

University of Southern Denmark, 13 October 2011:  
*Mediterranean Perspectives*

The EU, the US – NATO and the Gulf  
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Student Presentation by Casper: NATO and the Arab  
Spring: A new role for the trans-Atlantic alliance

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Literature:

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Outline:

- The EU, the US and the Middle East in an international perspective
- US foreign policy towards MENA – and the EU dimension
- EU and Iran, the Gulf and "The Broader Middle East"



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The EU, the US and the Middle East in an international perspective

- For years the US was a superpower and the EU was a loosely knit European alliance with the primary purpose of economic cooperation
- By 2011 the EU by far has surpassed the US both as to population and GDP – if not in geographic size
- Richard Youngs: "...the Middle East accounted for a greater amount of European foreign policy activity after the attacks of 9/11" and its...
- "foreign policy design increasingly merged with debates over the trends conditioning Islam within Europe"
- The EU is on its way towards internal integration (or, as we call it in Danish: *gl/debane*, English: slide) but also experiencing the challenges of an enormous enlargement within the last 5 years...
- At the same time the EU is experiencing a new reality in the Middle East. The Arab Spring is challenging the EU on the the policy level – and challenging research as to how we can interpret what is happening: a "transition" from depoliticization to re-politicization

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### The EU, the US and the Middle East in an international perspective

- The EU and the Gulf:  
[http://eeas.europa.eu/gulf\\_cooperation/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/gulf_cooperation/index_en.htm)
- The EU's exports to the GCC are (...) machinery and transport materials (32%) (...) EU imports from the GCC consist mostly of fuels and derivatives (65% of total EU imports from the GCC countries).
- The EU and Iraq: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/iraq/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iraq/index_en.htm)
- "The EU is moving steadily towards enhancement of its relationship with Iraq (...) Taking into account the possible role of Iraq as a natural gas supplier for the Southern Corridor and that Iraq has the world's third largest proven petroleum reserves, Iraq could become an energy bridge between the Middle East, the Mediterranean and the EU."
- The EU and Iran: [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/iran/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iran/index_en.htm)
- "The limits of our cooperation reflect ongoing concerns in the EU and international community, chiefly connected to Iran's nuclear programme"

### US foreign policy towards MENA – and the EU dimension

- With a new US policy: 'peace and security through freedom and democracy' – the US under Bush distanced itself from many years of cooperation with outrageous regimes (for instance Saudi-Arabia...)
- From 'balancing of power' to 'activist foreign policy based on propagation of freedom and democracy' – achieved through a confrontational and if necessary military policy: *shock and awe* as the new policy metaphor
- Added to that an ambition about influencing the region – through pressure, sanctions, threats of military intervention etc. all this summed up in The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), November 2003.
- Attached to this an important discussion about the legality and/or legitimacy of the US policy. This was part of the discussion of how to distinguish between preemptive war (which can be legitimized via the UN) and preventive war (which is considered illegal – Erslev p. 62)

### US foreign policy towards MENA – and the EU dimension

- Before the war – but also after, especially with the vague and unclear basis for the war in Iraq, we landed in a situation, where the US decided not to take notice of this distinction between preemptive og preventive – substantiated by a moral discourse based on the defence of freedom, rights and democracy
- With the ambition of Public Diplomacy the cartoon crisis becomes a problem for the US - therefore the hesitation as far as support to Denmark is concerned
- Syria a difficult case – in those days with the burning of the Embassy in Damascus (recently with the harsh crackdown on the uprisings...)
- The weak Syrian regime under Bashar al-Assad was further weakened by the political pressure and the economic sanctions from the US. The US policy was a result of the fact that Syria allowed terrorists to stay in Syria and allowed them to pass the border between Syria and Iraq
- Syria hardly threatened by inner opposition, but Syrian alliance with Iran weakened by Syrian exit from Lebanon and Iran-Hezbollah alliance..

### US foreign policy towards MENA – and the EU dimension

- Iran has become the main opponent for the US in the Middle East – at least at the rhetorical level. This has to do with the WMD-issue – the Iranian atomic-threat
- ...but also the condition that Iran is perceiving itself as representing Islam in the "confrontation" between the West and Islam
- US policy towards Iran is only partly coordinated with the EU (which on its side hardly can be said to agree internally). For some years the EU was represented by a 'trojka' consisting of France, Germany and the UK – this is no longer the case...
- Summing up: the concept by Carl Schmitt of the 'partisan' (or terrorist) and the 'partisan war' point to a 'new global reality' (Wæver), a discussion about the necessity of foreign policy *realpolitik* – and:
- ...the difficult and complex discussion about promoting democracy in unfree societies with these two points: 1) is it always a good idea to ask for democratic elections as quickly as possible? And 2): how do we avoid the strengthening of radicalism?

### EU and Iran, the Gulf and "The Broader Middle East"

- The inauguration of Khatami as president in 1997 was affected by the Mykonos affair (the killings of Kurdish politicians in Berlin 1992) – as to the relation to Europe (all ambassadors were withdrawn)
- From November 1997 a new, critical dialogue – characterized by frequent visits by Khatami in Rome, Paris and Berlin – pointed to a certain rapprochement. A French initiative seemed to initiate this (Vedrine)
- A contradictory rapprochement because of the complex Iranian development – reform policy without any real breakthrough, due to the continued dominance of the Faqih and the Guardian Council...
- European opposition against Bush's 'axis of evil'-concept – generally problematic development in the relation between the EU, the USA and Iran
- A new development after the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005. New internal political contradictions and seemingly new divisions within the conservative circles of the religious establishment

### EU and Iran, the Gulf and "The Broader Middle East"

- Iran – seen from the EU side – can be characterized both in positive terms and in more negative terms – under all circumstances as an issue of considerable significance
- The GCC-states is still perceived as playing a minor role – yet with increasing importance, especially within the economic field
- ...and certainly also within the media area (Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya...etc)
- Saudi-Arabia is in many ways problematic, very closed and beyond EU influence – and in a close relationship with the US
- Yemen maybe closer to the EU, the EU's status as being 'payer not player' is unfolding (the US: security, the EU: development), but recently highly problematic
- The Gulf-area in general affected by English and French bilateral, active policy – without the participation from the rest of the EU
- The US much more significantly present in the Gulf, based on security assessments and strategic interests
- The EU played out against the US – by the Gulf-states

### EU and Iran, the Gulf and "The Broader Middle East"

- Summing up: increasing European focus on the Middle East after 9-11
- Increasing focus on Islam in Europe and after the bombings in Madrid and London on security and (security-) cooperation with the regimes
- EU-policy: "the one and many"-policy (facing a Wider Middle East), see: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>
- Palestine – enormous economic support, limited political influence
- A number of areas characterized by inner European rivalry – as we have talked about
- Turkey – French and German opposition
- The Maghreb – French dominance, EU active towards Morocco...
- Iraq – US critical and US supportive policy (France on one side, the UK on the other – together with Dk.)
- The EU still not a coherent and consistent foreign policy actor – because of its differential foreign policy and multi-actor status
- And: the EU only gradually developing its potential outside the Mediterranean area...

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### Supplementary literature

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