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THE EU'S CONSTRUCTIONS  
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN (2003-2017)

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## THE EU'S CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN (2003-2017)

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### ABSTRACT

This report offers a critical discourse analysis of the EU's conception of the Mediterranean since 2003. It attempts to display how the EU's discourse on the region can be read as a boundary-drawing exercise; and how it produces and reproduces European and Southern Mediterranean identities and constructs the ideal European self against its imperfect Southern Mediterranean others. It also claims that the EU's approach towards the Mediterranean is rather securitized, depoliticizing and technocratic. The report first looks into the shifts in the EU's construction of the Mediterranean in terms of its region-building and boundary-drawing exercises. Second, it analyses how the EU securitizes the Mediterranean space and how this becomes an identity-construction exercise. Third, it inquires into the interplay between the EU's norms and interests on the one hand and the European and Mediterranean identities that it constructs on the other. Finally, it attempts to demonstrate how the EU's technocratic and depoliticizing policies on the Southern Mediterranean produce and reproduce subject and objects.

### INTRODUCTION

This report enquires into the European Union's (EU's) conception of the Mediterranean since 2003 through a critical constructivist view with a post-structuralist bend that emphasizes the co-constitutive relationship between foreign policy and identity.<sup>2</sup> The 2003-2017 period is significant in the sense that the EU's discourse on the Mediterranean in this period has shifted from a normative/transformational region-building approach to a more interest-driven, pragmatic and bilateral one. Furthermore, although the EU has retained and consolidated its securitized approach to the Mediterranean, there has been a change in the definition of the threats in this period: the priority given to regional conflicts, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in the 1990s (see Morillas and Soler i Lecha 2017) has shifted to concerns over the mass flow of refugees, irregular migrants and border security,<sup>3</sup> whereas the threat posed by terrorism has increasingly and interchangeably been perceived as ISIS terrorism. There has also been a change regarding the means used to address these threats, as the previously existing focus on region building, confidence-building measures, and promotion of democracy and human rights has increasingly given way to managing migration, controlling borders, combating

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2 Following Campbell (1998), Neumann and Welsh (1991), Neumann (1998) and Weldes et al. (1999).

3 Note that while migration was also a concern for the EC/EU and its Member States in the past, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, it was not prioritized to the level that it has reached today. On the other hand, starting from the oil crisis of the early 1970s, energy security has also been a security concern that has almost always affected the relations of the EC/EU and its Member States with the Southern Mediterranean countries.

terrorism, and pursuing a more differentiated approach towards Mediterranean partners. A simultaneous shift can also be observed in the way the EU has named its Mediterranean partners. Increasingly referred to as “the southern neighbourhood countries” after the Arab uprisings of 2011, they were labelled as countries of “the surrounding regions” with the Global Strategy of the Union.

Analysing the discourse used by the EU, its officials and the leaders of EU Member States, this report argues that the EU’s approach to the Southern Mediterranean is first and foremost about the construction of identities, and the EU-European discourse on the Southern Mediterranean in the period 2003-2017 reflects this clearly. The report also argues that the EU’s approach towards the Mediterranean is rather securitized, depoliticizing and technocratic, and that it can also be read as a boundary-drawing exercise.

The report pursues a critical discourse analysis approach<sup>4</sup> in terms of methodology, and attempts to deconstruct “the structures of meaning created by the EU regarding the Mediterranean” (Cebeci and Schumacher 2016: 3) in the period 2003-2017. It further tries to display how the EU discourse in this period has produced and reproduced “subjects, objects and policies – especially identities and difference” regarding the Mediterranean, and how this discourse has legitimized the Union’s policies (Cebeci and Schumacher 2016: 3). In this context, all the EU documents concerning the Mediterranean (including those on the Union’s response to the Arab uprisings) published in the period 2003-2017, as well as the speeches of EU officials and Member States’ leaders, were analysed with a view to displaying and deconstructing the EU’s official discourse on the region. In order to engage in an in-depth analysis of the official discourse, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Brussels and Vienna in December 2016, with selected acting and retired EU officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission, acting and retired researchers from the European Parliament, as well as a Member of the European Parliament. An extensive literature review on European foreign policy in general and the EU’s Mediterranean policy in particular was undertaken not least with a view to substantiating the arguments of this study. Although process tracing is also employed in order “to see the correlation between the EU’s constructions of the Mediterranean and its policies” (Cebeci and Schumacher 2016: 12), it is only utilized to complement the study where necessary. This is because process tracing does not fit well with critical discourse analysis, as the former is about causation and the latter is about correlation (Cebeci and Schumacher 2016: 12).

This report first looks into how the EU constructs the Mediterranean, mainly through an analysis of the discourses of region building and boundary drawing in the period 2003-2017. The aim of the first section, in this regard, is to display how European identity is constructed by the EU vis-à-vis its Mediterranean other through marking the EU’s borders (for example, through the discourses and practices of border control and managed migration as put forward in the recent European Neighbourhood Policy documents). The second section attempts to reveal the interplay between securitization and identity construction in the EU’s approach to the Mediterranean. It argues that the EU has a securitized approach towards the Mediterranean, depicting this mainly as an identity-construction exercise whereby the EU creates a peaceful inside and a dangerous outside. It thus specifically underlines the securitization of immigration

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4 Following Milliken (1999), Wodak (2001) and Hansen (2006).

and religiously motivated terrorism (as referred to in the European Security Strategy, the Global Strategy and the European Neighbourhood Policy texts) as such an exercise. The third section inquires into how the norms-interests dichotomy works in the case of the EU's policies towards the Mediterranean and how this is related to the EU's construction of the region and of itself as such. It argues that the discursive practice of emphasizing and reiterating "the EU's normative difference" from others empowers the Union to pursue its interests more effectively and legitimizes its acts in this regard. The fourth section scrutinizes how the technocratic and depoliticizing approach of the EU is constitutive not only of its policies regarding the Mediterranean but also of the European and Southern Mediterranean identities. It claims that the EU's depoliticizing and technocratic approach creates self-regulating neo-liberal subjects and objects, and further contributes to the reproduction of the ideal European self vis-à-vis its Mediterranean others, which are portrayed as backward and incapable of change on their own.

## 1. THE EU'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN: REGION BUILDING, BOUNDARY-DRAWING AND BEYOND

The Mediterranean is usually predicated as "a constructed region".<sup>5</sup> Such construction is historical and can be traced back to the notion of Mare Nostrum in Roman times. Furthermore, it is first and foremost "a European construct" (Interviewee 2). For many analysts, the region-building goal of the Barcelona Process also underlines the Mediterranean's constructed nature<sup>6</sup> as it reflects the EU's desire "to reproduce itself" (Bretherton and Vogler 1999: 249). Nevertheless, "social constructions are inherently unstable and contested" (Cebeci and Schumacher 2016: 2). The EU's conception of the Mediterranean has also changed over time, due to many factors such as the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 – which were followed by a wave of attacks on European soil in Istanbul (November 2003), Madrid (March 2004) and London (July 2005) and by attacks on European targets in other parts of the world<sup>7</sup> – as well as the Arab uprisings of 2011 and the ensuing mass flow of refugees from affected regions to Europe.<sup>8</sup> Besides these external developments, internal factors in the EU have considerably determined the conception of the Mediterranean. The "big bang" enlargement (which included two Mediterranean countries, Malta and Cyprus) of 2004 and the subsequent enlargement fatigue observed in EU/European capitals, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, and the Eurozone crisis which mainly affected Mediterranean Member States of the EU were crucial in this regard.

5 See, for example, Panebianco and Attinà (2004: 10). In the interviews conducted for this project, the interviewees also drew attention to this point, openly stating that the Mediterranean is a constructed region (Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2).

6 See, for example, Bicchi (2006).

7 For example, in Casablanca, Morocco in May 2003 and in Bali, Indonesia in November 2003.

8 Note that the authors deliberately refrain from using the term "refugee crisis" to define the flow of refugees in order not to contribute to the negative and securitized construction of the refugees and feed into the xenophobia already prevalent in Europe.

These internal and external developments caused a shift from the EU's normative region-building approach<sup>9</sup> which aimed to construct the Mediterranean space as a region, first towards the "normative bilateralism" (Pace 2007) of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), then to project-based multilateralism of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and finally to the more differentiated and pragmatic approach of the revised ENP of 2015<sup>10</sup> which was endorsed by the idea of "principled pragmatism" stipulated in the Global Strategy (EEAS 2016). These policy shifts also match discursive shifts in the definitions of the Mediterranean space, wherein the term "Mediterranean" was toned down and has increasingly been replaced with the term "Southern Neighbourhood"<sup>11</sup> – and later, in the Global Strategy, with the term "surrounding regions to the east and *south*".<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, such shifts were reflective of a new mental and mainly geopolitical mapping of the region among decision-makers in Brussels and EU Member State capitals – a development that came particularly to the fore in the framework of the 2015 ENP review process.

The year 2003 was especially significant as it marked the introduction of the Wider Europe Document, published on 11 March 2003, and the acceptance of the European Security Strategy (ESS), published just nine months later. Both documents pertain first and foremost to boundary drawing in the sense that the former came out of the need for halting the EU's enlargement at some point and marking the Union's definite borders, whereas the latter was inevitably destined to map the peaceful and secure European inside vis-à-vis an unstable, conflictual and thus threatening outside. The European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy paper, which was published a year later, carried the same markers as it built on these two documents. The creation of "a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean" was set as the major goal of the policy, just as it was stipulated in the ESS (Council of the European Union 2003: 8). The Wider Europe document, the ESS and the ENP Strategy were not designed to specifically address the Mediterranean but contained significant parts which defined the Mediterranean as follows: "In the Mediterranean region, the ENP applies to all the non-EU participants in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona process) with the exception of Turkey, which is pursuing its relations with the EU in a pre-accession framework" (Commission of the European Communities 2004b: 7).<sup>13</sup>

The ENP was designed for those countries in the EU's "geographical proximity"<sup>14</sup> (Commission of the European Communities 2003) that did not "have the prospect of [EU] membership" (Commission of the European Communities 2004a). In other words, the main idea behind it was that the EU could not enlarge "forever" (Prodi 2002: 3). The ENP was designed in such a way as to mark "the final borders of the Union" and to stipulate "how to promote security and stability beyond that border" (Browning and Joenniemi 2008: 520). The ENP can thus be regarded, "first and foremost, [as] a boundary drawing exercise; a political and spatial practice which does not

9 "Normative regionalism" as defined by Pace (2007).

10 For a detailed analysis of this new approach of the revised ENP of 2015, see Schumacher (2016).

11 Note that two of our interviewees underlined this discursive shift towards the use of the term "Southern Neighbourhood" (Interviewees 1 and 3).

12 Note that one of our interviewees also referred to the employment of this term instead of the term "Mediterranean" (Interviewee 4).

13 The Mediterranean partners of the ENP are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia, as well as the Palestinian Authority.

14 Note that this language of geographical proximity (as a uniting feature) was left aside after the Arab uprisings, with the ENP review of 2011 (Bouris and Schumacher 2017: 10-11).

only produce identities [...] but also subjects" (Cebeci 2017: 67).<sup>15</sup>

The same boundary-drawing exercise can also be observed in the launching of the UfM. It was the then French presidential candidate Nicholas Sarkozy who came up with the idea of the creation of a Mediterranean Union which would be composed of the southern Member States of the EU and the Southern Mediterranean partners, and modelled on the EU. In the speech that Sarkozy gave in Toulon in February 2007 to launch this initiative during his presidential campaign, he stated:

Europe cannot extend indefinitely. Europe, if it wants to have an identity, it must have boundaries and therefore limits. Europe, if it wants to have power, it cannot be diluted unceasingly. Europe, if it wants to be able to function, it cannot expand without stopping. Turkey has no place in the European Union because it is not a European country. But Turkey is a great Mediterranean country with which Mediterranean Europe can advance the unity of the Mediterranean. This is the great common ambition that I want to propose to Turkey. (Sarkozy 2007)<sup>16</sup>

Sarkozy's statement carries all the markers of othering and boundary drawing. It is thus mainly an identity-construction exercise identifying/fixing the EU's borders and underlining who is to be left out because of non-European characteristics. This is especially significant as it also draws the line between the "Mediterranean" which is supposed to be European and the non-European "Mediterranean" which should be cooperated with (primarily, to secure the EU's borders, via resolving conflicts and managing immigration). The UfM, in its current form, is different from what Sarkozy initially planned as it now involves all EU members and not only the Mediterranean Member States. Furthermore, in addition to the former partners of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), it now includes the Western Balkan countries (namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania) and Monaco, as well as Mauritania. Besides Sarkozy's individual geopolitical motivations that led to its inception, the UfM constitutes the venue for project-based multilateral cooperation between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners. The UfM is also significant as it recognizes the diverse characteristics of its partners and adopts a "variable geometry" approach towards the Mediterranean for providing the EU with the flexibility to engage with "a smaller number of countries" and "cooperate and participate in projects of common interest" (Union for the Mediterranean 2017).

The EU has always maintained an emphasis on "borders" in its ENP<sup>17</sup> and this emphasis has grown in recent years as the rhetoric of border management and cross-border cooperation was elevated by the Arab uprisings and the ensuing flow of refugees. For example, the 2011 document "A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean", issued in the wake of the Arab uprisings, stipulated the "strengthening of

<sup>15</sup> The ENP is about creating self-regulating neo-liberal states and societies in the EU's neighbourhood (Cebeci 2017). This point is taken up again in the section on technocratic and depoliticizing approach.

<sup>16</sup> All quotes from non-English sources have been translated by the authors.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the Wider Europe document of 2003 states: "More specifically, geographical proximity increases the importance of a set of issues revolving around, but not limited to, *the management of the new external border* and trans-boundary flows. [...] Infrastructure, efficient *border management* and interconnected transport, energy and telecommunications networks will become more vital to expanding mutual trade and investment." (Commission of the European Communities 2003: 6, emphasis added).

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*capacity building* in the Mediterranean countries on borders/migration/asylum and more effective law enforcement cooperation to improve security throughout the Mediterranean" (European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy<sup>18</sup> 2011b: 6, emphasis in the original). Such emphasis on borders is inevitably about constructing identities and drawing lines between the secure inside and the threatening outside which carries the risk of infiltrating that secure inside. It is, thus, also inherently about securitization.

The expansion of the definition of the Mediterranean as a geographical area is also about securitization, which is taken up in detail in the next section. However, what needs to be underlined here is that as the threats perceived from the South acquired an increasingly trans-boundary nature, and as instability in the neighbourhoods of the neighbours caused increased migration flows and destabilization in the Mediterranean partners themselves, the rhetoric of a "wider Mediterranean" area emerged. This was quickly replaced with the term "Southern Neighbourhood" and finally with the notion of "surrounding regions" of the EU. The Strategic Partnership document of 2004 defined this wider space as: "the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, including the countries of the GCC, Yemen, Iraq and Iran"<sup>19</sup> (Council of the European Union 2004: 4). As mentioned earlier, the UfM expanded the definition of the Mediterranean towards the Western Balkans, Monaco and Mauritania. With the Arab uprisings, and especially against the backdrop of the increasingly deteriorating domestic security situation in Libya, sub-Saharan Africa started to feature in various (broadened) definitions of the Mediterranean. The Sahel region was also another addition brought about by the Arab uprisings in this regard.

The EU's immediate response to the Arab uprisings in 2011 was the announcement of the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean on 8 March 2011, which was to be followed by the publication of the revised ENP on 25 May 2011. Both texts were written with a sense of rising to the "challenges" of a vaguely defined "southern Mediterranean" space (European Commission and High Representative 2011a, 2011b), whereas the final revision of the ENP in 2015, which adopted a more pragmatic approach, referred to the "southern neighbourhood" rather than the Mediterranean and suggested that the "EU should increase its outreach to partners in sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region" (European Commission and High Representative 2015: 19).

On the other hand, the Global Strategy of 2016 is rather ambiguous in its definition of the South and uses the broader definition of "surrounding regions to the east and south" (EEAS 2016: 28). There also seems to be some confusion regarding these surrounding regions as the Strategy makes reference to various spaces such as the "Southern Mediterranean" (EEAS 2016: 25) as well as the "Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa" which encompasses not only sub-Saharan Africa but also Africa in general (EEAS 2016: 34-35). On the other hand, when the Strategy stipulates that the EU should "promote resilience in its surrounding regions" it mainly refers to the resilience of states and societies "to the east stretching into Central Asia, and south down to Central Africa" (EEAS 2016: 23). The reason for such ambiguity, if not confusion, is explained

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18 Hereinafter, "European Commission and High Representative".

19 Note that the Strategic Partnership was regarded as a response to the Greater Middle East Initiative of the US and was criticized by some analysts because it did not seriously relate to the EMP or the ENP and engage the Mediterranean as such (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005: 37-8).

by one of our interviewees as follows:

The Global Strategy refers to the surroundings of the EU [...]. These surroundings are not defined in geographical terms but to embrace North Africa, the Middle East, of course, Turkey, the Sahel, etc., etc. While there might be a geographical and political definition of the Mediterranean, as far as the foreign policy of the EU is concerned, what is of interest is *the surrounding regions*, the importance that we attach to the resilience of these surrounding regions, in the sense of their capacities to resist external shocks [...] not only at the level of the state but also the level of the population – civil society. (Interviewee 4)

The shift in the EU's language from "the Mediterranean region" to "the southern neighbourhood", first, and then to the surrounding regions marks the cognitive change in the EU's approach towards the Southern Mediterranean space. What was once seen as the area where the EU would project its own model of regional integration, is no longer even regarded as a neighbourhood holding at least some common characteristics with the European space. It is now predicated as detached from the European self, and thus the EU's approach is no longer mainly about good neighbourly relations but rather about pursuing a differentiated approach towards the countries in these regions and increasing their resilience through tailor-made recipes, as suggested in the Global Strategy. In other words, whereas the neighbourhood was mainly seen as a buffer (as a ring of well governed countries around the EU/Europe, when the ESS first referred to it as such) to protect the Union against threats emanating from the neighbours of the neighbours; now, that the threat perceived from the neighbourhood itself was prioritized and the EU's neighbourhood was labelled as "the ring of fire" (Economist 2014). Thus, it is merely a "surrounding region" made up of "fragile" states which cannot tackle such threats on their own and which need to become resilient through the EU's help.

Whether geopolitical or pragmatically policy-oriented, these varying definitions of the Mediterranean in official EU texts are embedded in a security logic. Such variations (and especially expansion of the space that is defined as the Southern Mediterranean), based on the evolving and increasing threat perceptions of the Europeans, reveal the securitized nature of the EU's conception of the Mediterranean space.

## 2. SECURITY IN THE EU'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

It can be argued that the EU's approach to the Mediterranean since the first attempts to have a policy on the region in the 1970s (Isaac and Kares 2017) was based on a security logic which prioritized the stability of the region, to provide security to the Union. On the other hand, with the EU's "big bang" enlargement of 2004, besides this prevailing priority given to stability, a new and ontological dimension of security also started to shape the Union's policies towards its neighbourhoods in general, and towards the Mediterranean in particular. "The need to draw definite borders for the EU" started dominating the discourse on European foreign policy in the early 2000s. Security speech acts were intensively employed in this regard, labelling further enlargement as a threat to the European (integration) project. An important example of the security speech acts employed is Prodi's (2002) statement, made a few months before the



Wider Europe initiative was announced: "But we cannot go on enlarging forever. We cannot water down the European political project and turn the European Union into just a free trade area on a continental scale." It was within this context of securitization of enlargement that the ENP was designed.

The perception of a threat (the threat of further enlargement) that seemed to be directed at European integration constituted a new dimension in the EU's relations with the Mediterranean. It was significant because, besides other aspects, it was mainly about identity: Although the EC's rejection of the Moroccan application in 1987 on the grounds that it was not a European country (cf. Isaac and Kares 2017) had already made it clear to Southern Mediterranean states that it was impossible for them to accede to the EU, the launch of the ENP meant the consolidation of the EU's definite borders. Within this context, the prospective EU membership of Turkey began to be intensively debated in many policy circles through the use of the security speech act.<sup>20</sup> Especially European Christian Democrats who opposed Turkey's accession on the grounds that it had an allegedly different culture<sup>21</sup> employed the security discourse. The most important example in this regard was the statement by former French President Giscard d'Estaing that Turkey's accession would lead to the "end of the European Union" (Leparmentier and Zecchini 2002, Hürriyet Daily News 2002). The fact that Giscard d'Estaing made this statement when he was chairing the European Convention on the Future of Europe, tasked to draft the European Constitution, is particularly significant.<sup>22</sup>

This new security dimension was crucial for the Southern Mediterranean because the ENP which was built on this dimension was mainly a framework which imitated the EU's enlargement policy as a successful foreign policy tool. Nevertheless, lacking the promise of membership, the ENP could not produce similar results, especially in the Southern Neighbourhood. EU Member States were also unwilling to apply strict – if any – conditionality vis-à-vis the Southern Mediterranean partners, mainly because of security concerns. Drawing attention to these concerns, Pace (2002: 203) contended: "instability and chaos in the Mediterranean is perceived as a source of insecurity for Europe".

The rhetoric that Europe was vulnerable to threats from the Southern Mediterranean made the EU support autocratic regimes in the region long before the Arab uprisings (Freyburg 2012). The aim was to preserve the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, prioritizing stability over values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This also marked the security logic on which the ENP was founded (as stated in the ESS): "to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean" (Council of the European Union 2003: 8). According to such logic, Europe was presented as the security referent – as the one which was perceiving threats from Arab Mediterranean countries in the

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20 Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union stipulates: "Any *European State* which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union" (emphasis added). Article 49 is significant because it marks Europeanness. Thus, Turkey's European identity was first endorsed by the European Commission, which declared it as a country eligible to become an EU member (i.e., a European country) in 1989, and then by the European Council, twice, by accepting it as an official candidate in 1999 and deciding to open accession negotiations with the country in 2004 (which were opened in 2005).

21 Helmut Schmidt and Herman van Rompuy are only two of those who oppose Turkey's membership on these grounds. See Schmidt (2000: 223) and Barber (2009) for van Rompuy's views.

22 It should be noted that because Turkey is an official candidate for EU membership, it is not involved in the ENP, but participates in the UfM which took over the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's general framework.

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form of radical Islam, terrorism, illegal immigration, etc.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, the ESS set the general security framework within which the Mediterranean should be dealt with. The following statement in the ESS is significant in this regard:

The Mediterranean area generally continues to undergo serious problems of economic stagnation, social unrest and unresolved conflicts. The European Union's interests require a continued engagement with Mediterranean partners, through more effective economic, security and cultural cooperation in the framework of the Barcelona Process. A broader engagement with the Arab World should also be considered. (Council of the European Union 2003: 8)

This statement first and foremost constructs the Mediterranean as afflicted by serious problems. Furthermore, it not only openly reflects the security logic behind the EU's approach but legitimizes the Union's engagement with and intervention in the region. The EU's task of promoting a ring of well governed countries in its neighbourhood, and especially in the Southern Mediterranean, is surely tied to the discourse that the EU came "closer to troubled areas"<sup>24</sup> (Council of the European Union 2003: 8).

On the launching of the UfM, the then French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner (2008), in an article that he wrote for *Le Monde*, claimed that the Mediterranean was "at the heart of all the major problematiques of the new century". He stated: "Development, migration, peace, dialogue among civilizations, access to water and energy, environment, climate change: it is to the south of Europe that our future lies." The use of the term "problematiques" is especially significant here because the term suggests both "issues to be tackled" and "problems". In other words, he constructs the Mediterranean as problematic and in constant need of being dealt with. Such rhetoric surely legitimizes continuous European engagement with the Mediterranean.

The EU's security discourse on the Mediterranean did not change with the emergence of the Arab uprisings. To the contrary, after the initial flurry of a freer Arab world faded, it intensified, especially regarding the flow of refugees and irregular migrants. The threats listed in the 2011 document on "A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood" were illegal migration, regional conflicts, and terrorism and organized crime (as cross-border threats) emanating from the neighbourhood of the EU (European Commission and High Representative 2011a). The solutions that the document proposed were: intensifying "political and security cooperation", "enhancing sector cooperation" (the emphasis on the energy sector was significant in this regard) and improving cooperation on "migration and mobility" (European Commission and High Representative 2011a). In other words, the EU displayed discursive continuity by pointing to the prioritization of stability and security in the neighbourhood, and especially in the southern neighbourhood. The major concerns of the EU in this regard were: containing illegal immigration, controlling borders, maintaining energy security, cooperation in combating international terrorism and trans-border organized crime, and tackling conflicts (European

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<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Holm (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Note that the ESS also refers to possibility of a WMD arms race and nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, and names the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a strategic priority.

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Commission and High Representative 2011a: 6).

On the other hand, after the Arab uprisings of 2011, the EU's concerns with regard to regional conflicts have also taken a new slant. Although in the "A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood" document of 2011, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Western Sahara conflict were mentioned as challenges to the security of "the whole region" and to the EU's "geopolitical, economic and security interests" (European Commission and High Representative 2011a: 5), later on, with the mass flow of refugees, the conflicts in Libya and Syria became major issues of concern whereas especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was increasingly pushed to the back burner.

Reflecting this new emphasis on the conflicts in Syria and Libya, a "state of play" document, issued by the European Commission on the EU's response to the Arab uprisings in 2013, listed the primary security challenges in the region as the ongoing civil war in Syria and its risk of spillover to neighbours such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan (through refugee flows), as well as internal security threats in Libya (European Commission 2013). The document also mentioned "new forms of internal political polarisation" ("between secular and Islamist forces", as well as "between and among affected groups such as women, young people, religious and racial minorities") (European Commission 2013).

In the 2015 ENP Review, the EU's "interdependence" with its neighbours was underlined, with reference to the security challenges such as growing refugee flows, energy crises and terrorism (especially related to the rise of ISIL/Da'esh and extremism) (European Commission and High Representative 2015). "Cross-border threats" and especially "cross-cutting migration related security challenges" were given special emphasis in the document and "stabilisation" was named as "the most urgent challenge" for the EU's neighbourhood (European Commission and High Representative 2015: 13, 3). The 2015 ENP Review stated that in order to "make partner countries more resilient against threats", it was agreed that security would be given a "*stronger* place" in the ENP and the EU would cooperate with its partners in the areas of "security sector reform, border protection tackling terrorism and radicalisation and crisis management" (European Commission and High Representative 2015: 12, emphasis added). This shows that the neighbouring regions and especially the Southern Mediterranean are increasingly more securitized by the EU, and the ENP, which was initially designed as a development tool that was supposed to bring stability, is now rather regarded as a security tool<sup>25</sup> – as the 2015 ENP Review stipulates, "The new focus on security will open up a wide range of new areas of cooperation under ENP" (European Commission and High Representative 2015: 12).

The Global Strategy, on the other hand, highlights in particular the conflicts in Syria and Libya, drawing attention to their local, national, regional and global dimensions (EEAS 2016: 10). It also refers to the "*acute* cases of governmental, economic, societal and climate/energy fragility" in the EU's neighbourhood and states that "terrorism and violence *plague* North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself" (EEAS 2016: 9, 13, emphasis added). The Global Strategy

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<sup>25</sup> "Security became a very important element in the discussion, while in the beginning security was not something for us to deal with in the neighbourhood policy. Inevitably migration, as well, and the refugee crisis, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean, were issues which changed the nature of this instrument. So, now, we have a situation where what started out as pretty much a development tool based on the enlargement model is today a more political instrument – a far more political instrument than it was in the past" (Interviewee 1).

document not only employs the security speech act for the Southern Mediterranean, but its choice of words such as “acute” and “plague” – markers of sickness – to predicate the EU’s neighbourhood and especially North Africa and the Middle East is especially significant as it inevitably brings about the depiction of the target societies as defected and weak, unable to take care of themselves (i.e., pursue reforms or resolve conflicts) and thus in need of the EU’s help. One is reminded of the colonial logic – the *mission civilisatrice*. On the other hand, the employment of the sickness metaphor also serves to dramatize the situation,<sup>26</sup> underlining an emergency to protect the self. This surely legitimizes the EU’s engagement in the region through all the possible means at its disposal – especially the Common Security and Defence Policy, as specifically stipulated by and underlined in the Global Strategy.

Besides setting its major goal as helping states and societies of the surrounding regions to achieve and maintain resilience, under a specific subtitle on the Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa, the Global Strategy lists solving conflicts and promoting development and human rights as “essential to addressing the threat of terrorism, the challenges of demography, migration and climate change, and to seizing the opportunity of shared prosperity” (EEAS 2016: 34). It also sets functional multilateral cooperation in areas such as border security, food and water security, energy and climate with the southern partners as an objective to be fulfilled within the UfM framework.

The employment of the security speech act with regard to threats emanating from the southern neighbourhood is not just limited to official EU texts, the Union’s officials also use it in their respective speeches. In a recent speech, Federica Mogherini called for more regional integration and cooperation to solve conflicts, naming the Mediterranean as “the most conflictual region of the world” and “the less integrated one” (EEAS 2017b). This is an open speech act in which the Mediterranean other is portrayed as conflictual as opposed to the peaceful European self, and thus threatening. Similarly, it is portrayed as the imperfect, “less integrated” one as opposed to the “ideal”, “well-integrated” Europe as represented by the EU.

In another statement on the Mediterranean, Mogherini employed the security speech act, this time securitizing the women of the Southern Mediterranean on the one hand and referring to gender equality as the remedy for this security problem on the other. She stated:

I can never forget a conversation I had a few years ago, with a young lady from North Africa. She told me “Look, so many people my age” (and she was very young) “cannot find a place in the organigramme of our societies and so they become an easy target for the propaganda of terrorists of all kinds”. Now we all know the stories of women who join terrorist groups and commit terrorist attacks. But many many more are those who cannot find the job they deserve, get the education they aspire to – women who want to start a business but have to engage in a daily fight against bullies and sceptics who tell them they will never make it. Gender equality is not simply a human right, a basic human right, it is also a moral duty. But it has to do with security and with the fight against radicalization. (Union for the Mediterranean 2016)

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26 Here we recall Waever’s definition of securitization (Waever 1996: 106).

This statement is worthy of analysis in many respects. First, it represents the women of the Southern Mediterranean as potential recruits of radical religious terrorism and links this to the problem of gender equality. Second, referring to the everyday problems that Southern Mediterranean women (as the ones who “don’t get the opportunities that [European women] have had”) face, it sets the identity of their societies as backwards and as the generator of threats not only against their own women but against their region, against Europe and against the world. Third, it refers to the promotion of gender equality in the Southern Mediterranean as the means to avoid/overcome the threats of terrorism and radicalization, making this again a problem of Europe – i.e., it is a Euro-centric exercise. Surely this goes beyond the needs or demands of Muslim women, overlooking and silencing them in many ways. This also shows the link between securitization and depoliticization in the sense that Southern Mediterranean women’s political agency is only permitted for the promotion of a certain European idea of security and stability, whereas their cultural, socio-economic and political characteristics are ignored.

The representation of the problems that Southern Mediterranean women face as problems that emanate from their culture<sup>27</sup> forms an important part of the securitization of the region, feeding into the epistemological fear that many Europeans have with regard to Muslim societies. Thus, the issue becomes first and foremost an identity security issue. Portraying Muslim women as possible partners in the fight against terrorism and approaching women’s empowerment from the point of view of security in this regard means attributing “stereotypical notions of culture to non-Western [societies] while silencing the gendered nature of hierarchies within Western cultures” (Kunz and Maisenbacher 2017: 139). In other words, all these epistemological practices and the use of the security speech act result in the exercise of reproducing the ideal European identity against its imperfect others (cf. Cebeci 2012).

### 3. NORMS, INTERESTS AND IDENTITY IN THE EU’S APPROACH TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

The EU’s prioritization of security and stability over the promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms in the Mediterranean, and its Member States’ support for autocratic regimes of the region for pursuing their economic/energy interests prior to the Arab uprisings, have already been mentioned above.<sup>28</sup> It can be argued that the EU’s interest-driven approach to its neighbourhoods began to be more openly pronounced with the ESS, which stipulated: “It is in the European *interest* that countries on our borders are well-governed” (Council of the European Union 2003: 7, emphasis added). Tonra (2010: 66) argues that “the ENP is very much more the creature of the Union’s own proximate interests – and, particularly, its security interests”. In almost every official text regarding the ENP, the EU makes an explicit and reiterated reference to its interests as well as the putative interests of European citizens. For example, in the Commission communication on a Wider Europe, it is stated: “Over the coming decade

27 The following statement in a joint communication on the ENP issued in 2013 is reflective of this approach: “Cultural and social discrimination against women remains a problem in the Southern neighbourhood” (European Commission and High Representative 2013: 8).

28 Also see: Del Sarto and Schumacher (2011), Pace (2014) and Noutcheva (2015).

and beyond, the Union's capacity to provide security, stability and sustainable development to its citizens will no longer be distinguishable from its interest in close cooperation with the neighbours" (Commission of the European Communities 2003: 3).

This statement is a clear reflection of the EU's new interest-driven approach towards its neighbourhood in contrast to its liberalist-idealist approach to the Mediterranean in the EMP. Such an approach does not match those arguments that portray the EU as an idealistic, normative power. The ENP is mainly designed to pursue EU interests in creating a secure neighbourhood. The ENP strategy paper also stipulates: "Action Plans should also reflect the Union's *interest* in concluding readmission agreements with the partner countries" (Commission of the European Communities 2004b: 17, emphasis added). In the Commission communication on Strengthening the ENP of 2006 it is asserted: "The premise of the European Neighbourhood Policy is that the EU has a vital interest in seeing greater economic development and stability and better governance in its neighbourhood" (Commission of the European Communities 2006: 2). In this sense, the ENP can be regarded as a foreign policy tool designed to increase the ability of the Union to pursue its interests in its neighbourhood, including the Mediterranean. The employment of the term "EU/European interest" in such a manifest way in defining the ENP reflects a shift from a more normative/transformational and idealist approach towards a realist one, when compared to the EMP. There are several scholars who criticize the ENP for its interest-driven nature and who regard it as an initiative created for the EU's internal needs rather than for achieving economic and social development in the Mediterranean (e.g., Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005, Kelley 2006). On the other hand, it is also important to note that the interest-driven discourse in the ENP documents always goes hand in hand with the discourse of responsibility towards the neighbourhood as well as with the rhetoric of common interests with the partners.

The EU's initial response to the Arab uprisings reflected a reconsideration of its past policies that supported authoritarian regimes for the sake of stability in the region, demonstrating a "mea culpa" approach<sup>29</sup> and a "rising-to-the-challenge rhetoric"<sup>30</sup> – i.e., the employment of the normative duty narrative (Schumacher 2015: 387). Pursuing this initial (supposedly) normative response, on the one hand, the October 2011 European Council Conclusions still underlined EU/European interests; on the other,

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29 Štefan Füle, the then European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, in a speech given in the wake of the Arab uprisings, stated: "First, we must show humility about the past. Europe was not vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region. 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. I am not saying that everything we did was wrong, rather that Europe, at this particular moment more than ever before, must be faithful to its values and stand on the side of democracy and social justice" (Füle 2011).

30 At the launching of the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean, the then President of the European Commission José Barroso said, "The historic changes underway in the Southern Mediterranean carry the hope of more freedom, democracy, and a better life for the people in the region. It is our responsibility to rise up and support that transformation. The European Union is determined to make a qualitative leap forward in the relations with its neighbours who are willing and able to embark on the path of political and economic reforms. Fear of tomorrow's unknown shall not prevent us from supporting today's changes. This is a rendezvous with history that we must not miss" (European Commission 2011).

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The Union should capitalise on the special relationships it enjoys with its *neighbouring regions* to foster closer economic ties and open up new trade and investment opportunities, including by pursuing, where appropriate, deep and comprehensive free trade agreements. [...] The Union should also seek to reap full benefits from a *regulatory environment* applied in an expanding economic space and take the lead in the setting of standards. (European Council 2011: 6, emphasis in the original)

The terms “capitalise on” and “reap the full benefits” indicate the EU’s interest-driven approach to its neighbourhood and especially the Mediterranean. They also highlight the Union’s quest to set international standards for its own interests.

The EU’s interest-driven approach has particularly been apparent in its policy towards Jordan and Morocco after the Arab uprisings. It granted “advanced status” to these countries even though they actually have not complied with their ENP action plans so far, continuously and “systematically” violating “political rights and civil liberties” (Schumacher 2011: 113).<sup>31</sup> This can be regarded as a selective approach aimed at pursuing the national interests of Member States; as such it raises doubts about the EU’s transformative intentions, damaging the EU’s credibility in its foreign policy in general and in its relations with its Southern Mediterranean partners in particular.

Another example of this interest-driven approach is the “New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood” document which also emphasizes the EU-European interest in political and economic transformation of the EU’s neighbours (European Commission and High Representative 2011a: 21). The ENP review of 2015 also refers to a more pragmatic approach, which is reflected in the 2016 Global Strategy as well. Such a pragmatic approach carries the ENP’s differentiation vis-à-vis the neighbours to a new level, which is both deemed more realistic and criticized as a retreat from the EU’s so-called normative stance (see, for example, Schumacher 2016). One EU official interviewed in the framework of this study referred to this shift as being about admitting the failures of the policy and its limitations. In the view of this official, the ENP, which was initially an *acquis*-type policy, in its revised form pursues a tailor-made approach according to the needs of the neighbours, with a completely changed tool box (Interviewee 1).

This shift from a normative/transformational approach to a more pragmatic one is also explained with reference to the cultures of the target societies/states and their associated reluctance to adopt democratic reforms. The emphasis on “fragile” societies in the Global Strategy also can be read on these lines. In a sense, these societies are depicted as either too weak/“fragile” or otherwise unwilling to be “uplifted” to the EU standards, and this justifies the dropping of the normative agenda and replacing it with a more realistic one, conveniently named by the Global Strategy as “principled pragmatism”. One of our interviewees stated:

The Arab Spring increased the hopes that these democratic processes could take a definitive path towards similar standards to those of the European Union. This did not

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31 It should be noted that “arbitrary arrests and torture still occur, the judiciary continues to be subject to executive influence, and the freedom of expression, assembly, and association are still severely hampered” in these countries (Schumacher 2011: 113).

prove to be the case for all the countries in the south. [...] At a certain point, an ENP review was made in 2015, when there was for the first time a massive consultation with all the partners and stakeholders, at the state and non-state level. We eventually realized that the logic [of reaching European democratic standards] could not apply to all our neighbouring countries. So, [...] we put eventually in practice what was always in the ENP but was never fully implemented, that is the principle of differentiation: not treating them in the same way but treating each one according to its own willingness – to apply also a sense of ownership, and discontinue what was perceived as a Euro-centric approach. We were the ones telling them what to do to approach us. This was not well received, by some of them [...]. And maybe, the most important also from our side was to start projecting our interests and values, in a way that was a bit more assertive than what used be in the past. [...] We recognize that countries like Egypt are not intentioned to follow this path, they are countries of certain dimension, certain history, therefore [...] they wanted to follow their own path and they think that they have nothing to learn. Well, they wanted to learn certain issues but not others [...]. With Tunisians, they are very eager to learn more in terms of rules and regulations and be part also of the single market. [...] One has to recognize, appreciate and respect these different approaches. (Interviewee 4)

This statement is an important example which explains the shift in the EU's approach towards the Southern Mediterranean with reference to the "realization" that these countries (mainly because of their history and culture) are unwilling to reach the European standards of democracy. Furthermore, the acceptance in the statement that the EU's approach before such realization was Euro-centric is also significant and demonstrates how the EU went through a process of reconsideration of its own policies. On the other hand, the reiterated use of the term "to learn" – as an act to be performed by the Southern Mediterranean countries – reflects the Euro-centric mindset of being in the position of "teaching" the imperfect others what to do – i.e., the mindset which depicts the Europeans as the ones who possess higher standards.<sup>32</sup> This openly shows how the European and Southern Mediterranean identities are produced and reproduced in specific ways throughout all these interactions between the EU and its Mediterranean partners.

On the other hand, feminist readings of the EU's neighbourhood policy in general, and its policy towards the Mediterranean in particular, also draw attention to the Union's interest-driven approach towards the promotion of gender equality in its external relations.<sup>33</sup> Federica Mogherini refers to gender equality as "a powerful driver of growth and development" and states: "Empowering women is the only way to disclose the full potential of our societies on both sides of the Mediterranean" (Union for the Mediterranean 2016). Thus, it can be argued that the promotion of women's rights is also seen as part of the EU's quest for stability in the Mediterranean, which is crucial for securing the EU's interests.

32 The statement is also significant in underlining that it is important for the EU to pursue its interests as well as its values.

33 See, for example, David and Guerrina (2013).



The norms and interests dichotomy inherent in the EU's approach to the Mediterranean is inextricably linked to identity. This is mainly because it refers to the tension between the self that the EU-Europeans aim to convey about the EU as a normative/transformational power<sup>34</sup> on the one hand, and the self which pursues its interests on the other. The EU needs to reify its difference from others as an ideal entity and maintain its representation as a model in many regards (such as, for example, as a model of peaceful regional integration; as a model of possessing "higher standards" about democracy, human rights and the rule of law; as a model for socio-economic and environmental policies, etc.) in order to pursue its interests effectively.

#### 4. THE EU'S TECHNOCRATIC AND DEPOLITICIZED APPROACH TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

Article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty sets the terms for the EU's special relationship with neighbouring countries as establishing "an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on *the values of the Union* and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation"<sup>35</sup> (European Union 2016: 20, emphasis added). The statement clearly shows that those values, as set in Article 2,<sup>36</sup> are depicted as inherently belonging to the EU/Europeans and that the partners will have to follow suit if they demand closer ties with the EU. This is clearly a Euro-centric approach, which mostly overlooks the particular political and socio-economic characteristics of the EU's neighbours (Bouris and Schumacher 2017). The claim to be representing those norms and values underlies the asymmetric approach that the EU pursues in its relations with neighbouring countries, and it can thus be claimed that this asymmetrical approach has found a treaty basis in Article 8. Although this article has not yet been evoked, it is still indicative of such a logic of inequality between the EU, which represents universal values, and its neighbours (in our case, its southern neighbours), which can only acquire them with the EU's help.

Representation of the EU-Europeans as those who inherently possess the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law – i.e., as those who "take them for granted"<sup>37</sup> – inevitably portrays neighbourhood partner countries as those who "can only acquire those values with the EU's support and not by themselves" (Cebeci 2017: 67). This also pertains to a depoliticizing approach where the political decision about what is "normal" and "good" for the recipient countries is made by the EU, as the upholder of "universal values" which are inherently "European" at the same time. It is depoliticizing in the sense that "it turns the recipient countries and their populations into self-regulating subjects" (Cebeci 2017: 68) in a neo-liberal

34 See, for example, Manners (2002, 2006) and Grabbe (2006). On the dichotomy between the EU's norms and interests in its foreign policy, see Youngs (2004).

35 For more on Article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty, see Hanf (2012) and Hillion (2013).

36 Article 2(5) reads as follows: "In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter."

37 In referencing Articles 2 and 8 of the Lisbon Treaty, the 2011 document "A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood" refers to values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law as those "that many Europeans take for granted" and those "on which the European Union is built" (European Commission and High Representative 2011b: 2, 14).

world, without leaving them space for their own political discussion about the adoption of these norms and values.

Despite the rhetoric of joint/co-ownership in the ENP and the UfM, the EU rather turns a blind eye to "its neighbours' calls for belonging" and expects them to "conform to its norms and values" without engaging them "in a genuine dialogue about the[ir] content and meaning" (Haukkala 2008: 1613). Haukkala (2008: 1612-3) draws attention to "the uglier face of the Union's normative power as one based on domination" in its ENP. Tonra (2010: 66) also asserts that "there is no means or mechanism by which the 'neighbours' might formally interrogate or amend the agenda of the ENP better to reflect their assessment of the shared and 'common' interests that are held between the partners". This means little if no involvement of Southern Mediterranean partners in the making of these policies. So far, the partners have been given the chance to negotiate their Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) – one of the major fields in which the EU's technocratic approach manifests itself – with the Union. However, this still remains at the level of decision-shaping and not decision-making because the political decision to have a DCFTA is made by the EU in the first place – mainly arbitrarily, based on vaguely defined benchmarks and standards – and the limits (chapters) of the agreement are also set by the EU.<sup>38</sup> Here again, an asymmetrical relationship is evidenced.

The EU's technocratic approach in its foreign policy in general and its policy on the Mediterranean in particular is also a factor that causes depoliticization<sup>39</sup> and it is criticized by many scholars. Technocracy mainly reveals itself in policies which prioritize expert knowledge, economic and social aims, social harmony and mutual interests, and minimal democracy (Kurki 2011) and "is based on vague definitions, classifications, benchmarks, etc." (Cebeci 2016: 123). Pace (2007: 663) for example refers to unclear "strategies, procedures and timetables" in the ENP Action Plans whereas Schumacher (2015: 396) mentions the "exclusively technical project-based orientation" of the UfM.

The incentive-based approach as put forward by the "A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean" document and developed in the EU's New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood paper – which offers "more for more"<sup>40</sup> to those

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38 For example, see European Commission (2015).

39 Note that sometimes the terms "the EU's depoliticized approach" and "the EU's depoliticizing approach" are conflated. Whilst the former is about the EU and its pursuance of a depoliticized/technocratic approach in its policies, the latter is about the impact that the EU creates in the recipients (the target societies) through its policies. Whereas the EU's technocratic approach is mainly regarded as a depoliticized approach, in the sense that its policies reflect technical (bureaucratic) decisions about how they should be pursued, rather than political ones, not every depoliticizing move that the EU makes (with regard to third countries) is technocratic. For example, securitization which is an extreme form of politicization (and which does not necessarily have to be pursued through technocratic measures) may cause depoliticization on the part of the recipients because security measures are imposed on those states and societies without leaving them any room for political, public debate. The EU's securitized approach to the Mediterranean is a good example in this regard, as it causes depoliticization. For years, in prioritizing stability and security in its relations with the authoritarian regimes of the Southern Mediterranean, the EU considerably depoliticized their societies. On the other hand, securitization can also involve use of technocratic means. The EU's police missions, for example, are rather technocratic exercises which also cause depoliticization (cf. Merlingen 2011: 159)

40 This incentive-based approach ties an "advanced status" for and DCFTAs with the EU's neighbours to progress in political reforms that the Union expects the partner governments to fulfil (European Commission and High Representative 2011b).

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partners who are willing and able to go on with political reform and "less for less" for those who do not show any progress – can be regarded as a clear technocratic exercise.<sup>41</sup>

[C]loser political co-operation means advancing towards higher standards of human rights and governance based on a set of minimum benchmarks against which performance will be assessed. A commitment to adequately monitored, free and fair elections should be the entry qualification for the Partnership. It also means closer co-operation in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and more joint work in international fora on issues of common interest. (European Commission and High Representative 2011b: 5)

This statement carries all the markers of a technocratic approach as it mentions higher standards of human rights as well as governance based on minimum benchmarks which are not defined in the other parts of the text and instead are left ambiguous. Furthermore, a minimalist technical definition of free and fair elections as a prerequisite for entry to this partnership can also be read as another example of technocracy and depoliticization.

The EU's approach to human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the Southern Mediterranean is itself rather technical and rests mainly on governance aspects. With reference to the EU's policy on Morocco, Khakee (2010: 18) contends: "So far, by focusing on issues such as court automation, information processing and training [...], the EU has avoided the core issues of the judicial reform agenda, such as the independence of the judiciary and rooting out corruption". This clearly demonstrates the depoliticizing nature of the EU's policy as it overlooks the political debate regarding judicial reform, and rather than helping societies, it mostly plays into the hands of authoritarian governments which usually save face through some selective, cosmetic and technical reforms, many of which do not generate any change regarding their suppressive policies.

Criticizing the technical definition of "deep democracy" in the EU's New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood document as a guide for Southern Mediterranean partners, Pace (2014: 979) contends that "the EU's vision of democracy that it seeks to support in the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] has not actually changed" and that "the same old logic and belief in liberal democracy" remains. Noutcheva (2015: 21), on the other hand, sees here "a bureaucratic framework, missing out on the opportunity to make a more decisive impact on the neighbourhood in the wake of the Arab Spring". This technocratic approach also shows why the EU was simply unable to anticipate the Arab uprisings of 2011. The construction of Arab peoples as incapable of democratic change led to years of technocratic governance-based policies (cf. Pace 2014).

Such a depoliticizing approach can also be observed in the EU's treatment of civil society in the Southern Mediterranean. Although almost every official EU publication on the Mediterranean and the ENP reiterates the EU's commitment to the promotion of a strong civil society in partner countries, this is not the case on the ground as the EU mainly promotes a professionalized and all too often co-opted civil society and thus cannot reach grassroots civil society organizations.

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41 On the other hand, it should also be recalled that the ENP is mainly implemented by the European Commission, which is regarded as a technocratic institution itself. See, e.g., Peterson (2008).

After the Arab uprisings of 2011, the EU's engagement with civil society in the partner countries is maintained through the Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy – both rather technocratic institutions which mainly focus on financial and programme support. This again is depoliticizing as it does not leave much space for political agency on the part of the local actors and rather produces neo-liberal self-regulating subjects, especially through supporting elites and a professionalized civic society, both of which are mostly detached from their own populations, having little or no understanding of their local needs.

The cross-border cooperation and border management practices imposed on its neighbours in general and on the Southern Mediterranean partners in particular also constitute another technocratic and depoliticizing aspect of EU policy (cf. Korosteleva et al. 2013). The partners are asked to conclude readmission agreements and adopt EU best practices on how to protect their borders and manage migration, without a domestic political discussion on content.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the growing flow of refugees from the South has also changed the dynamics of the relationship between the EU and its authoritarian partners, giving the latter more leverage vis-à-vis the EU, now that EU Member States have a greater interest in good relations with supposedly reliable authoritarian regimes which claim to be accepting and sheltering unwelcome refugees. The financial aid offered to these regimes for more cooperation in this realm (for example through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis – Madad Trust Fund, and the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) is also rather significant. This is a clear example of how the peoples of these countries are silenced and their political agency is denied directly or indirectly through EU practices.

The problem of technocracy especially reveals itself with regard to women's rights because the EU promotes a very technical gender equality perspective which, in many cases, leads to "the marginalisation of local women's voices" because "local women's groups have often been forced to reframe their demands ensuring 'EU compatibility' in order to obtain financial support or to cooperate with transnational NGOs that promote a Western feminist gender equality frame" (Kunz and Maisenbacher 2017: 128-9). This is also illustrative of depoliticization because the political agency of the local women is limited at best, and ignored at worst, creating neo-liberal subjects that are obliged to operate within the confines of Western (European) standards of gender equality. Southern Mediterranean women are also usually portrayed as victims to be "protected" from violence or ill-treatment by the men and the states of the region (see, for example Huber 2017). This means their depiction also as weak and as objects which are to be "saved" – even "emancipated" (Interviewee 5) – by the white (mostly male) EU-Europeans.<sup>43</sup> This surely legitimizes the EU's interventions to protect and to civilize. At the inauguration of the Third Union for the Mediterranean High-level Conference on Women held in 2016, drawing attention to the existence of "so many women of immense talent, culture, civic fashion and hunger for change [from Morocco, to Jordan, to Albania]" but who "don't get the opportunities that we [European women] have had"<sup>44</sup> and referring to gender equality as "a moral duty", Federica Mogherini states:

<sup>42</sup> See for example, Parkes (2015).

<sup>43</sup> For more on this, see Kunz and Maisenbacher (2017: 133).

<sup>44</sup> This statement inevitably silences the gender discrimination prevalent in the EU-Europe – although at the end of this speech, Mogherini says: "So, each woman knows that no country has achieved full gender equality, and we all have to learn and we all have to listen to each other" (Union for the Mediterranean 2016).

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So, from our European Union's perspective, we don't just need good gender policies but to put women at the core of our foreign policy. [...] Women empowerment is a fundamental objective, it is also a tool for a more stable and prosperous Mediterranean. And we know, our action matters. Our engagement can make a real difference for women all around our region. (Union for the Mediterranean 2016)

In this speech, the patriarchal/protective European approach manifests itself in the statement "[o]ur engagement can make a real difference for women all around our region". Women of the region are portrayed as those who do not have the opportunities that European women have, thus as the weak ones who need help. Hence European intervention is justified, similar to the *mission civilisatrice* of colonial years. At the same time, both European and Arab Mediterranean identities are reinstated. The statement that the EU's engagement "can make a real difference" can also be read as another contribution to the rhetoric which represents the EU as a force for good in the world (cf. Diez 2005: 613).

On the other hand, the technocratic approach of the EU towards the issues of mass flow of refugees and immigration/mobility can also be observed in the case of the treatment of refugee women and children. Addressing this at a debate on "the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration" held at the European Parliament on 12 April 2016, Mary Honeyball (MEP, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) stated:

All of these women and girls are at heightened risk of all forms of violence and sexual assault. Therefore we need measures to meet the specific needs of women, and they have too often only been considered as an afterthought. Most of the time there are not even minimum standards in reception centres for preventing violence against women, such as single-sex sanitation facilities, which would seem absolutely obvious. What we need, therefore, is gender sensitivity in all aspects of our policies, from the design stage to delivery and evaluation. (European Parliament 2016)

This speech is particularly important for drawing attention to the refugee women and demonstrating how the EU's technocratic approach ignores their needs. On the other hand, it also builds on the narrative of a European responsibility accompanied by the victimization of women. This surely feeds into the representation of the EU through terms which denote masculinity – as the entity with a patriarchal protective mission. A generalized negative view of reception centres based in Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries which shelter millions of refugees (whilst most of the EU countries are totally unwilling to host refugees, as in the cases of Hungary<sup>45</sup> and the Czech Republic<sup>46</sup>) also helps the reproduction of the civilized European self against its imperfect others.

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45 See, for example, Bayer (2016).

46 See, for example, Jurečková (2016).

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## CONCLUSION

This report has made a critical discourse analysis of the EU's approach to the Mediterranean in the period 2003-2017. It has attempted to demonstrate how the EU's discourse on the region produces and reproduces European and Southern Mediterranean identities and constructs the ideal European self against its imperfect Southern Mediterranean others. It has first inquired into the construction of the European identity vis-à-vis its Mediterranean other through region building and boundary drawing, arguing that the EU's approach to the Southern Mediterranean is mainly about marking the EU's borders, thus creating a peaceful inside and a dangerous outside (as apparent in the emphasis on border control and managed migration emphasized in the recent ENP documents). Second, it has scrutinized the securitized approach of the EU towards the Mediterranean, taking this mainly as an identity-construction exercise, particularly on the lines of immigration and radical religiously inspired terrorism (as manifested in the ESS and the Global Strategy, as well as in the ENP texts). It has also revealed how the EU's approach is depoliticizing in this regard. Looking into the norms and interests dichotomy in the EU's relations with its Southern Mediterranean partners, this report has also demonstrated that the EU feels the need to reinstate its normative difference from others so that it can pursue its interests more effectively. Finally, the report has analysed the EU's depoliticizing and technocratic approach to demonstrate how it produces self-regulating neo-liberal subjects as well as objects. It further looked into the interplay between the EU's technocratic and depoliticizing approach and identity construction, claiming that this approach feeds into the reproduction of the ideal European self vis-à-vis its imperfect others. In each of these aspects, the report has pursued a gender-sensitive approach, inquiring into how gender equality is promoted by the EU in a technocratic and depoliticizing manner, to a certain extent denying the political agency of the Southern Mediterranean women; how these women are portrayed both as potential terrorists and as a means to achieve greater security at the same time, through the securitizing approach of the EU; and how, in general, the EU takes on the masculine, patriarchal task of helping its neighbourhood overcome its problems in general, and rescuing the Mediterranean women from their "cultural" fate, in particular.

To conclude, it can be stated that the EU's approach to the Mediterranean in the period 2003-2017 has mainly served to reproduce the EU-Europe's difference from its Mediterranean others. The ideal, normative European self which possesses higher standards in many respects is reconstructed against an imperfect and vaguely defined Southern Mediterranean, which needs the EU's help to achieve similar standards, but which will still not be regarded as "European". Thus, this report suggests that the EU should review its own rhetoric and thus discourse before attempting to design new policies regarding the Mediterranean. Without changing its preconceived notion of and language on its Mediterranean partners, the wide range of tools at its disposal or any new additions in this regard will not help the EU have effective policies on the Mediterranean, and tackle its problems together with its partners on an equal basis.

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