The European Union and the birth of The *Arab Spring* Countries: The Opportunities and Challenges of Asymmetric Interdependence

Summary of a Ph.D. Thesis

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In the **Introduction** the author stresses the importance of cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, which was known in the Antiquity as *mare nostrum* and which the Arabs call "The White Mediterranean Sea". The thesis provides a short narrative of the otherwise long history of these relations up to the present. More specifically, the evolution from colonial dependence, post-colonial adjustments in bilateral and multilateral relations (between West European countries and the Arab-Mediterranean countries) to mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership was a long process that took more than three decades (from the end of the 1950s to the first half of the 1990s). As this was a period of Cold War confrontation in the global context, and one of protracted Arab-Israeli conflict, which impacted heavily on Egypt, but also on the other Arab League member-states, a great multitude of geopolitical, military and economic factors influenced North-South relations. On the other hand, the post-WWII period saw at last West European great powers overcoming their past rivalries and engaged on the path of peace and integration. Turning the page of colonial ambitions and nationalist illusions, France and Germany led the western part of the continent towards increasing integration, which eventually culminated into the emergence of the European Union. Reinventing their Arab policies became the part of the political evolution of Western societies towards applying the principles of liberal democracy in international relations. Instead of opting for direct control, Europeans nowadays view North Africa as a region of sovereign states close to European culture (one of the undeniable assets from the Colonial era is the proficiency of French/English speaking citizens of these Arab countries), with which they are eager to develop security cooperation and trade relations, in addition to encouraging tourism (as Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco became especially popular among Western tourists). Another important incentive for such a positive

evolution was the fact that by the end of the 20th century France, Britain, and Germany became host countries of important Arab and Muslim minorities.

The post-Cold War resuscitating of the *Mare Nostrum* project, i.e. transforming the whole Mediterranean space into a part of Jean Monnet's European dream is grounded in the strong conviction, shared in the influential Western capitals and think tanks after 1989, that liberal democracy and market capitalism have won the ideological battle with competing sets of ideas and political alternatives (Communism, nationalism, etc.), and that what lies ahead is the prospect of an universal spread of Western (European) values to even the remote coins of the planet. This triumphalism, which found a theoretical argument in the "End of History and the Last Man" bestseller of the American scholar Fukuyama[1] permeated official parlance and public discussions in the EU in the 1990s. As is obvious now, the next two decades brought ample proofs of the inconsistencies in such theoretical hypotheses.

The crucial importance of finding the right formula that benefits the peoples of both Europe and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is the more evident nowadays, in the second decade of the 21th century, that is increasingly challenged by a host of intractable security risks, conflicts, and unpredictability in what was known as the Old World. The thesis is aimed to fill two important gaps that distort the picture of the current trends in the Southern Mediterranean and hence undermine the formulation of adequate cooperative policies by the European Union and it's Member-States:

- The first is a theoretical one and is linked to the lack of expertise and/or to the still prevailing colonial hubris vis-à-vis the Arab-Muslim world, resulting in the adoption of the false premise that "the European values" have a universal sway and therefore should be embedded into the contemporary Arab political systems. Until now, virtually no one has dared to challenge this deeply rooted conviction, which is a part of the liberal-democratic mythology behind the mainstream schools of thought and political denominations in the West.

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[1] Ibid.

- The second one is the lack of an accurate assessment of the "Arab Spring" significance as a popular movement/movements that aim to abolish the secular repressive political systems coined after European authoritarian models from the 20th century and ignoring the genuine efforts to reinvent/reinterpret Arab/Islamic traditions in state building and Muslim democracy in line with modern-day popular demands.

   Therefore, the main hypothesis formulated by in the thesis is that, indeed, "the world is not flat"[2] as different civilizations produce their own political traditions, institutions, and solutions to societies' core problems and essential interests. Understanding what unites and divides different peoples is the precondition for building a mutually beneficial set of policies, which indeed are symmetric, rather than asymmetrical.

Reviewing the existing sources and literature on the subject, the author mentions the abundant English-language documentary sources – official documents published by the European Commission, the Council, the EEAS, the European Parliament, etc. Some EU-linked institutes also regularly publish official sources on the topic (see for example the Institute for Security Studies of the European Union.

When researching international relations in the past 5-6 years, i.e. trying to assess foreign policies that are still evolving, while experiencing sharp amplitudes under the pressure of both endogenic and exogenic factors and players, it is unsurprising to find that academic studies are in a short supply. Some publications that focus on this topic pertain to the prestigious Spanish-based FRIDE institute. "Europe in the reshaped Middle East" (http://fride.org/download/Europe_in_the_reshaped_Middle_East.pdf) was published after a year and a half following the beginning of the "Arab Spring" and reflects both the critical appraisal of Europe's Mediterranean policies in the pre-revolution period, on the one hand, and the optimistic expectations for "Arab democracy" developing with European assistance and patronage. A vast multitude of publications were produced by the specialized institutes of the type of The European Institute of the Mediterranean, which publishes annual reports on Euro-Mediterranean

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[2] A phrase coined by the American columnist Thomas Freedman, suggesting that globalization overcame world cultural diversity. See: http://www.thomaslfriedman.com/bookshelf/the-world-is-flat

cooperation (see http://www.iemed.org/iemed/presentacio-en/liemed). A similar portfolio of studies is undertaken by its French counterpart – l'Institut de la Mediterrannee in Marseille, France (http://www.ins-med.org/), in addition to the EuroMesCo network of research institutes related to the region (http://www.euromesco.net/). Very important contributions were made by the prestigious Italian *Istituto Affari Internazionali* with its most prominent scholar in EU-Mediterranean policies Nathalie Tocci.

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Chapter 1 titled "*The emergence and crisis readjustments of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (from the 1970s until 2004)*" states that over the last several decades the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, also known by the acronym EUROMED, developed from limited trade and economic exchange bilateral agreements into a complex set of institutional frameworks and dynamic trends premised on regional stability/integration, security and political reforms, economic cooperation, and cultural interaction, and forming a wide hub of interregional, supranational community-national societies, and bilateral relations.

The assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and the ensuing institutionalizing of partnership between the two groups of states (both interregional/multilateral and bilateral) from both sides of the *Mare Nostrum* is facing several challenges, stemming from the fact, that this process is defined by the combined effect of three levels of loosely related developments over a period of at least two decades (1995-2015):

- Integration and enlargement processes within the European Union in the post-Cold War period, marked with the emergence of the Eurozone, the Schengen Agreement and the accession of most of the ex-Communist states in Eastern Europe.
- Further economic stagnation, regional disintegration, violent conflicts and revolutionary upheaval in the Arab states, forming the Southern Arc of the Mediterranean; in addition to the reversal in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, and foreign/multinational interventions in several regional countries.

- Profound shifts in the international system with the end of the bi-polar world and the demise of Soviet type of Communism and the ensuing acceleration of globalization processes.

Contrary to the initial intensions/declarations aimed at reducing the differences between the European and the non-European Mediterranean states, these processes led to the further widening of the chasm between the two groups of states[3]. On the one hand, the developed European Mediterranean countries gained new international momentum and leverage through the emergence of the European Union as a powerful player on the world scene, while on the other, negative trends that prevailed domestically and regionally in the South Mediterranean region further accentuated the existing challenges ahead of Arab societies in question. Therefore, from the outset the Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation partnership was characterized by the profound asymmetry between the two groups of states with diametrically distinct economic profiles and portfolios, belonging to different continental dynamics and subscribing to contrasting cultural traditions.

This complex set of circumstances and trends was made even more problematic as the initial momentum of Euro-Mediterranean *rapprochement* was linked to two differing drives, which are not necessarily reconcilable: the profound desire of the Arab elites and peoples to benefit from cross-Mediterranean economic cooperation, access to the Common Market and investments/aid from "Europe", on the one hand, and the EU desire to further spread its political, economic, and cultural influence to the South by imposing cooperation frameworks of its own design, on the other. The latter trend, especially prominent in the South-European states that have a history of colonial empires (France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal) received a great boost by the enlargement process that followed the end of Communism in Eastern Europe.

Methodological considerations are offered in the first paragraph of this chapter. The author borrows from the US international relations/foreign policy theoretical framework that distinguishes between the idealistic and the realistic schools of thought. While in the

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[3] Israel represents a special case, as it represented the one of the two non-Arab countries (the other one being Turkey), and will not be a focus in this paper.

European/Mediterranean context the idealistic school/approach is represented by both the official/institutional democratization narratives (in Brussels and the Western capitals) and the corresponding theoretical models (constructivism in international relations is often referred to), the realistic school will be illustrated by the "core-periphery model", originally developed by Prof. Immanuel Wallerstein of Yale University under the title of "The World Systems Theory"[4] and usually applied to study relations of the West and the developing world.

Although these two approaches, which will be cross-checked with counterfactuals throughout the text, are not necessarily and invariable opposed, they stem from different premises and suggest broadly differing hypotheses. Idealism, or to use a European term, *normative connotation of European foreign policy (EFP)* or *the normative core of 'normative power Europe'* is represented by the key principles of democracy, rule of law, social justice and human rights, outlined in the Lisbon Treaty[5]. The EU's internal governance is thus transposed externally, moulding the nature of its foreign policies. More specifically, the EU's internal system of rules and laws is transposed externally through the contractual relations the Union establishes and develops with third parties[6].

It is undeniable, that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), however well-intentional it could be, is asymmetrical in character, i.e. it is the European Union that not only conceived the partnership's institutional setup, but from the outset defines its dynamics and perceived aims. This fundamental premise permits to view this partnership as a by-product of the EU-driven enlargement efforts, aimed at integrating the European countries and at associating the non-European Mediterranean states by bringing them together and involving them in its own project/vision.

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[4] As is well-known he divides nation-states into three groups: core, periphery and semi-periphery. See at https://thebasebk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/The-Modern-World-System.pdf

[5] Lisbon Treaty states that in international affairs the EU would be guided by and would seek to promote the values on which the Union is founded, including democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law (Article III-193(1), Article I-2 and I-3).

[6] See: Nathalie Tocci, Profiling normative foreign policy: The European Union and its global partners, at: file:///C:/Users/Emo/Downloads/1+Profiling+Normative+Foreign+Policy.pdf,

The "Europeanization" tenet of the EUROMED project may be considered the starting point and the broad perspective in shaping the EU and Member-States' policies in the wider Mediterranean region. As Professor Frank Schimmelfennig puts it, "the EU has designed novel institutional arrangements for those countries that are either not willing to become members – the European Economic Area and the bilateral treaties with Switzerland – or not eligible for membership: e.g. the Barcelona process (since 1995) for the Mediterranean neighbors and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP, since 2003) for the Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Northern African neighbors. At their core, these institutional arrangements are directed at managing interdependence by aligning neighboring countries with EU policies and rules, albeit in the absence of formal membership"[7].

Moreover, because the EU is a regional/European community of states, it is stressing on regionalism in its outlook and foreign policy, especially in the Mediterranean case. However, as Federica Bicchi rightfully argues, this hardly reflects the situation on the ground: "The Mediterranean is a particularly hard case for region building….It is difficult to justify the idea of a 'Mediterranean region' on 'objective' grounds.

All this presents a theoretical challenge to the spill-over tactic[8] followed by the European Union and exemplified in the successive waves of enlargement. Usually the rationale is that by associating countries in conflict-torn regions and sub-regions is an effective instrument to achieve peace and regional stabilization as a precondition for both regional and interregional integration. The obvious example is the EU associative process in the Western Balkans.

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[7] Frank Shimmelfenning, Europeanization beyond the member states, Paper for: Zeitschrift für Staats-und Europawissenschaften 2010 in:
http://www.eup.ethz.ch/people/schimmelfennig/publications/10_ZSE_Europeanization__manuscript_.pdf

[8] Political science literature on diffusion provides us with an appropriate set of different social mechanisms driving such transfer processes. For instance, Börzel and Risse distinguish five mechanisms: coercion, conditionality, socialization, persuasion and emulation (Börzel/Risse 2008). Even though such patterns often seem too inflexible for historical analysis, they undoubtedly possess greater explanatory power than many concepts that circulate within the historical transfer research (Werner/Zimmermann 2002; Paulmann 2004). (http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/v/transformeurope/publications/working_paper/WP_01_Juni_Boerzel_Risse.pdf)

However, any attempts at drawing a parallel between the Western Balkans and the South Mediterranean countries will be challenged by two fundamental differences between the two areas: 1) Unlike the MENA region, the countries in the Western Balkans sub-region belong both historically, and geographically, to Europe, so their desire to join the EU is supported by stronger arguments. 2) It has been the clear intention of Brussels to effectively accept the Western Balkans countries as Member-States if they fulfill the required pre-conditions. Such a promise was never made, nor hoped for by the Arab states from the South Mediterranean. Integration of Arab candidate-states became an even remoter idea after the start of the Arab spring and the Ukrainian crisis since 2014, which demonstrated the perils of precipitated association process in a challenged environment.

One of the most questionable premises in both approaches (idealistic and realistic) to the EUROMED, however, is the total ignorance of the Muslim-Arab social and political traditions and the role of Islam as the foundation of both traditional and contemporary MENA societies. The linear, globalist vision of world's political and social landscape, where peoples that fall outside the Western sphere are denied any legitimacy in democracy building and economic welfare. The more is true of the "Near East" and of the South Mediterranean, which share the same sea with Europe, but has the temerity of insisting upon its distinct path to modernity, which does not suppose the automatic transposition of the European experience to facilitate its own transition into the 21th century.

However, the author stresses that since the subject of the Arab/Muslim democratic traditions and prospects, however, represents a vast theoretical and political corpus of doctrines and practices, he does not intend to enter into greater detail in the present dissertation, as his focus is mainly on EU perceptions, concepts and policies regarding its partnership with the South Mediterranean countries.

Historically, the 1990s EUROMED cooperation process was institutionalized under the so-called Barcelona Process. Its start-up event was The Barcelona Conference, convened on 27-28.11.1995 and attended by 15 European and 5 European states non-Members, and 9 Non-

European Mediterranean countries[9]. They adopted the Barcelona Declaration, which proclaimed the establishment of a common area of peace and stability as its main aim. This inevitably put the emphasis on the political and security problems, forming the framework for economic and cultural cooperation in the region. If the political & security questions were dealt with in a first "basket", the second one and, in the eyes of the Arab participants, the far more important one was economic cooperation. The major economic component of the Barcelona Process is composed of two parallel threads: the first is the creation of bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) between the EU and each of the ten MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries - Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, the Palestinian Authority and Turkey (which already has a customs union with the EU) - and second, the development of FTAs between the countries of the region themselves by 2010. A third "basket" provides for "Developing human ressources, promoting understanding between cultures & exchanges between civil societies"[10].

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership comprises two complementary dimensions:

• Bilateral dimension. The European Union carries out a number of activities bilaterally with each country. The most important are the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements that the Union negotiates with the Mediterranean partners individually. They reflect the general principles governing the new Euro-Mediterranean relationship, although they each contain characteristics specific to the relations between the EU and each Mediterranean partner.

- Regional dimension.

Regional dialogue was conceived as one of the most innovative aspects of the partnership, covering at the same time the political, economic and cultural fields (regional cooperation).

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[9] It was attended by the following delegations: 15 EU member states of the time (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany,Spain,Finland,France,Greece,Ireland,Italy,Luxembourg,Netherlands,Portugal,United Kingdom,Sweden,5 Non-EU member states of the time (Croatia,Cyprus,Malta,Macedonia,Turkey), and 9 governments from the wider Mediterranean region (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and the Palestinian Authority), in addition to representatives from two European institutions (Council of the European Union and European Commission).

[10] Ibid.

Regional cooperation has a considerable strategic impact as it deals with problems that are common to many Mediterranean partners while it emphasises the national complementarities. The multilateral dimension supports and complements the bilateral actions and dialogue taking place under the association agreements. The existing MEDA programme became the main financial instrument for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership[11]. However, regionalism was challenged by the continuing worsening of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21th century, virtually paralyzing the political dimension of the Barcelona Process.

In sharp contrast to the travails of regional integration, the Barcelona Process gave a strong impetus to the development of bilateral relations. The essential innovation here were the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements - are the main contractual agreements between the European Community and its partners in the Mediterranean. They replaced the cooperation agreements concluded in the 1970s. The agreements cover the three main areas included in the Barcelona declaration, that is to say, political dialogue, economic relations, and cooperation in social and cultural affairs. All agreements contain a clause defining respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights as 'an essential element' of the agreement. They all contain clauses dealing with political dialogue; the free movement of goods, services and capital; economic cooperation; social and cultural cooperation; financial cooperation; and institutional arrangements. With regard to the three partners that are either set to join the EU on 1 May 2004 (Cyprus and Malta), or which are candidates for membership (Turkey), they were at that time linked to the Union by means of association agreements that provide for customs unions with the EU.

Although these agreements cover a wide range of issues, here we will focus on the "democracy promotion" component. It embodies "normative power Europe" as it came to be known in both academic and political discussions.

Political scientists widely considered the EMP as the expression of a new 'normative regionalism', informed by the EU's own character as a 'civilian power' and its deep commitment to region-building. Rather than imposing certain models and solutions, it was argued that the EU,

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[11] http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/publications/closer_en.pdf

through the EMP, would use its powers of persuasion and attraction to change the region. However, these initial predictions soon appeared to have been overly optimistic.

It constructed a novel multilateral framework for coordinating regional affairs and instilled some limited sense of common identity on a variety of regional actors. It enabled the EU to maintain a political dialogue with the Mediterranean countries and provided it with some influence over their internal development. To the MPCs, the EMP offered in return some measure of support in their difficult task of modernising their economies and societies. But considerable problems remained. Administrative and structural shortcomings limited the effectiveness of the EMP from the outset and the EU's reluctance to provide the required financial and economic resources made Mediterranean countries question the extent of EU solidarity. Most importantly, perhaps, the EMP created overblown expectations about the EU's ability to transform the region. When the EU was unable to meet these expectations, the result was widespread disappointment and calls for reform.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to two particular accession policies that were introduced in the EUROMED framework in the first decade of the present century - the southern dimension of the EU Neighborhood Policy to the Union for the Mediterranean.

One sizable difference between the Barcelona Process and the ENP is that the latter abandoned one-size-fits-all approaches and engaged in the negotiation of reform projects bilaterally with the South-Mediterranean countries. National Action Plans were jointly agreed upon and the outcome of the reform process is supposed to be monitored by working groups within the European Commission. This differentiated approach led to the enactment of the following instruments:

1. Seven agreed Action Plans with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia;
2. Three Action plans on "stand-by" – with Algeria, Libya, and Syria.

It must be noted that the seven countries having agreed to respective Action Plans with the EU are also party to a contractual relation with the EU in the shape of Association Agreements (an Interim Association Agreement in the case of the Palestinian Authority).

For their part, as outlined earlier, ruling elites in the South-Mediterranean countries were eager to enter into bilateral partnerships and receive a preferential status with the EU mostly if not solely for economic reasons. Although the majority of governments paid lip-service to democratic reform, their foremost priority was and still is to stabilize their hold on power. Therefore, as sound democratization would mean to expose the ruling elites to political competition and thus would jeopardize their rule, it was highly unlikely that Western-style democratization could take place in those countries. On the other hand, these regimes understood they had to play by the EU-sponsored democratization scenario, which implied the introduction of the most basic tenets of representative democracy. This compromise resulted in superficial institutional reforms, that didn't present a serious threat to the ruling elites, on the one hand, and formally corresponded to EU conditions for enhanced partnership. Virtually all Mediterranean partner countries of the EU established parliaments and began to hold elections on a regular basis, adopting the principle of the separation of powers in their consitutions. It goes without saying, that "..in contrast to Western concepts of representation, most of these polities lack essential authorities while the power remains in the hands of the presidents and kings, which is reflected in the law overall scores of the southern Mediterranean. Hence, the rulers in the southern partner countries have managed to utilize public sentiments for the purpose of regime survival, without relinquishing essential powers to democratic institutions."[12] During this period the European support of civil society actors has also failed to bring about groups that are powerful enough to be incorporated in Euro-Med negotiations. This is due to the fact that aid for democracy and human rights projects is channeled through Arab governments. As a result, "much of the money has been channeled through human rights councils and commissions controlled by Arab governments, and many civil society groups receiving EU money are not independent"[13].

Overall, the regimes in the southern Mediterranean exploited the global 'war on terrorism' for oppressing political opponents, thus suffocating civil society in its fledgling stage. Hence, even if the Mediterranean regimes have opened up their regimes to some extent, a stron undercurrent of reinforced oppression of political opponents holds back real progress with regard to human rights."[14]

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[12] Ibidem
[13] Young, 2006
[14] Ibidem

As the only way to deal with security issues (general security, counter terrorism, immigration control, etc.) was through dialogue/cooperation with the existing Middle Eastern regimes, the democratization agenda was largely subcontracted to NGOs, while the EU institutions were relying mostly on propaganda and political correct interpretation of the ENP transformative aims. One can conclude, that Brussels' bureaucracy lived in an imaginary world simply transposing of the ENP priorities, criteria and mechanisms to South Mediterranean realities postponing indefinitely the theoretically existing opportunity of EU-membership.

With the EUROMED and the ENP in tatters, French President Nicolas Sarkozy launched its 'Union of the Mediterranean' idea. In October 2007, French President Nicolas Sarcozy invited Mediterranean leaders to a summit to take place in July 2008 with an aim to "lay the foundations of a political, economic and cultural union founded on the principles of strict equality". At the time, Sarkozy was criticized regarding the relationship between the proposed intra-Mediterranean union and the Barcelona Process. Some of the Mediterranean countries and EU member states criticized the new union emphasizing on the risk of reducing the effectiveness of the already established policies in the region. The other actors involved in the Mediterranean policies of the Union for over a decade were drawing attention to the possibility of duplication and undermining the work of Barcelona Process. However the resemblance of the Mediterranean Union to the European Union was heavily criticized by Turkey since the idea of Turkey's inclusion in the Mediterranean Union was perceived as an alternative to the EU membership for Turkey. Sarkozy's statements, such as "Turkey would instead form the backbone of the new Mediterranean Union", especially created discomfort and disappointment on the Turkish side[15]. After the reactions of policy makers, practitioners, civil society organizations and countries like Turkey, as well as the reactions emanating within the EU and particularly from Germany, France modified its original idea, which was to include only the countries bordering the Mediterranean, and accepted German Chancellor Merkel's request to include all EU Member States and to bring

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[15] The debate on the Mediterranean Union and Turkey's membership to this new union coincided with the debates on a possible "privileged membership" between Turkey and the EU, which increased the skepticism in Turkey towards the new initiative and resulted in the Turkish Foreign Ministry's reaction. Abdullah Gul, then Foreign Minister, said: "Turkey is a country that has started accession negotiations with the EU. The negotiations started on the basis of a EU decision which was taken unanimously, including France. Putting obstacles to the progress of the negotiation process would amount to violating signatures and promises made in the past, which I do not think will happen."

the new initiative within the existing EU strutures and policies in the region. This solution was first accepted by the March 2009 European Council, that requested the Commission with a formal proposal.

This new initiative's main objective[16] has been increasing the co-ownership of the process while complementing the EU bilateral relations with these countries which will continue under existing policy frameworks such as the ENP as well as the regional dimension of the EU enlargement policy and to the EU-Africa strategy. The UfM emphaises three main chapters of cooperation already envisaged by the Barcelona process: a) political dialogue, b) economic cooperation and free trade, and c) human , social and cultural dialogue among the EU member states and the following Southern Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, PA, Swria, Tunisia and Turkey, while Libya refused to participate. Finally, some other countries, no originally included within the Barcelona Process were included in the new initiative: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Mauritania, Monaco and Montenegro.

Nevertheless, since the start this initiative is criticized for not bringing an added value to the existing policies – the issues that have been included in the UfM were already in the three baskets of the Barcelona Process of 1995. The second most importan criticism focuses on the non-abailability of the funds to be released under the UfM initiative. Furthermore, there have been criticisms regarding the institutional aspect of the new initiative; that the intervention of the third countries in EU domains through copresidency would create a legal problem and a clash between Barcelona acquis and acquis communautaire.

Sarkozy's UfM initiative experienced two failures: initially it was aimed at creating regional community, carved up from Mediterranean EU-Member States and South-Mediterranean states. It was clearly intended in securing France's leadership position at the expense of the other most influential country within the EU – Germany. However, after the latter, supported by other EU-members not included in the UfM design, rejected the idea, the initial project was rekindled into its present form. This *volte-face* completely transformed its character, since Brussels imposed a strict control over the French initiative.

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[16] See The Final Statement, published in Marseille in November, 2008 at: http://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/dec-final-Marseille-UfM.pdf

Interpreting the initial Sarkozy idea (The Mediterranean Union), one might say that a core country, or rather a key country from a core community (the EU) tried to secure a leading position launching a project to unite a group of countries, representing other core states (the Mediterranean EU-States), semi-peripheral states (Turkey, Israel), and peripheral states (the Arab states[17] and the Palestinian Authority). In order to gain the semi-peripheral states' approval, a "special partnership" status was on the offer. It appeared as a shrewd move, as in case Turkey, as well as Israel (and perhaps Morocco), accepted it, this could offer Brussels with a solution to an unsolvable problem (the semi-peripheral states' bid for membership). Turkey, however, objected from the outset, which significantly eroded the chances for earlier approval by Brussels/Germany.

The second failure, this time of the "Union for the Mediterranean", was predicated on the same factors, which hindered the original Barcelona Process and above all – the inability of the EU, let alone France, to offer a solution to the existing conflict in the South Mediterranean and above all – the Israeli-Palestinian problem. As for the democracy agenda, far from representing a serious challenge to South Mediterranean authoritarianism, it was a knowing collusion between the West-European politicians and the Arab strongmen to downgrade the democratic reforms priorities in favor of security cooperation, premised on regimes stabilization. This 'discrete compromise' represented the favoring of 'possession goals', instead of 'milieu goals', which was facilitated by the worsening of the security situation on both shores of the Mediterranean, especially after the US led "war on terror" swept the Middle East.

Moreover, the further legitimization of 'façade democracy' not only dealt a coup to genuine democratic aspirations of the peoples in several Arab countries, but also negated any attempts at modern interpretations of the Shura based authentic Arab/Muslim political culture, corresponding to social traditions and mores in the MENA region. Façade democracy created the perfect preconditions for the public revolts, which led to the downfall of authorianism, but also plunged countries like Tunisia and Egypt into political and economic crisis.

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[17] Egypt was another candidate for a semi-peripheral status, as it is by far the most populous and politically influential country among the non-EU Mediterranean countries. However, his bid was doomed from the outset.

This compromise had disastrous effects on the political processes in a number of Arab countries, among which Tunisia and Egypt. The snobbing by the EU institutions of the main opposition in these countries, namely the Muslim Brotherhood movements, legitimized the regimes' repressions and led to their further marginalization. The denial of any legal political presence pushed some of their supporters towards radical ideas and influences, which ultimately widened the influence of extreme organisations, acting in the name of Islam.

This negative trend put additional pressure on the South-Mediterranean semi-peripheral countries like Turkey, Israel, and Egypt, which not only hindered regional (South-South) integration efforts, but added to further alienation between Arab and non-Arab EU 'neighbors', on one hand, and between would be regional leader, like Egypt, and the rest, on the other. In such a way, the emphasis of the ENP on bilateral partnership facilitated the further erosion of Arab solidarity, encouraging countries like Morocco, which considered itself a more likely candidate for the status of 'special partner' with the EU, to push with its own national agenda. Others followed suit.

Chapter 3 is titled "The European Union, Europe and the 'Arab Spring'**.** It focuses on the frantic search for an adequate EU and European response to the popular upheavals, which shook a number of South Mediterranean countries back in 2011. Both Brussels and the Western capitals had to redefine their priorities and narratives vis-à-vis their southern neighbors. Eventually, they settled for a wholehearted support for the 'Arab Spring' as an expression of prevailing anti-dictatorial feelings and demands by the Arab 'silent majorities'. Parallels between the 'Arab Spring' and the Eastern European 'velvet revolutions' were hastily drawn, showing little appreciation for Arabic traditions and social attitudes. Such a *volte-face* of the previous stress on securitization was at least partially vindicated by the Tunisian revolution that cleared the way for a post-authoritarian type of policies. This was to a great extent the result of the existing set of historical and cultural circumstances, considered to be unique in the region[18]. Even in this case,

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[18] According to Marc Pierini – a seasoned diplomat and expert – among those factors defining Tunisian exception is the mix of older cultures from the times of the Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Berbers, Arabs, etc., in addition to the peaceful transition to independence from France in 1956, to the existence of a strong middle class, and to Tunisian women's emancipation under the country's first president, Habib Bourguiba. http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=56071

however, ignoring of the prevailing Arab traditions' imprint is wrought with risks. In any case, the Tunisian democratic experience is too young and fragile, and the country itself has a limited impact on the Arab political scene.

Elsewhere a typical mistake shared by both the EU institutions and the Member-States, was their overreliance on democratic institutions and procedures, which form a part of the "façade democracy" in some Arab countries. The obvious example is a country, which is not part of the Maghreb sub-region, but was and still is considered as the heart of the Arab World, namely Egypt. Since the first protests erupted in Tahrir square two years ago, the EU has consistently supported the movement for democracy and human rights in Egypt, calling for a peaceful and inclusive transition. Similarly to the Tunisian case, Brussels wholeheartedly embraced the vision of democratic Egypt, A succession of high-level visits to Egypt has been made to underline and highlight this support, by *inter alia.* European Commission President Barroso and European Council President Van Rompuy, by HR/VP Ashton and Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy Füle. One of the first foreign visits undertaken by the newly-elected President Morsi of Egypt was to Brussels which resulted in agreement to resume bilateral contacts through the structures of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement and a restart of negotiations on a new ENP Action Plan.[19]

The overreliance on Western-coined democratic institutions, coupled with the underestimation of the influence and ambitions of the Army and the officers' corpus in the land of Abdel Nasser, led the EU institutions, in addition to most Member-States to believe that Egyptian democracy must be taken for granted. Such a belief was plainly proven shortsighted as both the EU and the European capitals were taken by surprise by the military coup led by Gen. Sisi in mid-July 2013. Reacting to the coup, the Council stressed the EU conviction, that "the armed forces should not play a political role in a democracy; they must accept and respect the constitutional authority of civilian power as a basic principle of democratic governance. It is now of utmost importance that Egypt embarks on a transition, allowing a transfer of power to a civilian-led and democratically

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[19] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-81_en.htm

elected government"[20]. This was yet another lip-service to political correctness, pervading EU documents and statements. Less than two years later, Brussels would quietly reverse to more or less "business as usual" with Cairo[21].

It is too early to give a final verdict of the credibility, effectiveness and input of EU/member-states policies on the Syrian crisis. However, it is beyond doubt that they were instrumental in further alienating both Brussels and leading West-European countries from the inner circle of global and regional players, that decide the fate not only of Syria/Iraq, but also of the 'Fertile Crescent', as these Middle Eastern territories were known in the past. Such a trend is also compromising the economic and human rights' agendas of Europe in the South Mediterranean, belittling the impact of otherwise generous financial and technical/logistical aid.

Another awakening from the illusionary EU transformative agenda in the framework of the Arab Spring/Arab Winter came after the November, 13, 2015 terrorist acts in Paris and the "tidal wave" of Middle Eastern illegal immigration through the "Balkan Route", which reached its climax by the end of the same year. One of the most important priorities for the EU and its Member-States became the preservation of European security faced with these unprecedented challenges, coming from the Arab world. Somewhat paradoxically, the festering insecurity of the Iraq/Syria central region was translated into a combination of soft-security and hard-security threats to European security. It was largely Europe's own fault. Instead of effectively participating in the efforts to put an end to disintegration processes in the Iraq-Syria region by supporting democratic forces and crushing the terrorist bastions in the Middle East, the EU and the majority of its Member-States left other states do the job. This laissez-faire attitude led to the gradual formation of a Shi'a Axis involving the Iranian elite militias, the Iraqi Shi'a volunteers, the Hamas military units, plus the Assad regime military and paramilitary forces. Starting from the autumn of 2015, it received a powerful backing from the Russian aviation and intelligence forces, which decisively weighted on the balance of power in the Syrian conflict. These worrisome developments postponed the prospect of reaching a political solution to the crisis and put the West into a weak position.

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[20] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138282.pdf

[21] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/eu-legitimising-sisi-coup-egypt-20144161181767834.html

In a parallel development, the accumulation of Syrian refugees and other illegal migrants on Turkish territory led to a humanitarian crisis, replicated in countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and to a lesser extent Iraq as well. Eventually, the Turkish authorities used the over 2 million of refugees on its territory as a trump card in its negotiations with the European Union. In order to increase the pressure on Europe, by mid-2015 mass migration to the West mainly through Greece and the Western Balkans swept Europe. The flocking of over a million migrants to the European borders and the saga of this human wave to its final destination – Germany and to a lesser extent the Nordic countries, led to an European crisis of previously unknown proportions that opposed "New" to "Old", in addition to South to North, Europe and created cleavages even within the core EU-members. Brussels and Germany were compelled to compromise with Turkey, signing a migrants' deal with its government. The European Union's deal with Turkey, reached in March, is Europe's key mechanism for reducing the flow of refugees into the bloc. In return for taking back refugees, Turkey was promised not only funding, but – if it meets 72 criteria outlined by the EU – visa-free travel to the Schengen Zone. The idea of visa-free travel for Turkish citizens is not only deeply unpopular among European voters, but has also sparked security concerns among European policymakers. The fulfillment of all the agreement's terms looked to be a difficult feat even at the time the agreement was signed. Following the failed coup of 15 July, 2016, both sides understand – even if they do not admit it publicly – that visa-free travel is off the table. In its turn this negative development puts the deal into jeopardy reviving European fears of a second "Balkan" wave of illegal migrants.

The illegal immigration problem shed an additional light to the problem of the rising threat of terrorist infiltration, including the problem of the returning "foreign terrorist fighters" to their European countries. On the other side, however, both the EU and leading member-states are still reluctant to engage more vigorously in Syria, stressing that they see no military solution to Syria's violence. Only five EU member states—Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and the UK[22]—have participated in the coalition carrying out air strikes against the Islamic State in

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[22] The UK government has agreed to extend air strikes in Iraq until at least March 2017. Britain's involvement in Syria has so far been limited to surveillance flights, drone strikes against British Islamic State fighters, and covert operations. London has promised to increase funding for special forces and to double the number of drones the UK operates in Iraq and Syria. The government has announced its intention to ask for parliamentary backing for air strikes in Syria very soon. Yet, senior military figures are downplaying the likely scale of UK operations.

Iraq. Taken together, these states have contributed a small fraction of the level of airpower provided by the United States. Before the Paris attacks, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands were struggling to find additional funds to continue their involvement in the coalition. As for Germany, even though Berlin announced on November 26 that it would contribute noncombat support services, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has been openly hostile to any military engagement in Syria.

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In the **'Conclusion'** the thesis presents the main lessons from contradictory developments and outcomes from the EU-South Mediterranean cooperation efforts for the last three decades.

He states that the thesis confirmed the main hypothesis, stated in the introduction, namely that different civilizations produce their own political traditions, institutions, and solutions to societies' core problems and essential interests. This conclusion is particularly relevant for Europe in several ways. In a more narrow sense, the acknowledgment of the cultural and social-political differences between the two shores of the Mediterranean and the acceptance by the European elites of the Arab culture, including Arab political culture, as a legitimate entity in a multicultural world, would facilitate the adoption of more realistic and adequate European policies in the MENA region. On the other hand, as the EU and several of its member-states currently face their existential crisis questioning the multiculturalist concept as a building stone of their societies, such a retour to a more balanced view of "the Other" could to a great extent ease the current pressure on mainstream parties and politicians from far-right Islamophobes, racists and extreme nationalists. Moreover, renouncing with the hubristic attitude vis-à-vis the Arabs, their religion and culture, the Europeans will also solve their fundamental problem with Islamist extremism and radicalization that use religious in a wholly distorted way.

In final analysis it appears that *Eurocentrism* lies at the heart of the EU failure both to objectively assess what is happening in the MENA region at large and to formulate realistic and successful policies towards it. This 21th century "ism" reproduces old colonial hubris combined

with a negligence of local cultures and traditions, not to mention centennial political wisdom and know-how which translate into successful state building and governance in a number of Arab states, one example among which is present-day Qatar. One of the consequences of Eurocentrism is that Europe both as European Union and as Member-States fatally ignored and continues to downplay the catastrophic consequences of foreign mentorship and "democracy promotion" that run counter Arab traditions and mores, not to mention the religious prescriptions of Islam. Western civilization itself is at crossroads and its pretense of equating its own constantly changing values with the universal ones is unwise and counterproductive even for Europe. Therefore the adoption of a much more tamed and conservative approach of the European institutions and states to the MENA region will be highly advisable.

Recent events in the MENA region have outlined two contrasting trends – to the difference of the "Arab Spring" countries, experiencing an existential crisis, which led to some of them becoming "failed states", another group of countries – namely the Arab monarchies, especially in the Gulf region, continue to experience economic progress, prosperity and stability. This fact alone reveals the shortcomings of the EU and Member-States neighborhood policy, based on geographical criteria, namely the appurtenance of the Arab countries involved to the (South) Mediterranean region. By favoring riverine countries, the EU ignored or downplayed the importance especially of the Gulf Cooperation Council members. With the unfolding of countries like Syria, Libya, or Iraq, the relative importance and role of the latter is continuously growing both in the regional and the international/global context. This is a fundamental fact, which should not be dismissed as a logical by-product of oil/gas bonanza. A political analysis of the resilience and upward dynamics of Gulf societies should also take into consideration, that, to the difference of the failed Arab states, Gulf monarchies benefitted from traditional shura democratic procedures and institutions, that run counter to liberal democracy of the Western type.

The doctorant sees some light at the end of the tunnel linking both coasts of the Mediterranean. A more realistic approach that draws its tenets from the MENA realities and aspirations is evident in the efforts that led to the new EU Global Security Strategy. Europe should learn from

its mistakes. Here are some suggestions as to the directions of a future European policy for the South Mediterranean, and beyond:

1. The EU should further distance itself from the early unrealistic ideas of abrupt Europeanization of the Arab Mediterranean countries (based on "shared values" of liberal-democracy and aimed at integrating Arab countries in the EU institutions) and recognize the cultural differences that divide the two shores of the Mediterranean. Finding the common ground necessary for a fruitful and beneficial to both sides dialogue between the proponents of different democratic models will create the prerequisites for the future political cooperation that will respect national/regional specificity.

2. The EU should also give up its narrow geographical approach in defining the scope of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. By drawing dividing lines between Arab coastal countries, on the one hand, and the rest – non-Mediterranean Arab countries, is counterproductive, especially since the Gulf States in particular are increasingly important players in the MENA area and beyond. Moreover, it was precisely the coastal Arab Spring countries that suffered the most from the downside effects of the popular revolts and their suppression at the hand of local tyrants.

3. Much more efforts should be dedicated on reestablishing EU relations with regional institutions in the MENA region – from the Arab League to the Gulf Cooperation Council. But here again, from European side cooperation should be refocused on partnership, rather than the current obsession with patronizing and imposing ready-made policies, that does not fit the MENA realities.