying-the-Arab-Spring.pdf>, (Accessed 20 September 2016).

The Arab uprising began 18th December 2010 in Tunisia and quickly spread throughout the rest of the Middle East in countries such as Egypt, Libya and Syria. For decades the people of the Middle East had experienced social injustice and felt deprived by its leaders and governments but now the time had come to revolt. However as the last two decades in international relations theory and the rise of historical sociology (HS) in IR has shown,⁴ the ‘international’ cannot be confined to the geopolitics only and does not only exist at the level between states but also between peoples. Indeed the diffusion of upheavals from Tunisia towards the rest of the region is a testament that foreign dimension in revolutions is not to be limited to the activities of diplomats and intelligence agencies.

This regional diffusion may bring an input to both social movements theory which already has a long standing discussion on diffusion and scale shifts in social movements⁵ and to the theories of revolutions, especially to the discussion of whether revolutions are domestic events and where we should be looking for their causes. How to conceptualize exactly this issue of foreign intervention and international-domestic interaction at times of upheaval remains a challenge for the experts of the Middle East as well as the students of social movements and revolutions.⁶

The Arab Spring has led to a redistribution of relative power in the Mediterranean region that is shifting the existing regional balance. While this seems to have initiated a new phase in regional politics, its emerging contours and organisational dynamic remain, as of yet, blurred. These shifts in the region’s power-political crusts are having a seismic effect. With regional dynamics in flux, there has been a natural tendency to emphasise *ad hoc* bilateral interaction over multilateral problem-solving and the role of regional institutions.⁷

The EU’s response to the Arab Spring

The events taking place throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa since the beginning of the Arab Spring have taken on truly historic proportions which will not only shape the future of the entire region but also have repercussions far beyond the countries concerned. In the past the EU had focused on creating a ring of firmly governed states to establish a stable region. The concerns for maintaining order and stability in the south of Mediterranean and the Arab region overrode concerns about democracy and human rights. This has affected the EU’s credibility, especially with regards to democracy promotion in the Mediterranean region especially because of their efforts to

⁴ Dannreuther and J Kennedy, ‘Historical Sociology in Sociology: British Decline and US Hegemony with Lessons for International Relations,’ *International Politics*, Vol. 44, (2007), pp. 369-389.

⁵ Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam ‘Scale Shift in Transnational Contention’, in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism: People, Passions, and Power*, eds. D. della Porta and S. Tarrow (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, INC, 2005).

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Timo Behr, “*The Effect of the Arab Spring on Euro-Mediterranean Relations*”, IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2013, Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean, (2013), p. 80.

isolate Hamas when the latter won the Palestinian elections.⁸ The current changes demand that the EU adopt a new policy towards its Mediterranean partners. With the ‘Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’, a proposal by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), the promotion of democracy and human rights is now at the centre of this new partnership, and signals the first concrete step taken by the EU to adjust to the new situation in the region. The EU is also proposing to pay more attention to non-governmental actors through the new Civil Society Facility and the Endowment for Democracy. This new body will provide grants to non-registered NGOs and political parties.⁹

In 2011, the EU responded to the political uprisings that swept across North Africa and the Middle East with a striking *mea culpa*. In a speech to the European Parliament, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, admitted: “Too many of us fell prey to the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region. This was not even *realpolitik*. It was, at best, short-termism – and the kind of short-termism that makes the long term ever more difficult to build.” Füle and the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security Affairs, Catherine Ashton, promised that the EU would support democracy more forcefully across the region. The Union would offer ‘more for more’; it would provide generous assistance in terms of aid, trade and mobility to countries that introduced democratic reforms. A few weeks later, Commission President José Manuel Barroso, a veteran of Portugal’s ‘carnation revolution’, made an emotional speech aimed at the activists leading the Arab Spring: “From Brussels I want to say this particularly to the young Arabs that are now fighting for freedom and democracy: we are on your side”.¹⁰ The general EU reaction to the Arab Spring confirmed the continuing primacy of security concerns. When the Arab Spring began, Southern European policy-makers and the media were more concerned by the influx of migrants than supporting the region in its democratic transitions.

The events taking place throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa since the beginning of the Arab Spring have taken on truly historic proportions which will not only shape the future of the entire region but also have repercussions far beyond the countries concerned. The EU, watching the transformation of the Arab world, responded to the challenges that the Arab Spring posed by reviewing the already existent ENP. According to the joint communication, the consequences of the developments in the MENA region will affect the EU as well, who is committed to offering its support to the countries in its southern neighbourhood, depending on the reforms that they are willing to undertake.¹¹

⁸ Timo Behr, *What future for the Union of the Mediterranean?*, Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, N°.1, (2010), pp. 85-87.

⁹ Rosa Balfour, *The Arab Spring, the changing Mediterranean and the EU: tools as a substitute for strategy?* Policy Brief, Brussels: European Policy Centre, June 2011.

¹⁰ Edward Burke, *Running into the sand? The EU’s faltering response to the Arab revolutions*, London: the centre for European reform, December 2013, p. 1.

¹¹ European Commission, & High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. (2011a). *A partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*, Joint

Therefore, the Union's new ENP constitutes a reinforcement of its earlier policy as well as a reinforcement of its own role vis-à-vis the Mediterranean partner states.

Europe urgently needs a grand strategy for Arab Mediterranean countries. Europeans have thus far focused on easy and measurable democratisation targets such as free and fair elections or women's rights. The EU should revise its strategy to reflect the reality that democratisation is a long-term endeavour and an end in itself for third countries and their nationals rather than a means to promote EU security interests. Southern Europe can play a crucial role in this endeavour.

*Managing the political change strategically:
the EU in search of a new role*

Since December 2010, events in the MENA region have resulted in new challenges for the EU. Initial reactions to the uprisings showed European reluctance and indecisiveness, as the EU and various Member States were unsure about which side to support. In early February 2011, the European Council recognized citizens' democratic aspirations. It committed itself to providing effective support to those pursuing political and economic reforms including through standing mechanisms, the EMP, UfM and the ENP. In the course of 2011, three cross-cutting instruments, aimed to set out the broader EU-MENA strategy were presented and/or renewed. The first comprehensive initiative was the Joint Communication of the High Representative and the Commission on 'a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean', of March 2011. As the Communication's title indicates, topics discussed relate to democratic transformations, institution building, and the enhancement of the role of civil society, as well as to economic development, trade, investment, and finance. The document also demonstrated the EU's constant preoccupation with security issues in the Southern Mediterranean. Topics such as the management of migration flows and border security were included in the democracy partnership. Second, in May 2011 the High Representative and the Commission presented the renewed ENP, which had been prepared since the summer of 2010.¹²

Although it addressed recent changes in the MENA and explicitly referred to them in a neighborhood context, the basic features of the ENP were not significantly rethought. Third, in September 2011 the Commission launched its SPRING program (Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth) as a strategic and cross-cutting financial instrument to support democratic transformation,

communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf.

¹² Fernández Arribas, K. Pieters and T. Takács (eds.) "The European Union's relations with the Southern Mediterranean in the after math of the Arab Spring", The Hague center for the law of EU external relations (CLEER), 2013, pp. 26- 27.

institution-building and economic growth. To realize these goals in the years 2011 and 2012, a moderate EUR 350 million was foreseen.¹³

For decades, the EU's policies in North Africa and the Middle East have been forced to strike a difficult balance between the Union's ambitions to promote political pluralism and human rights and its member states' interests in safeguarding regional stability.¹⁴ Whereas Europe's normative ambitions and self-understanding support a more value-led foreign policy agenda, its commercial and security interests have usually tended to tip the balance in favour of stability. Arab dictators skillfully exploited this European penchant for stability by habitually asserting that any political change would inevitably empower Islamic radicals and favour regional chaos. Fearful of the consequences that any sudden and uncontrolled change might bring, European policies sought to foster economic reforms and good governance initiatives.

The EU has responded to the Arab Spring with a broad range of tools, from humanitarian assistance, the revision of some modalities of long-term programmatic policies, sanctioning measures, and military intervention on part of some member states through NATO. The mobilization of such a wide array of tools per se represents a shift: one of the outstanding features of Euro-Mediterranean relations was the gap between the creation of broad frameworks and plentiful initiatives and their non-implementation, leaving much of the substance of politics to bilateral relations between individual countries. The question is whether the sum of these tools indicates a shift in EU thinking about its relations with North Africa and the Middle East (MENA), and whether it is a prelude to a qualitative change in relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean. In turn, understanding the changes and continuities in EU policies will require some incursions into the limits and problems of yesterday's Euro-Mediterranean relations.¹⁵

*The EU's renewed approach after the Arab Spring:
prospects and challenges*

Toward a new Mediterranean region

The MENA region has always been characterized by its political instability and insecurity. The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011 have focused the attention of the international community on this region and brought new light to the importance of Euro-Mediterranean relations. In this context, the Arab Spring has generated a more fragmented region, in which different paths and speeds of democratization can be identified. Whereas the pre-Arab spring region remained quite monolithic in terms of the nature of regimes, the new Mediterranean is likely to witness the co-existence of democratic and non-democratic regimes,

¹³ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴ Federica Bicchi, 'Dilemmas of implementation: EU democracy assistance in the Mediterranean,' *Democratization*, 2010, Vol.17, pp. 976-996.

¹⁵ Rosa Balfour, *Changes and continuities in EU-Mediterranean relations after the Arab spring*, Papers IEMed, Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean, June 2012, p. 15.

hybrid political systems and diverging speeds of political and socio-economic development. As a consequence, a growing chorus of voices in the EU is demanding that Europe focuses its policies on a series of “showcases”, in particular Tunisia.¹⁶

According to these views the crisis in the EU and the limitation of Europe’s leverage require a more modest contribution to the processes of democratic transition, focusing on those areas and countries where the EU’s expertise can provide more added value – such as constitutional, security-sector or judicial reform. In a sense, the focus of EU communications on “differentiation” and the “more for more” principle (more assistance and resources to those countries that make more progress on democratic reform) embodies this “limited” action of EU policies towards the region.

A consequence of this approach would be to strengthen bilateral policies towards specific countries and sectors at the expense of the Euro-Mediterranean regional perspective.¹⁷ According to Calleya, The challenge in the next decade will be to ensure that the European Union develops an external policy towards the Mediterranean that takes into consideration the aspirations of the millions of Arab citizens that have risked their lives to bring about the downfall of their respective dictators. Geographical proximity and geopolitical interests dictates that the EU realizes that it is in its interest to increase its political and economic commitment towards the Mediterranean. Naturally the Mediterranean countries have an essential role to play in this challenge. They must adopt policies that attract the attention of Europeans and ensure implementation of a comprehensive reform programme that is built on the rule of law and respect for universal human rights.¹⁸

The current changes demand that the EU adopt a new policy towards its Mediterranean partners. With the ‘Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’, a proposal by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), the promotion of democracy and human rights is now at the centre of this new partnership, and signals the first concrete step taken by the EU to adjust to the new situation in the region. The EU is also proposing to pay more attention to non-governmental actors through the new Civil Society Facility and the Endowment for Democracy. This new body will provide grants to non-registered NGOs and political parties.¹⁹

The EU stepped up to face these events by adopting a series of instruments. Although it may be considered that no significant steps forward were taken and that the measures adopted may be seen as “more of the same”, the new vision

¹⁶ Richard Youngs, „*When Gravity Fails. Five Futures of Euro-Mediterranean Relations*”, Madrid: European think tank for global action (FRIDE), No 125 – April 2012, pp. 1-2. Available at: www.fride.org/publication/1010/when-gravity-fails...-five-futures-for-euro-mediterranean-relations (accessed on July 15th, 2014).

¹⁷ Rosa Balfour, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁸ Stephen Calleya, “A Strategic Reassessment of EU Policy in the Mediterranean”, in *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, Edited by Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld, Gutenberg Press, Malta, 2012

¹⁹ Rosa Balfour, *The Arab Spring, the changing Mediterranean and the EU: tools as a substitute for strategy?*, Policy Brief, Brussels: European Policy Centre, June 2011.

adopted aims to overcome the existing divergences. Whether it works or not is still to be seen. In March 2011 the European Commission adopted a communication entitled “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean countries”, which calls for a new approach to the region, based on more differentiation, a *more for more* approach. Thus, “those that go further and faster with reforms will be able to count on greater support from the EU”.²⁰

The Commission also called for a review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, in order to face the challenges of the changing political landscape in the Mediterranean. With “a new response to a changing neighbourhood: a review of a European neighbourhood policy.”²¹ The EU aims to “strengthen the partnership between the EU and the countries and societies of the neighbourhood: to build and consolidate healthy democracies, pursue sustainable economic growth and manage cross-border links”. It establishes the link between democracy-building and migration. With new stable democratic countries migration will decrease and will be better managed, at least that is the expectation.²² The policies adopted by the EU towards the Mediterranean region have long been criticized for its lack of political will to achieve its objectives and for often being one-sided. The measures adopted so far illustrate the ‘*business as usual*’ approach.²³ The EU should seize the moment to rethink and reframe its Mediterranean policy and contribute to the region’s stability and prosperity.

A new Euro-Mediterranean agenda should take into account the populations’ demands. Therefore, dialogue and bilateral cooperation is essential for a genuine partnership. With the Arab uprisings, started at the end of 2010, the number of migrants (including asylum-seekers and refugees) hoping to reach the southern European borders, represents the 20% of immigrant inflows entering the European continent. Furthermore refugee issues in the Mediterranean have altered some aspects of the balance of power between and within different states in the region.²⁴ The uprisings of the Arab Spring produced a highly insecure situation for individuals in the North African region and prompted significant cross-border movements.

FRAN data for the period between July and September 2015 show an increase in excess of 449% in overall detections of illegal border-crossing compared to the same period in 2014, with 617,412 detections in Q3 2015. As it is possible to see from the Annual Risk Analysis, published by FRONTEX (*Frontières*

²⁰ European Commission, “A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean” (COM(2011) 200 final). Available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf.

²¹ European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, COM(2011)303, Brussels, 25th May 2011, p.1. Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf (accessed on 22 September 2016).

²² Philippe Fargues, and Christine Fandrich, “Migration after the Arab Spring”. *MPC Research Report* (Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, September 2012). Available at: <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/23504/MPCRR-2012-09.pdf?sequence=1>.

²³ Sergio Carrera & al., “EU Migration Policy in the wake of the Arab Spring What prospects for EU-Southern Mediterranean Relations?”, *MEDPRO Technical Report*, No. 15, August 2012, p. 23.

²⁴ Mikail Barah, ‘Refugees in the MENA region: what geopolitical consequences?’, *Frída Policy Brief* no.162, Madrid: FRIDE, July 2013, p. 2.

extérieures) for the year 2015, an increasing in the number of detections reported in the sphere of the central Mediterranean, has been recorded. The number of Syrians, for example, represented only around 4% of the level reported back in September 2014. On the other hand, the detections of Nigerian, Somali, Sudanese, Eritrean, Moroccan and Cameroonian migrants were substantially higher than one year ago.²⁵

EU actions in response to human movements was broadly divided into four types of measures: i) the intensification of border control and surveillance, ii) pressure on new authorities in North Africa to cooperate in curbing irregular migration, iii) the introduction of new legislative proposals suspending mobility and iv) the attempt to address the refugee crisis in North Africa.²⁶

Thus, the EU should focus on managing and promoting circular migration, developing mechanisms to regulate migration that does not jeopardize human security, and focus on the positive effects of migration. Nevertheless, this should be the result of multilateral decisions and not unilateral ones.

*The future of Euro-Mediterranean relations:
What role for the EU?*

Needless to say, in recent years, the Mediterranean has been a place of crisis and revolutionary change affecting the Middle East and North Africa, Southern Europe, and transatlantic stakes in these regions. Alongside the rise of extra-regional influences, and the decline of explicitly Mediterranean strategies, the scene is characterized by the primacy of internal security concerns, both traditional and non-traditional, and the persistence of multiple unresolved conflicts within, and on the periphery of the Mediterranean. Across the region, the power of states is increasingly constrained, and in some cases, states are quite literally under siege. In the southern Mediterranean, this phenomenon has direct, hard security implications.²⁷ In the aftermath of the Arab Spring the European Union has declared a firm determination to review its approach to the southern neighbourhood with an ambitious aim of creating a ‘democracy partnership’ with the countries of Middle East and North Africa (MENA).²⁸ The Arab Spring has brought many serious challenges to EU policies in the region, challenges that need to be effectively answered. However, the changed context of these challenges requires thinking and acting in a different paradigm. In policy terms, the traditional EU approach has been to divide the Mediterranean along geopolitical lines, with a fairly strict bureaucratic and intellectual division between Europe, including southern Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa.

²⁵ Frontex Fran, *Quarterly Issue 3*, July-September 2011. Available at: http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk.../FRAN_Q3_2015.pdf.

²⁶ Sergio Carrera, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

²⁷ Ian O. Lesser, *The United States and the Future of Mediterranean Security: Reflections from GMF's Mediterranean Strategy Group, Policy Brief*, Brussels: The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), April 2015, p. 4.

²⁸ Milja Kurki, “How the EU can adopt a new Type of Democracy Support?” *FRIDE Working Paper* No. 112, 2012, pp. 1-2.

While the EU has struggled to adapt its policies to a more democratic and independent Middle East (the current European discussion about reinventing Mediterranean strategy), it similarly had problems adjusting to the emerging geopolitical context of the region. Although much remains uncertain about the outcome of the current democratic transition processes, the Arab Spring has clearly changed the geopolitical balance in the wider Middle East. On the one hand, it has broken the prevailing Middle Eastern balance of power that had divided the region between a coalition of western-leaning *status-quo* powers and an axis of revisionist states and organisations. On the other hand, it has facilitated the emergence of a number of new emerging actors that are pursuing their own regional goals and interests.²⁹ In this confusing situation, the EU has struggled to find a new place for itself on the changing Middle Eastern chessboard. All in all, future leaders of the region may not pay as much attention to the EU as before. This is due to the existence of a more competitive chessboard in the Mediterranean and the new elites speaking different languages regarding the involvement of external powers in the region.

If traditional European threats were to re-emerge, Southern Mediterranean security threats would be pushed into the background. This would have implications for the investment in regional cooperation and EMP. In other words, if the nature of Euro-Med cooperation is such that it encourages the creation of independent regional capabilities to manage crises and deal with threats, then events in Europe are likely to be less important. If, on the other hand, cooperation develops only bilaterally and naturally creates greater dependence on extra-regional initiatives, then the impact of events in Europe may be more severe.³⁰ The future of Euro-Mediterranean relations is not certain at all, nonetheless, the Union for the Mediterranean could play a role in fostering regional cooperation, thus deepening the economic integration between all countries of the region. However, the importance of the UfM would diminish over time when all south Mediterranean countries would have become members of the EEA (the European Economic Area). In this scenario, the UfM is seen as a mechanism to revive trans-Mediterranean relations.³¹ Furthermore, on the multilateral dimension, the role of the UfM has not yet been reinforced in the post-Arab spring, although it has the potential to implement the sustainable development objectives in the region within its inter-governmental philosophy.³²

Conclusion

As is argued in this paper, the Arab Spring calls the entire Euro Med relations into question and forces the EU to rethink its strategy and partnership with its

²⁹ Florensa Senén, 'Europe, the Mediterranean and the Arab Revolutions in the Current Geopolitical Puzzle', Mediterranean Yearbook 2011, Barcelona: IEMed, pp. 87-94.

³⁰ Roberto Aliboni and Yasar Qatameh, The future of the EMP in a changing context of transatlantic and regional relations, *EuroMeSCopaper*, Lisboa : Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais IEEI, N°. 46, September 2005, p. 18.

³¹ Rym Ayadi and Carlo Sessa, What scenarios for the Euro-Mediterranean in 2030, in the wake of the post-Arab spring? *MEDPRO Policy Paper*, No. 2, October 2011, p. 3.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

“nearest abroad”. Indeed, the policy-making process has been almost entirely driven by the European side, an approach which the Commission now seems committed to change. However, it is critical to involve civil society in the negotiation and consultation process with its partners. While the EU has consulted civil society and has increased its financial assistance through the civil society facility and the European Endowment for Democracy since the Arab uprisings, a more substantial consultation in the process of agenda/priority setting is now required, as is giving more space to civil society in policy execution and potentially even a role in monitoring. Therefore, the new ENP appears to have a stronger focus on both the realist and the normative objectives. This, however, does not imply a renewed turn by the EU to the role of a normative power but rather a turn to a more assertive position from the EU vis-à-vis its Mediterranean partners, as a response to the Arab Spring. However, the EU still suffers from a lack of common will, conflicting interests and an inherent incapacity to act autonomously.

Nonetheless, the important shift in the paradigms behind EU engagement is the recognition that past policies rested on the assumption that authoritarianism was the bulwark against terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, and for the containment of migration. The democracy-and-stability paradigm which littered EU declarations and intentions was far from being translated into practice.

The positive impact and long-term credibility of the EU’s new policy in its neighbourhood will depend on its ability to conduct a value-based but realistic common foreign policy and to make coherent use of all EU instruments, including its neighbourhood and trade policies and external assistance instruments. On the other hand, the EU – both as an entity and as an alliance of its member states – can have enough weight, diplomatic tools and political arsenal to take decisive action and to shape events, instead of being a bystander.

This, however, depends on the political will of the Union’s member states to have such a policy. Currently, the EU is a long way from a common vision of how it could become a voice that is heard on the global stage and a force for reform and the implementation of the rule of law in its neighbourhood. It may be time for EU member states to invite the High Representative to put forward a vision for an EU foreign policy strategy in the Union’s interests and to set out when, how and with what tools the Union should engage in crises. In addition to that, the EU, in pursuit of its own security interests, contributed to stabilizing authoritarian rule in the partner states more often than triggering democratic reform.

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aliboni, Roberto and Yasar Qatarneh, *The future of the EMP in a changing context of transatlantic and regional relations*, EuroMeSCopaper, Lisboa: Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais IEEI, N°. 46, September 2005;
- Arribas, Fernández, K. Pieters and T. Takács (eds.) “*The European Union’s relations with the Southern Mediterranean in the after math of the Arab Spring*”, The Hague center for the law of EU external relations (CLEER), 2013;

- Ayadi, Rym and Carlo Sessa, What scenarios for the Euro-Mediterranean in 2030, in the wake of the post-Arab spring? *MEDPRO Policy Paper*, No. 2, October 2011;
- Balfour, Rosa, *Changes and continuities in EU-Mediterranean relations after the Arab spring*, Papers IEMed, Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean, June 2012;
- Balfour, Rosa, *The Arab Spring, the changing Mediterranean and the EU: tools as a substitute for strategy?* Policy Brief, Brussels: European Policy Centre, June 2011;
- Barah, Mikail, 'Refugees in the MENA region: what geopolitical consequences?', *Frída Policy Brief* no.162, Madrid: FRIDE, July 2013;
- Behr, Timo, "*The Effect of the Arab Spring on Euro-Mediterranean Relations*", IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2013, Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean, 2013;
- Behr, Timo, *What future for the Union of the Mediterranean?*, Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, N°.1, 2010;
- Bicchi, Federica, 'Dilemmas of implementation: EU democracy assistance in the Mediterranean', *Democratization*, Vol.17, 2010;
- Burke, Edward, *Running into the sand? The EU's faltering response to the Arab revolutions*, London: the centre for European reform, December 2013;
- Calleya, Stephen, "A Strategic Reassessment of EU Policy in the Mediterranean", in *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, Edited by Stephen Calleya and Monika Wohlfeld, Malta: Gutenberg Press, 2012;
- Carrera, Sergio & al., "EU Migration Policy in the wake of the Arab Spring What prospects for EU-Southern Mediterranean Relations?", *MEDPRO Technical Report* , No. 15, August 2012;
- Dannreuther, and J Kennedy, "Historical Sociology in Sociology: British Decline and US Hegemony with Lessons for International Relations," *International Politics*, Vol. 44, 2007;
- Frontex, Fran, Quarterly Issue 3, July-September 2011, available at: frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk.../FRAN_Q3_2015.pdf ;
- Kurki, Milja, "How the EU can adopt a new Type of Democracy Support?" *FRIDE Working Paper* No. 112, 2012;
- Lesser, Ian O., "The United States and the Future of Mediterranean Security: Reflections from GMF's Mediterranean Strategy Group", *Policy Brief*, Brussels: The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), April 2015;
- Santini, Ruth Hanau, "The Arab Spring and Euro paralysis in the Levant and the Gulf", *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2012;
- Senén, Florensa, 'Europe, the Mediterranean and the Arab Revolutions in the Current Geopolitical Puzzle', Mediterranean Yearbook 2011, Barcelona: IEMed, 2011;
- Tarrow, Sidney and Doug McAdam 'Scale Shift in Transnational Contention', in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism: People, Passions, and Power*, eds. D. della Porta and S. Tarrow Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, INC, 2005.

Internet Sources:

- European Commission, & High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. (2011a). A partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean, Joint communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf ;
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION, "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean" (COM(2011) 200 final). Available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf;
- Fargues, Philippe and Christine Fandrich, "Migration after the Arab Spring". *MPC Research Report* (Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, September 2012). Available at: <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/23504/MPCRR-2012-09.pdf?sequence=1>;
- Youngs, Richard, „When Gravity Fails. Five Futures of Euro-Mediterranean Relations”, Madrid: European think tank for global action (FRIDE), N° 125 - April 2012, pp. 1-2. Available at: www.frída.org/publication/1010/when-gravity-fails...-five-futures-for-euro-mediterranean-relations (accessed on July 15th, 2014).