

University of Southern Denmark, 3 October 2011:  
*Mediterranean Perspectives*

The 2008 Mediterranean Union. A re-launching of the  
Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or new perspectives  
for Euro-Arab Relations?

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Student Presentation by Elise: Union for the  
Mediterranean – pragmatic multilateralism?

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Literature:

- Bicchi, Federica (2011) The Union for the Mediterranean, or the Changing Context of Euro-Mediterranean Relations. *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 3-19.
- Schlumberger, Oliver (2011) The Ties that do not Bind: The Union for the Mediterranean and the Future of Euro-Arab Relations. *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 135-153.
- Seeberg, Peter (2010) Union for the Mediterranean – pragmatic multilateralism and the depoliticization of EU-Middle Eastern relations, *Middle East Critique*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 287-302.



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Outline:

- Presentation of the UfM, homepages, "staff" etc.
- The "Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip" Project, see Blackboard
- The Mediterranean Union (UfM)– its history and launching
- The UfM, or the Changing Context of Euro-Mediterranean Relations
- The UfM and the Future of Euro-Arab Relations
- The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East



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## Presentation of the UfM

- EEAS homepage: [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/index_en.htm)
- EU around the globe, regions, Mediterranean & Middle East: [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/mideast/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/mideast/index_en.htm)
- The Union for the Mediterranean:
- [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/euromed/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/euromed/index_en.htm)
- Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfMS):
- <http://www.ufmsecretariat.org/en/>, see "Without the UfM no political future..."
- Organisation ("staff"):
- <http://www.ufmsecretariat.org/en/organisation/>
- Partners:
- <http://www.ufmsecretariat.org/en/ufm-partners/>
- Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union\\_for\\_the\\_Mediterranean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_for_the_Mediterranean)

1

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## Presentation of the UfM

### Projects:

- the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea, including coastal and protected marine areas;
- the establishment of maritime and land highways that connect ports and improve rail connections so as to facilitate movement of people and goods;
- a joint civil protection programme on prevention, preparation and response to natural and man-made disasters;
- a Mediterranean solar energy plan that explores opportunities for developing alternative energy sources in the region;
- a Euro-Mediterranean University, inaugurated in Slovenia in June 2008;
- the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative, which supports small businesses operating in the region by first assessing their needs and then providing technical assistance and access to finance
- > see UfM Desalination Project in Gaza, pdf

3

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## The Union for the Mediterranean - its history and launching

- The initiative came from the presidential campaign of Sarkozy – via negotiations "upgraded" to the European level in 2008
- 27 + 12 (incl. Albania and Mauritania) + 4 (incl. Libya and Croatia...)
- Dual presidency (Mubarak and Sarkozy) + Secretariat (located in Barcelona – in down-town *Pedralbes* palace, led by Moroccan Youssef Amrani
- 15 projects (later cut down to 6): functionalist, somewhat technocratic outlook in which cooperation would be intensified primarily through technical projects (infrastructural, environmental etc., rather non-controversial)
- The UfM will focus on projects and institutional co-participation – and so far it is difficult to see where we are heading with the UfM.
- Gillespie: it will be "less momentous than President Sarkozy originally hoped, but at the very least the French proposals have served as a challenge to complacency with the Barcelona Process."

6

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### The UfM and the Future of Euro-Arab Relations

- Point of departure: over half of the Arab population (350 mio. people) are part of the EMP – how will its continuation, the UfM affect the future of Euro-Arab relations?
- All states involved are middle income countries, all face economic stagnation and all are authoritarian, preoccupied with power maintenance...in spite of threatening financial crisis and threatening bankruptcy...
- Consequences of this are both soft and hard security (see p. 136) issues for the neighbouring states...and for the EU
- The UfM was met with skeptical Arab reactions, based on the continued existence of the Arab-Israeli conflict (and the Palestinian-Israel conflict as well) – and “fears of European paternalism” (?)
- Attempts at cooling down the problems – by the Israeli acceptance of Arab League participation and Israel obtaining a deputy post – did not secure the success of the new project. And the “ownership”-based UfM construction does not seem to convince the Arabs so far...

10

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### The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East

- The UfM, launched in July 2008, attaches importance to selected projects: depollution, infrastructure, civil protection, solar power etc.
- By returning to early debates on European integration we may provide ourselves with a clue as to the kind of thinking behind the UfM, which can be said to bear resemblance to neo-functional arguments in integration theory
- The purpose of my article is therefore first to discuss if it is meaningful to characterize the UfM and the thinking behind it as a de-politicization of relations in the Mediterranean
- Secondly the article discusses what a common more explicit focus on security after 9.11 both in the EU and in MENA means for the development of more pragmatic forms of cooperation
- Thirdly the article shows that the reason why the UfM in 2009-2010 has experienced postponements of UfM meetings and prolonging of institutional procedures has to do with “traditional” MENA conflicts...

11

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### The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East

- The enlargement of the EU in 2004 was an important precondition for the launching of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), designed to offer “our neighbours a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values” (off. EU ENP homepage)
- An important element of the ENP is the so-called positive conditionality, where the EU, through Actions Plans designed individually for the 16 non-EU states, formally insists on its political goals, but in reality with no order of priorities, no benchmarks or clear incentives...
- This lack of insisting seems to be transferred to the UfM, and this time in a multilateral setting, both through its complex institutional elements (the co-presidency, the secretariat in Barcelona etc)...and through the rather non-controversial projects...
- Or, quoting Kausch & Youngs: “the main issue is that the UfM is expressly designed to push the focus of relations between Europe and North Africa away from the most sensitive political areas”

12

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### The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East

- With its rather non-controversial projects the UfM represents a continuation of former EU policies, first of all the ENP, which I elsewhere (leaning on Dannreuther, Youngs) have described as pragmatic bilateralism...
- The UfM can be seen as an expression of pragmatic multilateralism and the pragmatic character of both the UfM and the ENP can be demonstrated by looking at the actual EU political practices
- The notion of pragmatism here is to be understood in a Rortyan sense ("what could be" rather than the normative "what should be")
- An important consequence of this is that the EU thereby secures *status quo* in MENA and secures the resilience of the authoritarian regimes
- This is furthermore becoming a reality because of the development of a security environment across the Mediterranean, which also contributes to stabilizing the MENA states

13

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### The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East

- Bashar al-Assad insisted in Paris in July 2008 on "that the political aspect should be one of the basic factors in the UfM"...so it seems the UfM from the start was being held hostage by the Arab-Israeli conflict:
- Incidents like when Lieberman told Mubarak to "go to hell" has led to an Arab reaction: threats to stay away from meetings if Lieberman will take part and discussions on the role of the Arab League have contributed to split the MENA members on political issues...
- Political issues are also emphasized by MENA media (Al Ahram, Al Manar etc. ), insisting on talking politics and not mentioning the UfM projects at all...
- Many Middle Eastern weblogs, mentioning the UfM projects, see them as an ambitious waste of time – and also make the point that the decisive problems (Israel-Palestine, Iraq etc.) should be dealt with first...
- So summing up both official and unofficial discourses in the Middle East emphasize the political obstacles to developing the UfM

14

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### The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East

- After 9.11 and the terror attacks in Madrid and London the EU has been focusing more on security – both externally and internally...
- The preoccupation with security by the EU is shared by the Arab states, which are concerned with their own security
- An important aspect of this is the difficulties the EU has had in approaching Islamist movements and parties...
- ...and due to the gradually closer cooperation between the states on both sides of the Mediterranean the political environment as far as Islamist parties and movements are concerned has changed
- Furthermore the institutional development of the EU itself (esp. the enlargements in 2004 and 2007) has made it more difficult to reach an internal consensus on a policy towards the Mediterranean
- In conclusion: a two-stage strategy seems to be both a pragmatic and relevant solution: first an initial period devoted to development, then a second period during which political cooperation will become feasible...

15

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### The UfM and the EU as a pragmatic actor in the Middle East

- The contribution of this article to the 'post-democratization' debate is to call attention to a historical dimension in European institutional thinking:
- As neo-functionalism back in the 1950s informed the founding fathers of European integration, it seems also to have informed the architects of the UfM in 2008 and onwards...
- Obviously it is not the idea that Mediterranean cooperation in the near future will go through integration processes like the EU since the 1950s
- Rather the parallelism between early European integration thinking and the UfM can help us gain insight in the thinking behind the UfM...
- The actual result, however, of implementing the UfM might very well be a continued lack of integration between the EU and its Mediterranean partners in the UfM ...
- At the policy level the actual unfolding of the UfM seems to be prevented by the slow European integration process and the political contradictions in the Middle East (the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq etc...)

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