WHY THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ABLE TO INTEGRATE SYRIA IN THE EURO-MED PROCESS?

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA       Association Agreement
BP       Barcelona Process
CW       Chemical Weapons
CSCM     Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean
EC       European Community
ENP      European Neighborhood Policy
ESCAWA   Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU       European Union
EUMS     European Union Member States
MENA     Middle East and North Africa
MP       Mediterranean Partnership
NATO     North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UN       United Nations
UNIFIL   United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
US       United States (of America)
USSR     Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD      Weapons of Mass Destruction
WHY THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ABLE TO INTEGRATE SYRIA IN THE EURO-MED PROCESS?

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This thesis describes the relations between the European Union and Syria in the context of the Euro-Med Process. The relations between the two agents cannot be extrapolated from a complex and difficult context which concerns the relations between North-South Mediterranean and the evolving political and economic disparities. This thesis considers also the relevance of the making process of the Euro-Med Institutions, together with the active role of the European Union and its Member States in financing numerous programs and projects in order to empower the economic development of the Northern Mediterranean States.

Thus, a particular case is dedicated to Syria together with its political complexities and the difficult relations with its neighboring States, such as Turkey, Jordan and Israel. The thesis aims to highlight the challenges which the European Union faced in order to integrate Syria in the Euro-Med Process, despite the special partnership of Syria with Russia and Iran.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation will attempt to highlight the relations between the European Union and Syria in the Euro-Mediterranean context. Although the topic has already been subject to numerous academic interpretations and analyses, the relations between the two political agents remain fundamental to review once more; the evolving status of the Euro-Med partnership and the attempts by the European Union to fully integrate the south Mediterranean states into a multilateral dialogue at regional level pass also through the role which Syria played in the Mashreq regional stability.

The research question of this paper will attempt to highlight a reflection on the whole Euro-Med process, which starts by offering an overview of the actual political context which cannot be ignored in order to fully understand the research question.

The second part of this dissertation will focus on two different major aspects, which are strictly interconnected. First, the relations between Syria and the neighbouring states in the Mashreq region in addition to close partners, such as Iran and Russia. Secondly, the last chapter will outline the actual relations between Syria and the European Union.

Through this analysis, the dissertation aims to conclude that the actual bilateral relations between Syria and the European Union have to be taken into analysis.
considering the sub-regional context of the Mashreq area, where the Damascus’s regime has constantly been involved in hostile relations with its neighbouring states, mining the perspective of an actual positive interrelation with different European and MENA countries within the Euro-Med partnership.

**Literature Review**

The opening of this dissertation starts highlighting the studies and researches already carried out by numerous other academics and scholars in the field of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

The aim of the Literature Review is to underline the theories already discussed in other contexts by scholars, which already offer the basis from where to start a new academic investigation. In this part of the work, there is particularly stress on the research on the development of the Mediterranean Partnership between North and South. Scholars agree that the European Union has been playing an important role for re-conciliation between the different State agents along the Mediterranean, but numerous obstacles have been encountered during this process, including cultural barriers, political - economic differences and priorities and last, but not least, the continuous rise of new problems, for example irregular migration and terrorism.

At the same time, the second part of the chapter underlines the peculiarity of the Syrian case, including the political hostilities with the United States and Israel. Eventually, despite the divisions with numerous Western and European countries, Syria attempted to develop a strong relationship with the European institutions and the
different European Member States, particularly France and Germany in order to attract financial and economic investment, during the development of the Mediterranean Partnership.

**Methodology**

The methodology chapter is dedicated to an investigation of the importance and the relevance of the research question. This initial part of the dissertation will outline the methods and the criteria considered in order to answer the research question. Moreover, the reader might here find the explanation as to why this analysis needs to be considered and how it could eventually improve the knowledge already present in numerous other works.

The methodology analysis explores also the biases which might be present in the dissertation and the challenges which surround a study which has been considered difficult and controversial by numerous other scholars who opted to remain vague on the European-Syrian relations due to the numerous difficulties within it, including the possibility of finding a sufficient number of critical and academic analysis in the field.

**Chapter 1**

The theory chapter is a key chapter where one can find the basis for the academic legitimacy of the whole research question. Indeed, the analysis of different theoretical perspectives would guarantee the narration of facts and events not as an historical speculation, but as an analytical analysis of events under a political science knowledge and study method.
In this part of the work, the reader will encounter the study of numerous scholars who particularly focused on three major theoretical schools of thought: Realism, Liberalism and Regionalism.

The study on a State agent would certainly reinforce the need to speculate on the different views on security perspectives which realist scholars consider as a fundamental approach in order to understand a State’s behaviour and priorities over political actions. On the other hand, the context of the Euro-Med process cannot elude the importance of the economic development towards the Mediterranean patterns and processes, highlighting so the theories of liberal scholars and importance on the economic development and the creation of a common Euro-Mediterranean market in order to consolidate and enforce peace and stability in the region. The third and final scholastic approach considers the analysis of the Euro-Med dialogue within the view of a regional level of analysis, outlining the emerging role of regional institutions, such as the European Union and the attempt by the same to enforce a new political model which could delimit the unlimited role of states as exclusive regional and global actors over political and economic decisions. Moreover, such political schools of thought speculate on the communalities which different States may have in order to facilitate and increase bilateral and multilateral levels of cooperation in contrast to external regional agents.

Further discussions in this chapter will also consider the actual debate over emulative or assimilative cases. In particular, the chapter aims to explain through effective examples and cases to what extent the Middle East and North African states have fully implemented the projects and the policies agreed with the European Union.
member states from the inauguration of the Barcelona Process and consequently, to what extent these policies impacted on the changes of the regimes in the MENA region.

Chapter 2

The second chapter will analyse the evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. After outlining the causes which determined the rise of the Mediterranean Partnership, this part of the dissertation examines the role of the European Union in promoting a new external policy with the MENA region, especially from the 1990s.

The analysis of this regional phenomenon will include a study on the variable and invariable factors which determined the expansion of the relations between the European Union and the North African and Middle East states. Thus, a critical perspective will eventually stress the challenges which the European Institutions had to face in order to emerge as credible interlocutor within the Mediterranean region, strongly characterized by regional divisions and socio-economic disparities.

Throughout this investigation, the chapter will focus on the changing policies of the European Union in the Euro-Med scenario, considering the promotion of the European Neighbourhood Policy and its limited impact in substantially enforcing a qualitative and a quantitative policy change over the Mediterranean region and finally concluding with the promotion of the Union for the Mediterranean launched by President Sarkozy in 2008.

Moreover, one cannot ignore the different levels of analysis which aim to facilitate a comprehensive knowledge of the Euro-Med political dynamics. Indeed, if a
fundamental role in the Mediterranean Partnership has been played by diplomats and official institutions through a Track I level of negotiation process, especially over macro-economic and security issues, one should also consider the importance of the numerous initiatives taken by non-governmental organizations and academic institutions in order to expand and promote discussions on common cultural aspects and mutual socio-economic benefits within the Mediterranean dialogue and the promotion of bilateral and multilateral discussion processes over concrete social issues, for example equality, human rights, education, water resources and management in the Middle East area.

Chapter 3

After having presented the Euro-Med context, the second part of the dissertation focuses on the case study of Syria.

Analysing the Mashreq context and the regional political stability, this chapter focuses on the bilateral relations between Syria and the neighbouring countries. The aim of this investigation is to highlight the difficulties which Syria faced in order to maintain a political equilibrium in the Middle East area, which inevitably impacted on the role which the same country assumed in joining the Euro-Med process.

Indeed, the difficult partnership between Syria and important Middle East partners, such as Turkey, Israel, Lebanon and Jordan, affected the precarious stability in the region and it also contributed to decrease the strong level of partnership with the same European institutions. The study on bilateral relations between Syria and part of the Mashreq members will underline specific issues, concerning both military and security aspects, together with economic disparities, especially over water resources.
management, which is both a common element of weakness (and in some cases of strength) for Syria with all its neighbouring countries.

Moreover, in order to expand the importance which Syria plays in the whole sub-regional and macro regional Mediterranean scenario, the last part of the chapter will investigate the bilateral partnership between Syria and two other international and regional state agents which certainly largely benefited from having a close relations with a country directed connected to the Mediterranean and Europe through its geographical proximity: Russia and Iran.

As a result, this part of the dissertation will ultimately attempt to externalize the bilateral relations between Syria and the European Union into a major complex context which indirectly affects the partnership between the two agents.

**Chapter 4**

The last chapter of the dissertation will enter into the actual EU-Syria relations, looking mainly at two major perspectives. This part of the work will outline the historical relations between Syria and the European Community, stressing the difficult bilateral relations which Damascus attempted to establish with important European Member States, such as France, Germany and Italy.

On the other hand, the evolution of the bilateral relations between these two agents has developed and has increasingly achieved tangible results with the signing of numerous bilateral agreements over economic development, trade and entering into a more delicate aspect, like security and armament proliferation. Eventually, a sub-level of analysis will include investigations over the contributions which some EU member
states, like France, have effected to shape a new partnership with Damascus’s regime, although several controversies remained over sensitive questions, including the respect and the implementation of human rights by Assad’s regime.
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to highlight the major theme which will be discussed in this dissertation from the points of view of different scholars who stress different theoretical frameworks and analysis on the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

This part of the dissertation presents the reader different perspectives on topic which are: a theoretical introduction of the concepts of multilateralism and cooperation at international and regional levels, highlighting definitions and the practical challenge implementation of such policies; a comprehensive analysis of the historical route of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the challenges faced by states in the making process; the analysis of one specific actor of the Euro-Med process, Syria, which has limited its political enthusiasm and activism in comparison to other regional state actors, especially in improving its cooperation with further international and regional organizations (e.g. NATO). Moreover, the strong alliance and partnership of Damascus’s Regime with two important international state actors; Iran and Russia will be considered.

2.2 Cooperation and Multilateralism in the Mediterranean Institutions

The first important step in order to understand the political and economic dynamics in the Euro-Mediterranean region is to approach a theoretical perspective of the identity
of the multilateral and regional institutions which aim to guarantee cooperation among different state actors.

Starting from a purely technical definition, James Caporaso\(^1\) defines “Multilateralism” as an architectural structure characterized by \textit{indivisibility}, \textit{reciprocity} and a \textit{common conduct} of principles. The scholar also adds that the word multilateralism implies an activity conducted by a group of states with common basis (e.g. cultural, economic or political).

The concept of \textit{multilateral} stresses an activity conducted by different states under cooperative measures. Multilateral does not specify a quantitative or a qualitative number of state members, which could also include whole regions, but the definition also implies that cooperation plays a fundamental role in maintaining the relations among the Member States; meanwhile, the key dilemma concerns whether cooperation is a tool or an end for the policies of each state. Indeed, some theorists argue that cooperation is an instrument through which states aim to achieve their national goals through cost-benefit logic. On the other hand, other scholars stress that cooperation is the end process which passed through multilateral political discussions and activities. As a result, whether a state participates with a logic of cost-benefits to multilateral actions or not, it has to renounce temporarily its independence and autonomy in order to facilitate the reaching of a compromise agreement among state actors.

The outcome of these theoretical underpinnings may be the establishment of international and regional institutions with different principles and dynamics over organizations and structures which aim to keep State actors working together and solve common challenges.

Multilateralism at international level remains open to non specific and identified geographical and cultural frameworks, and several critics highlight the loss of autonomy by state members. However, Fiona Butler\(^2\) considers more specifically the theory of Regionalism and Integration as the key theoretical pillars in which can be identified the European Union and the Mediterranean area.

Butler explains that the word regionalism does not only express geographical proximity of states, but also historical experiences, long traditions of cultural and economic interactions through a mechanism of mutual interdependence. Thus, regionalism may also assume the meaning of cohesion of states (due to common challenges) and promote and coordinate agreed policies and conventions, through mechanisms which can appear easier to apply in comparison with broader international organizations.

However, to what extent the regional and international organizations may positively increase cooperation and development for nation-states is questioned by the Italian

scholar Giulio Gallarotti\(^3\), who stresses the limits of the institutions, claiming three major difficulties. The first concerns the extended differences present among states and how these tend to emerge within the political routine of the international institutions. Thus, the stronger states would constantly aim to impose policies over the weaker and shape their activities and the political agenda. The second criticism highlights the incapacity of developing states to assume an autonomous status once that a constant intervention of international institution would *de facto* prevent the establishment of a national structural system. As a result of this, Gallarotti warns that sharing policies among states may be risky for each State and it would also increase a sort of sense of irresponsibility on an accurate use of economic and political resources.

Despite the above mentioned challenges, one can argue that regionalism is *de facto* a reality nowadays present in the Mediterranean region, which includes the European Union states and the North African and Middle East states through a mechanism of integration policies.

The integration process is defined by Fiona Butler\(^4\) as constant and intensive interactions among states. These activities may be the result of direct policies, actions or indirect communication through economic and cultural tools. The latter involves the establishment by member states of a free trade and market system through

\(^3\) Giulio Gallarotti, The Limits of International Organization: systematic failure in the management of international relations, Volume 45 / Issue 02 / March 1991, pp 183-220

common financial agreements and the removal of customs tariffs. The former implies the formation of an institutional mechanism which could check and balance powers, solve disputes through peaceful tools and maintain order and security.

The enlargement process of the European Community into the North Mediterranean region has represented an unique case in which regional cooperation has been extended across geographical borders and political-economic divergences in order to face the old and the new challenges emerging in the Mediterranean region, after the Cold War era.

2.3 The EU and the Mediterranean Cooperation

Regional cooperation within the Mediterranean area and the EU should be analysed taking into account key historical differences between the North and the South Euro-Mediterranean states. In the 1970s the European Community intensified the dialogue with non-EC Mediterranean States aiming to establish economic agreements over free trade and decreasing tariff barriers. Nevertheless, economic development and cooperation had to be matched with numerous economic disparities, starting from the unequal production and redistribution of resources. Ricardo Gomez⁵ highlights how North African states faced several challenges over the production and the export of food goods, such as the Moroccan tomatoes production in the late 1970s.

On the other hand, political dialogue between North and South Mediterranean was inaugurated by a changing political route of the European countries. The Global

⁵ Ricardo Gomez, Negotiating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 2003 pp.33-35
Mediterranean Policy promoted by the EU Commission between the 1970s and 1980s was possible through the new relations between France and most of its former North African colonies. However, the new enlargement process in North Europe (UK-Ireland and Finland) negatively affected the implementation of effective cooperative policies and temporarily decreased the intensive dialogues with the MENA region. The Mediterranean dialogue mostly affected the accession of close European partners such as Spain, Portugal and Greece into the EC. Political actions over the Middle East area were unilaterally agreed at the Venice Summit\(^6\) (1980), when EC members stated their participation in the negotiation of the Israel- Arab States within the Palestine Conflict and the intensification of the political relations with the MENA region.

Gomez explains that such interests were facilitated by the new French policies and relations with the former colonies, such as Algeria and Lebanon. However, the escalation of political violence in the 1980s in Lebanon and Palestine, increased diverging political positions among the same EC states. France kept an ambiguous foreign policy with Syria and Lebanon, due to the high threat of Islamic terrorism against French citizens.

If the 1970s and 1980s created the basis for a new interaction between the EC and the North African states, the global political and economic changes shaped a new role for the emerging European Union and its members.

\(^6\)The European Council: Venice Summit, 1980

Roberto Aliboni explains that political cooperation between North and South is the result of several events which were taking place in three different border areas of the EU at the beginning of the 1990s. Among these, Aliboni highlights the First Gulf Crisis, the instabilities in the Balkans and the fall of the Soviet Union with the subsequent democratization processes in Central and Eastern Europe as key political changes which have strongly determined the need by Mediterranean states to intensify cooperation and dialogue over several issues.

Scholars express the opinion that the European Union evaluated an increasing number of new occasions for the launching of a Mediterranean Partnership, starting from the 1990s, including new practical measures which had to be commonly agreed and implemented in order to face practical issues such as the following: irregular migration from North Africa and Eastern Europe and the rise of transnational criminal groups; illegal trafficking of people and goods; environmental pollution in the Mediterranean; the increasing hostilities among multi-ethnic groups in the Balkans; the emerging of transnational terrorist groups; the intensive economic and financial development of the North Mediterranean States versus the deficits of the MENA region; the need of EU and MENA states to commonly agree on a new Mediterranean political order, inaugurating a new road map for common development and an exit strategy for two important conflicts: the Cyprus crisis and the Arab Israeli divisions.

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The Cypriot conflict involved the discussions of the EU Council on the application of Turkey as a full member of the EU, a proposal obstructed by Greece. On the other hand, the Israeli Arab crisis opened the debate on the actual role of the EU as a credible negotiator between the two parties, standing between the stronger influence of the United Nations and the United States.

Thus, Stephen Calleja\(^8\) describes the intensive number of ministerial meetings which Northern and Southern Mediterranean states attended in order to achieve a new political vision in the region. The first remarkable meeting was the so called “5+5” Dialogue which included France, Italy, Spain, Malta and Portugal and Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia in 1990 and followed by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). In 1992, the Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guido de Marco, launched the Council of the Mediterranean, a Committee of Ministers and a General Assembly which could concretely tackle the different problems concerning the Mediterranean. In 1994, the Mediterranean Forum proposed by Egypt and France extended the attendance to ministerial meetings to further Mediterranean States, such as Turkey, Greece and Morocco.

In the light of these several meetings, in 1995 the Fifteen Representatives of the EU member states and other ten representatives of the Major North Africa and Middle East states, together with Malta, Cyprus, Croatia and Turkey, the EU Commission

and Council Representatives attended the Barcelona Meeting and commonly agreed on the Barcelona Declaration.\(^9\)

The Document recalled the UN Charter on Human Rights and the respect for individual rights, the promotion of the rule of law and democracy, the fight against terrorism and the respect of national borders and minority groups. Moreover, the EU States pushed for the formation of a common free trade area and the implementing of socio-economic policies for cooperation and development. Interesting enough, the Representatives also introduced the innovative declaration of cultural cooperation and exchanges, free movement and mutual fighting against illegal activities. The Declaration did not have strict binding policies, but it aimed to promote further *ad hoc* ministerial meetings on the different topics and promote the institutionalization of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Calleya also stresses that as a result of the Barcelona Declaration, the Mediterranean became a key geo-strategic area not only for the EU Member States, but also for International Organizations, like NATO and OSCE, which opened a special partnership with key MENA States between 1995 and 1998. Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Egypt and Algerian intensified their political and strategic relations with NATO.\(^{10}\)

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\(^9\) Barcelona Declaration, Barcelona 1995

\(^{10}\) Stephen Calleya, *Evaluating Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, 2005 pp.120-121
Interesting enough, a key Southern Mediterranean actor, Syria, limited its political and strategic relations to the EU and NATO proposals of cooperation, assuming a unique role in the Mediterranean scenario.

2.4 Syrian Foreign Policy

Syria is certainly a fundamental player in the Middle East and South Eastern Mediterranean peace processes, which attended the Barcelona Meeting in 1995 and agreed to revise its relations with the EU and the Mediterranean Partners. However, one can argue that such political partnership was limited to co-existence rather than actual cooperation.

The starting factors for such hypothesis should take into account the dynamics of Syrian foreign policy with its neighbours and the strategic economic and political partners such as Iran and Russia.

2.4.1 Syrian Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Syria’s role within the Mediterranean relations and partnership has been studied under geo-political and economic analyses. When considering the foreign policy of Syria, scholars stress the continuous evolving of the political changes within the Mashreq and the Middle East regions.

Since its formation as an independent state, Syria has played a key role in the following political scenarios: the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the political fragmentation in
Lebanon, the making of the Palestinian State, the Iran-Iraq divisions and the expanding interests of Russia and China over the Middle East area.

However, despite the numerous political initiatives, Syria played a key role beyond its regional borders. Syria’s attendance at the Euro-Med Partnership let scholars consider the possibility of a change route within the relations between Syrian and Middle East neighbouring countries, especially with Israel. After the passing of the political powers from Hafiz Al-Assad to Bashar Al-Assad, numerous hypotheses have been formulated on the possible changing policies of Syria with the European Union. However, few real steps have carried forward the relations between Syria and the EU.

Most of the writings by different scholars have attempted to outline the major political changes carried on by Bashar Al-Assad once he took over power, especially on the relations between Syria and Israel and Russia.

Bassam Haddad\textsuperscript{11} suggests that Syrian foreign policy over the last ten years is strictly connected with the socio-economic reforms which the country tried to apply between the end of the 1990s and the new millennium. Opening the state to European investments and decreasing the tariff barriers with Lebanon, the regime also applied new reforms in order to diversify its economy, but remaining highly depended on the state’s investment. As a result, economic stagnation and social mobility remained minimal in comparison to other Middle East states. The possibility of a Syrian

\textsuperscript{11} Bassam Haddad, \textit{Change and Stasis in Syria: One Step Forward}, in Middle East Report, N°213, 1999 (pp.23-27)
economic growth is still depending today on building capacities with its closer regional economic partners, challenged by difficult political relations and disparities.

In 2004, the think tank International Crisis Group published a document\(^\text{12}\) in which it outlined the major challenges of Syrian foreign policy with Israel and Lebanon. The Group stressed that the Syrian regime seemed willing to re-open a negotiation process with Israel over key national interests like for instance the control of the natural resources over the Golan and the Jordan Valley, important for its water resources. Nevertheless, despite the numerous official positions of the Assad family in which the regime guaranteed the reopening of an official negotiation, few meaningful forms of bargaining have been conducted unofficially by the two parties.

The second key strategic policy of Syria concerns its role as a fundamental party in the process of stabilization of the Lebanese territory. The Hezbollah group remains the strongest political and armed group in Lebanon close to the Assad’s regime. The commitment of the Lebanese military group against Israel’s invasion of Lebanon has certainly contributed to increase the tensions between Damascus and Jerusalem. In 2003, the Syrian troops were reduced up to 1,000 units offering to all the parties involved in the peace process the possibility to implement UNSCR 425\(^\text{13}\) on the territorial integrity of Lebanon.

\(^{12}\) *Syria Under Bashar (I): Foreign Policy Challenges*, International Crisis Group, Middle East Report N°23, 2004

2.4.2 Syria’s International Allies: Russia and Iran

If limited efforts have shown scarce positive outcomes on part of the regional relations with Israel and Lebanon, Syria managed to establish strong political and economic alliances with two regional and international actors: Russia and Iran.

Jonathan Gelbart\textsuperscript{14} portrayed the Syria-Iran relations as an unique alliance characterized more by common geo-strategic interests rather than common cultural backgrounds. Since the making of the Iranian Islamic Republic in 1979, Syria stands by Iran over two major policies:

- the eradication of US influence from the Middle East;
- the defeat of the State of Israel.

During the 1980s, both the states cooperated in supporting the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon, giving weapons and armaments and Syria supported Iran during the conflict against Iraq.

Gelbart also considers that in the last few years, both the Assad regime and Iran were labelled as “State Sponsors of Terrorism” by the United States, reinforcing their


mutual support also on international political decisions, like mutual support for the proliferation of nuclear weapons by Tehran’s regime.

On the other hand, an interesting observation arises from the analysis of Andrej Kreutz\textsuperscript{15}, who describes the relations between Syria and Russia as a fluctuating reciprocal sustainment. He stresses that since the 1970s, the Soviet Union favoured an alliance with Damascus’s regime as an antithesis to the Egypt-US reconciliation under Sadat. Economic and financial support together with military equipment favoured the expansion of Syria as an important state actor in Middle East. However, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the reconciliation between Moscow and Jerusalem jeopardized the axis between Syria and Russia until the rise of Vladimir Putin in Russia.

The new Russian President intensified the rapprochement with the Assad family between 2004-2008 in response to the Iraqi invasion by the United States and the new tensions between NATO and Russia during the Georgian Conflict in 2008.\textsuperscript{16}

Apart from economic partnership stressed by intensive exports and imports of primary goods, such as food and natural resources, both Syria and Russia share common military training. Kreutz explains that between 2006 and 2010, over 10,000 Syrian

\textsuperscript{15} Andrej Kreutz, \textit{Syria: Russia’s Best Asset in the Middle East}, Russia/NIS Centre, N°55, 2010

\textsuperscript{16} Idem 2010 pp.14
officers were trained in Russia for military purposes; meanwhile, another 2,000 Russian “military advisors” were present in Syria.\footnote{Idem 2010 pp.18}

In conclusion, Syria became a strategic partner for regional and international state actors, maintaining a key role on the stability of the Mashreq region and opening the accession to the Mediterranean to Iran and Russia. However, parallel to the relations with the closer partners, the Syrian regime inaugurated a set of political talks and economic investments with the European Union, new regional actor.

\textbf{2.5 EU and Syrian Relations}

If Russia and Iran were the northern and eastern allies which guaranteed to Syria military and political support, the western borders remained opened to economic partnership with the rest of the MENA States and, most important, the European Union.

Eyal Zisser\footnote{Eyal Zisser, Syria, in \textit{Middle East Contemporary Survey}, edited by Ami Ayalon, 1991 pp.674} stresses that since the beginning of the 1990s, Syria re-launched a new political relationship with the EC Member States. Several European representatives visited Damascus in order to establish new economic agreements. The European Community offered several loans to Syria; meanwhile, around 50\% of the Syrian exports were directed to the European states. At the political level, London and Damascus’s relations were officialised through the opening of permanent diplomatic representations, while the German Foreign Minister Dietrich Genscher made an

\footnote{Idem 2010 pp.18}
official visit to Damascus. On the other hand, France kept its political reservations and enthusiasm due to the instabilities present in Lebanon and the pressing for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country and the refusal to recognize the Hezbollah group. The tensions between the France and Syria reached the apex in 1991 when the French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas refused to visit Damascus, contrary to the other European Ministers.

Zisser\(^{19}\) adds that at the end of 1990s, if political relations between the EU and Syria barely improved due to the minimal efforts committed by Syria and Israel to achieve a long term peace process, economic cooperation and integration remained an active negotiation process through the Association Agreement and the domestic economic reforms which the EU asked to the Assad’s regime to implement in order to benefit from major European investment. Syria also supported the presence of the EU envoys as active mediators in the peace process between Israel and Palestine, reducing the exclusive role of the US as unique facilitator.

On the other hand, Emad Gad\(^{20}\) considers that the European Union faced several challenges in implementing a strong political and economic partnership. First of all, Syria’s economy was tremendously lacking of domestic economic reforms which could facilitate pluralism, free market and enterprise. Second, the Assad Regime

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\(^{19}\) Eyal Zisser, Syria, in *Middle East Contemporary Surveys* edited by Bruce Maddy Weitzman, Tel-Aviv University, 1997 pp.669

\(^{20}\) Emad Gad, Globalization and Generational Change: Syrian Foreign Policy between Regional Conflict and European Partnership, in *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with the EU* edited by Gerd Nonneman, 2005 pp.94-97
objected to the promotion of important socio-economic changes because these could break-down the political control of the state over society and different dissident groups. Third, Syria aimed to increase its economic relations with the EU in order to step forward in the Middle East region, applying as a full member of the World Trade Organization.

However, if *de facto* EU and Syria converged economic perspectives, not without numerous challenges, from a political perspective, the Assad family found important allies in Germany and France during the Second Iraqi Gulf War (2003), maintaining an ambivalent position over the US invasion in Iraq.

2.6 Conclusion

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is the result of the strong commitment of the EC States which aimed to extend the enlargement policies in the north of the Mediterranean. The accession of Spain, Portugal and Greece in the EC ultimately opened the regional institution to the Mediterranean region and the MENA States.

Regional cooperation and integration in the Mediterranean are also the results of the common historical and cultural routes which numerous European states experienced with their former colonies. In the light of this political movement and changes, most of the North African and Middle East regimes accepted to inaugurate a new political phase of cooperation and dialogue, attempting to gain the best economic benefits.

Nevertheless, among those states which officially guaranteed a new policy, Syria resisted most of the political and economic innovations which the EU Commission and member states proposed to the Assad Regime. As a result, the EU-Syrian
partnership was characterized by a fluctuating relation motivated in some cases by common interests, while in others by diverging policies and development programmes. Furthermore, the Syrian regime could rely on the special relations with Iran and Russia, both interested in keeping a “bridge” to the Mediterranean in order to extend their regional and international geo-strategic positions.
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the methodology chapter is to explain the importance and the validity of this dissertation, considering also the data collected and used in order to prove the author’s extended knowledge of the subject. This part of the dissertation attempts to outline the relevance of the actual research question, including the numerous difficulties in writing on a topic widely debated on a macro perspective at academic level, but poorly described when it comes to outline more detailed characteristics and phenomena.

3.2 Hypothesis

Since the end of the Cold War, the European Union has been considered an important regional and international actor able to shape and affect political and security stabilities around the globe. One should therefore question why the same regional European institution has difficulty in establishing a stronger and more effective partnership with its closer neighbouring partners, namely those from the Middle East and North African states over the last twenty years.

In 1995, the launching of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership became the subject of numerous researches and studies by numerous scholars and academics. After more than a decade, few books and academic papers have faced the specific issue of the European-Syrian relations under the Euro-Mediterranean patterns and processes.
In particular, the main hypothesis poses a dilemma on the effective capacities of the European Union to shape an effective partnership with Damascus. Such dilemma would consider that the major challenges for the European institutions are not only related to the actual policies implemented over economic and political aspects in the last twenty years, but most important on the whole context of Syria and its foreign policy, starting with the main protagonists of the Euro-Med dialogue, which include Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Thus, the hypothesis of this research question stresses that, while on the one hand the European Union could have better shaped the political and economic formats, the same would also be partially responsible for not having carefully considered the actual context in which the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was considering to incorporate Syria as one of the major protagonists in the process. On the other hand, the external relations between Syria and further Euro-Med members have largely shaped a sense of diffidence, or in other cases, of open hostilities when discussing sensitive issues, including for instance water resources and security aspects.

In sum the hypothesis beyond the actual research question would suggest that numerous domestic and external aspects have also contributed to shape the relations between the European Union and Syria, indirectly affecting the whole Euro-Mediterranean process, which has been for a long time considered by the European Member States and the European institutions as a fundamental tool in order to maintain regional stability in the south and north of the Mediterranean.
3.3 Research Question and Its Validity

*Why has the European Union not been sufficiently effective in integrating Syria in the Euro-Med Process?* This question arises at a particular moment for Syria, the North Africa and the Middle East regions and the European Union.

Numerous academics and scholars are already focusing on the current protests which are greatly affecting the geo-political strategies to which most of the Western countries adapted since the Cold War period. In the last two years, new books and articles have attempted to explain the evolution of the political scenarios in the MENA region and the possible impact in the Mediterranean.

Nevertheless, little attention seems to be paid to the events which preceded the current Arab uprisings. Consequently, despite these new analyses, the best way for understanding the present remains looking at the past, by analysing the possibilities and the challenges faced.

In the light of this statement, the research question does not aim to investigate the destiny of Syria, but to understand what the European Union has already attempted to construct and improve with the Syrian regime under the Assad’s family in the last twenty years. The study on this subject would start considering the context of the Euro-Med dialogue as a historical platform in which the European Union has directed two major policy targets: guarantee security and stability along the Mediterranean borders and expand its economic supremacy at a global level, starting from opening its market to the southern Mediterranean states.
At the same time, the specific relations with Syria represent a special case study because of the following reasons. First of all, the current context and the political instability in Syria are highlighting the difficulties for the European Union to remain a major actor as a conflict mediator and facilitator. Russia and the United States are both re-opening a sort of competitive policy which was already present during the 1980s and 1990s over the Syrian territories and the whole predominance on the Mashreq region.

Secondly, different from the other Middle East and North African States, Syria had difficulty in establishing close relations with the European Union. It was only from 2009 that the EU and Syria had finally started to implement the Association Agreement, just two years before the new political turmoil and the collapse of the Syrian-European partnership.

Thirdly, Syria presents geographical, cultural and political characteristics which make this country a fundamental actor for the whole Middle East and Mediterranean stability, especially with important Euro-Med protagonists, such as Israel and Turkey. As a consequence, also after the conclusion of the current domestic conflict, which started in 2011 and, at moment of writing, is still going on, Syria risks continuing to experience the same challenges and fears with its neighbouring states; meanwhile, the relations with the European Union will need to face new bilateral reforms, concerning domestic changes over economic, political and social aspects.

Thus, the research question aims to explore the EU’s efforts for promoting the Euro-Med partnership with the different Mediterranean states and particularly understand to
what extent the EU achieved a solid cooperation with Syria and how it affected the whole Mediterranean cohesion and mutual economic growth.

3.4 Methods and Data

The method of analysis and study for this dissertation is mostly based on a qualitative approach.

James Mahoney\textsuperscript{21} explains that the main characteristics of the qualitative method in contrast to the quantitative one are based on the level of analysis which these two approaches imply. The qualitative approach focuses particularly on one individual case study, while the quantitative stresses an analysis on a collective group. A quantitative system requires a constant observation of the phenomenon and its evolution, while a qualitative works through mathematical explanations and analysis of causes-effects relations. Finally the peculiarity of the qualitative approach stresses the importance of the single case in contrast to the other phenomena. As a result, the qualitative approach aims to underline the importance of the Syrian case in the Euro-Med context and the relations with the European Union.

The complexity of the research question is largely reflected in the difficulty of finding resources which can fully explore and ultimately represent the aim of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{21} James Mahoney, \textit{A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Research}, in Political Analysis, 2006
The research was mostly focused on the review of secondary resources such as books, articles and essays which fully discuss the Euro-Med project and the role of the European Union within it. The articles are usually to be very specific in the issues discussed, such as water resources in Middle East and their impact at a political level between Syria and other States.

The authors of the books and articles show particular knowledge in the field, through direct or indirect personal commitments in the subjects analysed, whether for research studies or geographical and temporal proximity to the events taken into consideration. Nevertheless, the resources utilized and reviewed still risk to be affected by biases and incorrect interpretations.

Parallel to these resources is the relevance of statistics, graphs and figures which can fully and mathematically reflect certain aspects discussed in the dissertation, especially on economic issues and themes, which eventually offer a more quantitative perspective on the analysis of this dissertation.

Finally, primary resources, such as documents and texts on multilateral and bilateral treaties and agreements have been analysed in order to fully highlight a comprehensive knowledge on the diplomatic and political relations among the different signatory parties.

3.5 Variable and Invariable Factors

Another important aspect of the methodology adopted in the analysis of this subject is the constant reference to the context in which political episodes were taking place. First of all, this dissertation focuses particularly on a regional level of analysis, which
includes the Mediterranean region as the main geographical location. Moreover, the second part of the dissertation focuses on bilateral relations between Syria and the neighbouring countries, and finally the relations with the European Union.

The study on bilateral relations offers ad hoc explanations on specific issues and it helps to avoid generalizations on the themes discussed. Despite a recurring theme present in most of the bilateral relations between Syria and its neighbouring states, the dynamics and the effects of bilateral decisions are different from one to another.

Particular attention in this dissertation is also dedicated to the variable and invariable aspects which the research question cannot ignore. Variable and invariable factors are also sub-divided into external and domestic elements which also influence the analysis on key aspects in this dissertation; for instance, the Euro-Med making process and the Syrian bilateral relations with the rest of the Middle East States.

Fundamental invariable aspects at external level would include: 1) the political and security dynamics in the post Cold War era and the impact on the making of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue together with the role of the EU; 2) the expansions of the Globalization phenomenon and the international market, which pushed the EU to ultimately promote the formation of a common Euro-Med regional market; 3) the impact of international conflicts and terrorism on the whole regional stability, including irregular migration, international terrorism and Middle East political instability.

On the other hand, regional and sub-regional invariable factors would certainly consider: 1) the economic, political and cultural gaps between north and south Mediterranean states; 2) the EU’s expansion and neighbourhood policy in response to
the expansion of the economic market; 3) the geographical characteristics of the Mashreq region and the scarcity of primary resources, including water which inevitably affects the relations with numerous states in the area.

Variable factors will include 1) the level of bargaining which Damascus’ regime played during its dialogue with its neighbouring partners; 2) the implementing of few reforms by Assad’s regime at domestic level, impacting the economic and social development of Syria, which inevitably affected the domestic political stability.

By taking these aspects into account, this dissertation aims to offer a clear and functional analysis of the EU-Syria relations, without excluding the dynamics and the context in which such relations have taken place.
PART I

The European Union and the Mediterranean
THEORY CHAPTER
Regionalism in the Mediterranean

Euro-Med Development under Liberal and Realist Approaches

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I anticipated the major theoretical frameworks which characterize the process making of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In this part of the dissertation such frameworks will be newly explored and expanded, whilst recalling the European Regional policy and the making of bilateral relations with North African and Middle East countries.

In particular, the reader will have the opportunity to explore the intensive theoretical frameworks which aim to explain the rise of regionalism as a political phenomenon and the regional institutions through the roles played by different states, which aim to converge collective and national targets, through external mechanism. The Mediterranean offers an interesting case study, where for centuries, states have both cooperated and clashed in order to establish an unique political and economic equilibrium or in other cases hegemony, through the whole region.

In particular, I will start by paying particular attention to the different definitions of “regional integration”, considering the sub-level of analyses that one scholar has to take into account in order to offer a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon,
including also the historical political changes which determine the relevance for studying specifically the Mediterranean.

In the second part of the dissertation, I will outline reflections on the key theoretical aspects which underline the nature of the Euro-Med relations. On one side, there are the neo-liberal principles and the importance of a common Mediterranean market, characterized by free trade and economic exchanges. On the other hand, there are realist and neo-realist theories which stress the security challenges of the European Union with the Mediterranean partners, including traditional state actors and the emerging of new threats, like the regional proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Moreover, reflecting the traditional realist approach, I will also include the role of external state powers within the patterns of the Mediterranean political dynamics.

4.2 Theoretical aspects of Regionalism

In the Literature Review, I anticipated the concept of regionalism as described by Fiona Butler in terms of common economic activities and interactions, shared historical and cultural peculiarities, political integration which includes cooperation within common challenges, shared by different state actors.

Stephen Calleya\textsuperscript{22} presents a comprehensive analysis of regionalism. Considering the political perspectives of the phenomenon, the author underlines that regionalism concepts particularly re-emerged in the post Cold War period due to fundamental

\textsuperscript{22} Stephen Calleya, \textit{Navigating Regional Dynamics in the Post Cold War World}, 1997 pp.15-25
empirical events which include: declining trend of the role of nation-states as unique actors in international relations; the increasing interactions of cultures and people which have expanded the dynamics for mutual understanding of common needs and values; the influence of external regional powers; the re-launching of a common understanding of culture, traditions, political frameworks and mutual economic development by nation-States of a specific region, affecting in this way the roles that the same nation-states decide to assume within the interactions of their partners.

Moreover, from a purely technical definition and structure of regionalism, the debate includes several explanations. Calleya explains that one can look at regionalism as a result of: geographical proximity of a group of states; common cultural homogeneity shared by different nations; states which could share common political and economic policies assuming a trans-regional power and affecting the external environment; regionalism as a result of empowerment of supranational institutions which collectively aggregate and shape the policies of state members. The scholar also adds that the structure of regional entities has also to include different sub-regional areas, which ultimately differ from each other, due to geographical characteristics and mostly different levels of political and economic influences; the Mediterranean per se reflects such sub-international divisions with the constituency of the two major Middle East and North Africa areas (Maghreb and Levant).

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23 Ibid, pp. 28-30
Similar to Calleya’s explanations, Sophia Clément stresses that regionalism may remain open to different definitions; geographical delimitations and cultural-historical communalities are just tools used in order to shape the criteria for the definition of regionalism, but these do not offer an actual impediment to expand the concept *per se*. \(^{24}\)

Andrew Hurrell\(^ {25} \) considers different varieties of regionalism. *Regionalization* is a phenomenon in which integration derives from the interaction of societies which ultimately lead to economic and social cooperation. Thus, private trade and investment become the key tools through which such interactions can take place. However, the scholar stresses that such phenomenon does not presuppose any real impact on the relations already present among states.

*Regional awareness* refers to the case in which states within the same region may identify themselves with particular practices and cultures, creating a regional form of identity. *Regional inter-state cooperation* indicates a form of dialogue among states within the same region, under an intergovernmental approach, shaping communalities on policies against external challenges.

\(^{24}\) Sophia Clément, Sub-regionalism in South Eastern Europe, in *Regionalism in the Post Cold War Era*, edited by Stephen Calleya, 2000, pp. 72-73

Finally, there is the so called European model (or *State-promoter model*) in which state actors deliberately accept to establish common Institutional frameworks, principles and values, affecting domestic politics and economic development.

In looking at the traditional theoretical approaches to regionalism, Michelle Pace outlines the main views of the neo-realist and neo-liberal scholars, which I will later expand on the second part of this chapter.

A neo-realist\(^{26}\) view advocates the rise of regional institutions as mostly determined by security issues, concerning the safety of more than one state from common challenges. Moreover, regional institutions may emerge in conditions in which power shifts from one hegemonic state to regional state actors (e.g. the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of the regional south east Mediterranean hegemony of Turkey). Further neo-realist scholars, such as Waltz\(^{27}\), differ from the rise of regional institutions; these are claimed to be mostly the results of states’ interests, which eventually would cooperate only against common challenges, albeit with difficulty, for long term periods.

On the other hand, neo-liberal scholars\(^{28}\) claim that the rise of regionalism is the result of intrinsic economic cooperation among states, which is ultimately caused by domestic factors. Overproduction and the lobbying of domestic companies, push

\(^{26}\) Michelle Pace, *The Politics of Regional Identity*, 2006, pp. 28-30

\(^{27}\) Colin Elman, Realism, in *Security Studies- An Introduction*, edited by Paul Williams, 2009, pp.18-19

national governments to expand trade and financial mechanisms, decreasing tariff barriers.

4.3 Regionalism and Integration in the Euro-Med

Before expanding further on the most recent Mediterranean regional events, one has to understand that the Mediterranean integration runs parallel to the formation and the expansion of the same European Union, which could not ignore the need to establish a communication channel with southern neighbouring states.

Butler advocates the case of the European integration as the most emblematic in the 20th century, when economic, political and cultural interdependences were progressively expanded from the European continental area, across the Mediterranean states and the eastern European region.29

Ebarhard Rhein30 stresses that since its establishment in the 1970s, the European Regional system has been characterized by five different dynamics: increasing the influence on states’ sovereignty through effective legal and institutional mechanisms, promotion of long and short term policies through regional supra-national institutions (e.g. the European Council, the Parliament, the Commissions, etc...) , developing the enlargement and the integration processes together with institutional changes, expansive influences on states over new emerging technical problems for mutual

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cooperation, such as banking, competition, finance regulations. In this regard, Ricardo Gomez offers as examples the role that both the EU Commission and the European Council played during the intensive negotiation platforms for the launching of the Euro-Med and the Barcelona Process, especially for the MEDA budget. 31

Finally, the development of a strong economic integration may be explained through a neo functionalist approach. Ben Rosamond 32 underlines that the European Union is characterized by strong economic integration, the development of economic interdependence among states, increasing loyalty to supranational institutions as the EU institutions are impacting on national sovereignty and autonomy. Rosamond explains that the successful core of the neo-functionalist approach consists in shifting the loyalty of interest groups from state to institutional level through the converging of domestic policies with Institutional objectives.

As a result the European Union functionalist expansion could not cross and affect the southern Mediterranean sub-region, even if such linkages and dynamics were already part of the long historical processes between European and Mediterranean cultures.

For instance, Stephen Calleya 33 highlights the historical patterns of the Mediterranean region, identifying four major historical phases which have largely shaped the structural frames of the Mediterranean political culture. The most emblematic are

32 Ben Rosamond, Theories of European Integration, 2000, pp. 50-53
certainly the patterns of religious and political interactions between Christian European and Arab Muslim civilizations under intergovernmental relations, followed by the rise of nation-states and the colonial and military expansion of northern states to the south of the Mediterranean and concluded with the collapse of the European hegemony and the rise of the superpowers in the Cold War period.

Micelle Pace\textsuperscript{34} indicates the Mediterranean regional interactions as a unique case. Indeed, the historian Fernand Braudel considers that the history of the Mediterranean has always been characterized by a strong political interaction among the different state powers and empires throughout the MENA region. The Mediterranean Sea \textit{per se} represented a vast resource in which economic and political interests largely shaped the diplomatic relations among states. The constructivist approach would suggest that the Mediterranean interaction is shaped by the structure and the nature of the different state actors, including their cultural identities and the role which historically the northern European states played versus the southern ones. In this respect one could, the Christian western identity of the north Mediterranean States versus the Islamic and Arab cultures which characterize the North African and Middle East regions.\textsuperscript{35}

Looking at more recent Euro-Mediterranean political regional dynamics, Stephen Calleya explains that the Mediterranean is characterized by three different sub-regional areas which have modelled different internal and external interactions: the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} Michelle Pace, \textit{The Politics of Regional Identity}, 2006
\bibitem{} Op.cit. 2006, pp. 49-57
\end{thebibliography}
South-Mediterranean, the Maghreb and the Levant sub-regions. All these three differ from each other in patterns, primarily due to the nature of the States, their relations and the level of economic production and development. Calleya’s conclusion highlights that the first area has been successfully integrated in the European Union model of cooperation and dialogue, largely affecting the economic and political activities of the Euro-Med process. On the other hand, the Levant and Middle East regions remain highly characterized by an intergovernmental interaction model, where military and political tools are utilized by sub-regional states in order to keep domestic and external security. Finally, the Maghreb area is shaped by a more comprehensive sub-regional level of cooperation among state members, which ultimately aim to develop a new cooperative form of intergovernmental economic and political interactions.\(^{36}\)

In the next part of the chapter, one could better understand the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, taking into account the two most emblematic scholastic views, the neo-liberal and neo-realist approaches, which have been largely concerned with the most fundamental characteristics of the relation between North and South Mediterranean States: economic and military security and cooperation.

4.4 Liberalism and Euro-Med Partnership

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, economics play a key role in shaping and reinforcing the dialogue among states. Together with security dilemma, economic

partnership is the result of common necessities which states share and need to address, convinced that a mutual positive feedback would ultimately come out from such alliance.

Cornelia Navari\textsuperscript{37} explains that the classical liberal approach underlines that economic trade among states would positively impact on the security and political issues. Decentralizing the state’s roles, free commerce and exchange of goods could increase the economy of states, reinforce the emergence of the middle class and private investments. Ultra liberal philosophers, such as Rousseau and Kant, have advocated that alliance among states is beneficial in contrasting common challenges, while the ultimate prevailing of the rule of law would guarantee the abolition of the standing armies. Beyond the economic benefits, implications would also emerge at domestic political level of states. The democratization process within states has been largely claimed under the effective roles played by trade, movements of people and sharing resources.

One can note that the Barcelona Declaration \textit{per se} represents a document in which neo-liberal principles are for the first time institutionalized by different cultures and states in the Mediterranean region. In 1994, state parties commonly agreed upon several economic and social pillars, which could combine the actual pragmatic political development, without ignoring the integration of human rights lobbies and movements, which aimed to launch a new political phase into North-South relations.

Thus, even though the Declaration does not outline any particular setting of specific rules, it attempts to guide states to common principles, already inspired by the United Nations Declaration.

In the Euro-Mediterranean context Hafedh Zaafrane and Azzem Mahjoub\(^{38}\) describe *dialogue, exchange and cooperation* as key concepts, which together with socio-economic and democratic developments can positively contribute to guarantee peace and stability in the Mediterranean Partnership. The authors explain that recalling the neo-liberal approach, free trade plays a fundamental role in decreasing the divergences among States, reinforcing a mutual development which passes through concrete policies: modernization of social structures, promotion of private sectors, social flexibility and movement. As a result of this process, the immediate social impact in the southern countries would certainly be evident under the emerging role of local business and trade which would compete directly with the northern region.

Nevertheless, Ian Bache and Stephen George\(^{39}\) explain that a neo-liberal approach for the Mediterranean Partnership remains contradictory due to the intensive disparities present between north and south Members: the lack of advanced educational and training sectors, inadequate economic and financial structures and ineffective long


term political stabilities which could facilitate an equal level of exports and imports in the Mediterranean.

Fulvio Attinà\textsuperscript{40} presents the dual figure of the interaction between north and south relations. Looking at a liberal perspective, the author stresses such a dynamic as an opportunity for reducing the economic and social gaps between the European and the MENA states. The decentralization of the economic activities from the state’s controls within the MENA region is one of the key objectives to which European Partners looked at, implying different outcomes. The first concerns the facilitation for the making of a free trade area, while the second aims to impact on socio-political aspects.

Conditionality within aid and partnership programmes is one fundamental tool used by the EU in order to advocate a major implementing of social and political reforms with Mediterranean Partners which with difficulty guarantee respect of human rights, political rights and pluralism. Consequently, the economic liberal motivation for cooperation moves to political implications.

The democratization process of North Africa and the Middle East has been an ambitious programme for the EU States. The Kantian logic according to which economic cooperation evolves into political transformation from dictatorial regimes to democratic institutions has difficulty achieving any concrete reality. Solingen and

\textsuperscript{40} Fulvio Attina, \textit{The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal Views}, 2003, pp.8-13
Ozyurt\textsuperscript{41} point out that in the second decade since the launching of Barcelona Process; Southern States have promoted slight political changes, allowing political pluralism and institutionalization of political parties. However, most of the regimes have continued to apply a strict restriction on fundamental political and civil freedoms. In this regard, the third part of the Barcelona Declaration, concerning freedom and respect of human rights, was largely undermined by the \textit{real-politick} of EU States, especially under the paradigm of regional security and stability after the 9/11 events.

\textbf{4.5 Realism and Euro-Med Partnership}

As already mentioned, realist scholars have particularly considered the rise of regional cooperation as a result of common security challenges perceived by states, which ultimately decide to address common strategic policies. Before entering into the core of the Mediterranean Partnership, I here expand the most important concepts which especially neo-realist scholars consider fundamental in order to understand security dynamics.

In his script on security and realism, Colin Elman\textsuperscript{42} recalls the theories of Kenneth Waltz on \textit{“Theory of International Politics”}. The American scholar analyzes the security dilemma in the context of the Cold War, when a state’s security was guaranteed by the bipolar division between west and east and the global order shaped

\textsuperscript{41} Etel Solingen and Saba Senses Ozyurt, Mare Nostrum? The Sources, Logic and Dilemmas of the Euro-Med Partnership, in \textit{The Convergences of Civilizations}, 2006 pp. 62-64

by the super-powers: the Soviet Union and the United States. Recalling the anarchical system already presented by the classical realist scholars, neo-realists also outline that after the bipolar division, the rise of multilateralism will ultimately reinforce the divisions among States and increase the level of anarchy together with the chance of conflicts.\textsuperscript{43} Furthermore, the new nuclear armament proliferation by medium regional powers in the Mediterranean (e.g. Israel) have concretely questioned the collective security.

Nevertheless, pointing out the central roles of states as primary actors in international relations, neo-realist scholars ignore or delimit the rise of Institutional structures at regional and international levels which have an actual impact on the policy of state actors. Such structures could be identified in non-governmental bodies (e.g. terrorist groups, humanitarian and cultural NGOs) and international or regional institutions, such as the United Nations.

Both the structures are considered to be playing a secondary role in comparison with the state, since this is the only institutional actor legally recognized and unilaterally legitimized to exercise power and the use of military force. However, throughout the last two decades, Waltz's theories on state supremacy have been largely revised by the same realist scholars, who expanded their level of analysis considering the emerging of regional actors (e.g. the European Union, NATO, etc...) as new

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 2008, pp. 18-19
international players and integrating into security agenda cultural and economic processes.

In the specific context of the Mediterranean, since the 1990s, both the economic and military security have become key pillars in the Mediterranean agenda promoted by different regional States. Such agenda has been characterized more by divisions rather than cooperation among the MENA and European States, particularly over the implementation of an equal treatment by EUMS in regard to economic partnership with the same North African Partners.

Stressing the realist approach applied by the EU States on economic dialogue, Fulvio Attina\textsuperscript{44} explains that since the 1970s, the European Community members aimed to establish a Euro-Med Partnership due to geo-strategic and economic reasons. Indeed, the Oil Crisis in 1973 and the opening of new markets in the Mediterranean favoured an intensification of the relations between northern and southern Mediterranean states. However, such Partnership should be seen under a “hegemonic” perspective of the European States with the Arab partners. The deregulation of trade and the decreasing tariff barriers have been partially applied by the Arab partners, increasing the exporting of the European products in the MENA region. On the other hand, European partners have implemented minimal efforts in order to facilitate the import of goods from the North African and Middle East areas, largely damaging the economic stability of numerous states, starting from the agricultural sector. Such

\textsuperscript{44} Op.cit. 2003, pp. 7-8
examples can already highlight the attempt by the European States to emerge as supreme economic and financial leaders in competing with developing states of the Southern Mediterranean.

At the same time, political and security stabilities have also largely demanded a realist perspective in the new scenarios which emerged at the beginning of the 1990s. One should consider the rise of the Euro-Med Process under the spill over factors of international and internal regional changes.

If the collapse of the Soviet Union inaugurated an era of dialogue among the Mediterranean States, under less international pressures, the breakout of local regional crises and the rise of new non-governmental actors stressed the necessity to respond through military actions against state actors which potentially threatened the stability on the European borders. Roberto Aliboni explains that four major issues destabilized the Euro-Mediterranean integration: the changing structure of the same European Union and the aim of the Northern Mediterranean States to implement policies which could reflect a Euro centric vision of the Partnership; the Yugoslavian political and ethnic crises which largely demanded of the European States to collectively intervene, while once again, state’s interests and strategic calculations prevailed, strongly jeopardizing the credibility of the same EU Institutions; the intensive role of the EU as new diplomatic mediator between Palestine and Israel,

with particular attention on the use of non-conventional weapons and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction; lastly, the rise of neo extremist Islamic movements, which was ultimately claimed as a key regional and international source of new crises by the American scholar Samuel Huntington.

Among those security dilemmas, the specific case of the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction requires a major reflection and analysis. As already discussed, neo-realist scholars claim that equilibrium was guaranteed through the bilateral US-USSR military supremacy, but what about the Mediterranean after the Cold War era?

Mohammed E- Sayed Selim⁴⁶ argues that WMD have to be analyzed under two major lines. The first concerns the risks represented by the unequal redistribution of military power in the Middle East, due to the high proliferation of military equipment by Israel. Such condition would increase the ambitions of further MENA States (e.g. Turkey and Egypt) in enriching their military capabilities and running for a major international role. In addition to this, the denuclearization of the Middle East largely depends on the evolving of current conflicts, like the Israel-Palestine dispute, which requires an extended reinforcing of confidence building measures among the different actors.⁴⁷

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On the other hand, the realist perspective remains extremely relevant in considering the role played by international State actors in affecting the regional policy of the Mediterranean. Stephen Calleya\(^{48}\) points out that external regional powers can have stabilizing or destabilizing roles in a region. In two major cases external powers would be interested in intervening in a region: to re-balance the equilibrium among states and to prevent the rise of a strong regional entity which could face the international equilibrium. The intervention of the United States in the Euro-Med scenario has mostly been motivated by the need to expand an umbrella of military and political alliances with the MENA States in order to enforce the fight against international terrorist groups and promote political change in the area.

4.6 North-South Democracy: Assimilation or Simulation?

One cannot certainly ignore that the potential success of the Euro-Med Partnership is the effective implementation by all the parties of the Principles agreed to in 1995. At the beginning of the 1990s, the neo-liberal ideas spread at regional and global levels, supported by the end of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Russia.

As a result, Kenichi Omhæ\(^{49}\) talks about “global citizenship” as a phenomenon in which interactions among states and individuals extensively increased during the 1990s, opening a new vision of market and business relations. Indeed, globalization has intensified the partnership of numerous national companies with foreign


\(^{49}\) Kenichi Omhæ, *Borderless World*, 1994
competitors jeopardizing the intensive predominance of national security concepts in
domestic and global affairs. Economic integration among private companies would
spill over the domestic economic strategy, shaping a new international model of
business and economic cooperation which would eventually reduce the interference of
governments into trade affairs. Moreover, Omhae states that characteristics of the new
economic interconnections around the world primarily depend on policies, such as the
reduction of tariff barriers, the creation of a competitive labour class and the opening
of foreign investment, making the domestic market flexible to a new form of
economic pluralism.

Reflecting the ideas of Kenichi, one can state that through the 1990s, the European
Union attempted to implement a similar economic policy, gradually increasing its
relations with North Africa and Middle East partners and promoting Association
Agreements, expressively focused on the economic and financial regulations and
liberalization of exchanges of goods and products.

On the other hand, the EU has considered economic partnership as a possible political
tool in order to favour domestic political reforms, particularly over the domestic
structure of institutions, promote political pluralism and eventually democratic
movements, assimilating the MENA region into a democratic wave of reforms and
political transitions. Despite the numerous levels of cooperation between north and
south Mediterranean states, especially at the economic level, both the issue of
democracy and a successful promotion and implementation of human rights remain
debatable challenges, especially vis-a-vis the European States.
Considering some examples of both North Africa and Middle East States, one can easily note that human rights have difficulty being implemented by the Regimes.

According to Freedom House Report 50 (2012), already in 2009, before the uprisings which started in 2011, the access to internet was limited to 1/5 of the whole Syrian population. In 2010, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies 51 outlined how the legislative regulations on the basic freedoms (such as association, expression and press) in Syria were mostly based on legal systems instituted by the Assad Regime during the 1960s and 1970s, strongly limiting the rights of individuals. Among these one can note that the Government could exercise strong legislative pressures in order to control the work of NGOs, journalists and direct funds to Syrian civil organizations. Moreover, the Government has constantly implemented the use of martial law, defending the use of torture by Government’s employees against dissidents, advocating national security.

With a different connotation, but not dissimilar scenarios to that of Syria, Maria Paciello52 explains how in Egypt the power of the President has remained prominent in order to control political movements and dissidents. In 2005, after decades of restrictions, the Muslim Brotherhood Party was allowed to present its own candidates in the new elections. Achieving successful turnouts and votes, the Muslim

51 The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Ten Years in Al’Assad Grip, 2010
52 Maria Cristina Paciello, Egypt: Changes and Challenges of Political Transition, May 2011
Brotherhood suffered the immediate repression of Mubarak’s regime, through the extension of the Emergency Law and the postponing of further local elections. Such political grip could only temporarily favour the strength of the regime and jeopardize the different political movements and civil organizations, until 2011. Indeed, the major challenge for the spread of new political changes remained the division among the different political parties and the difficulties to establish an electoral confidence and trust with the rest of the population, overcoming religious and ideological divisions. At the same time, the author stresses how the army remains a key player in the whole political scenario, acting as ultimate tool for the implementation of decisions and political activities. Meanwhile, those aspects increased the debate over political security and stability; another fundamental problem remained the unsuccessful domestic economic development and reforms within the Egyptian territory.

The 2008 UN Report on Development Index53 presented the numerous contradictions of the Egyptian “progressive development”. Suffering from a disproportionate urbanization, Egypt remained with a high level of unemployment, inefficient health systems and about 20% of the whole population, living under poor level conditions. Economic redistribution of resources and effective policies in order to re-launch employment and development remained purely projects which failed to materialize under Hosni Mubarak’s Presidency.

53 UN Development Index, Report 2008
On the other hand, marginal perspectives of success were emerging in Morocco, historically close partner of the southern European states, especially France and Spain. Ottaway and Riley\textsuperscript{54} explain that through the conditionality policy of the European Union (e.g. restriction on trade exports), Morocco’s monarchy, which detains a key power within the state, accepted throughout the 1990s to implement new political reforms. Important actions were taken in order to increase the level of transparency and truth over the abuses of human rights in the last 40 years. The Instance Équité et Réconciliation (IER) aimed to offer reconciliation among the victims and the perpetrators of crimes, compensate the relatives of the victims and restore a sense of justice. Moreover, further laws aimed to increase parity of rights between women and men in the country, legalizing consensual divorce and decrease polygamy. On the civil and political rights aspect, the launching of an independent Transparency Panel in order to denounce corruption and clientelism was programmed but never implemented. Similar to the other cases mentioned above, the major challenge for Morocco remains the lack of autonomous political movements, especially secular groups, which are able to create a strong interaction between society and the rest of the political activities.

Despite these issues, the European Union has constantly attempted to continue to portray the promotion of democratic reforms in the MENA region, through the direct funds of non-governmental actors and bodies which operated on the ground in order

\textsuperscript{54} Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, \textit{Morocco: From Top-Down Reform to Democratic Reforms}, 2006
to promote political and social changes. Vera Van Hullen\(^{55}\) explains that the EU promoted the creation of Association and Council and \textit{ad hoc} Sub-Committees on Human Rights in order to cooperate with the southern Mediterranean Partners on individual and collective rights and freedoms. Over €37ml were devolved into human rights promotion between 1991 and 2006, meanwhile €7861,80 ml were offered by the EU under the MEDA and the ENP programmes between 1995 and 2010 in order to favour dialogue about democracy and political reforms. Between 2007 and 2010, Syria got over 20% of the funds in order to favour democratic reforms at national level; Egypt and Algeria got respectively around 7% and 8%.

In the light of the points mentioned, one should question to what extent the political dialogue between Europe and the rest of the Mediterranean Partners was actually based on effective willingness by both the sides to actually implement the Barcelona principles. Human rights and democracy would remain difficult issues to discuss into constructive dialogues and finally move to concrete reforms. I would say that the major failures for such political attempts are the responsibilities of both EU and MENA sides. The latter are strictly characterized by domestic cultural cleavages mixed with the unwillingness of political leaders to offer concrete steps for sharing and redistribution of powers and economic resources with minority and political groups. At the same time, the EU States have viewed with suspicion the real changes which could eventually take place in the whole Middle East and North Africa regions.

\(^{55}\) Vera van Hullen, \textit{EU Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: Cooperation against all odds?}, 2009
In 2006, most of the EU States responded with a suspicious attitude to the democratic victory of Hamas in Palestine and the strong political institutionalization of the Hezbollah party in Lebanon. The EU expects to see more a political transition led by moderate political groups which could reflect a Euro-centric view of cooperation and dialogue. Nevertheless, as already explained in the case of Egypt and Morocco, such political groups would find it difficult to achieve a strong and immediate popular support due to the lack of extended integration across the MENA territories. Indeed, the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa since 2010 have empowered old religious groups, which claim more political activity and rights after decades of political repressions.

In conclusion, one can suggest that the attempts of the EU to spread democracy and good governance along the southern Mediterranean territories was based on integrative programmes which until today have encountered problems in seeing an effective visibility and implementation, remaining just concepts ineffectively simulated by the MENA regimes.

4.7 Reflections on the Euro-Med and the Levant area

As described in the previous paragraphs, the Euro-Med Process remains highly subject to theoretical speculations and studies. Whether the Mediterranean Partnership is the result of the regional integration processes directed by the northern European states to southern countries, or cooperation due to simple economic interests or else collective cooperation against common security challenges, state parties have all attempted to gain the best beneficial outcomes from it. The Mediterranean per se
represents unique geographical area in which States have interacted for centuries and civilizations have both manifested forms of cooperation and clashes.

The central questions which different scholars aimed to respond to were the concerns of whether the European Union has effectively managed to integrate the MENA regions into a comprehensive dialogue which includes economic and financial development, security frameworks and good governance. The neo-realist perspective has primarily prevailed in targeting the states as first actors in the making of security policies. The collapse of the bipolar US-USSR contentions and the rise of regional conflicts in the Balkans have offered the chance to Mediterranean states to actively assume responsible roles in shaping a new political equilibrium counting on their own resources, including common cultural and historical sharing.

On the other hand, collective regional dialogue requires an increase in the level of commitment by states inaugurating a new institutional framework which can overcome their own self-interests and operate through legal and institutional mechanisms which could facilitate the work in numerous different fields. The northern European states have already partially responded to such requirements through the reinforcing of the EU institutions, whose representatives attended the Barcelona Meeting as independent actors, with a precise agenda and aims. On the other hand, one can argue that the southern Mediterranean countries have more reflected a classical realist view, where local and regional contrasts on military and economic supremacies have intensified the difficulties in enlarging the number of Euro-Med members (e.g. Libya – Algeria divergences), while at the same time, north
African and Middle East countries have found it difficult to establish a strong and common regional institution which could cooperate directly with the EU Partners.

Such difficulties primarily emerge from the actual structures of the political regimes in the region and the difficulties in effective creating a dialogue with the domestic oppositions which is increasingly demanding new political and social reforms.

Nevertheless, reflecting Euro-centric vision, the Mediterranean cooperation started similarly to the EU alliance, outlining the needs of states to re-construct a new economic model which could positively impact on socio-institutional stabilities. The continuous promotion of a Free Trade Zone between north and south will certainly be subject to future analysis in this dissertation, stressing particularly the concrete impacts which affected the relations between the EU and some of the north African states. Moreover, both the realist and the liberal perspectives assume important analytical frameworks to question the specific case study of the sub-regional level of the Mashreq area.

Starting from a geographical identification of the area, Stephen Calleya\textsuperscript{56} identifies Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt as the state actors present in the Levant Mediterranean region.

The degree of hostilities between Palestine and Lebanon versus Israel has been for long a destabilizing factor which has reinforced the intergovernmental structures and

\textsuperscript{56} Stephen Calleya, \textit{Navigating Regional Dynamics in the Post Cold War World}, pp. 117-130

61
relations in the Levant area. Thus, recalling a neo-realist vision, one can argue that state roles in the region have mostly focused on the military and political securities, especially in the context of the Syrian territory. Moreover, Syria’s role in pushing for a military solution during the intensive period of hostilities in the region has further increased the difficulties of the parties involved in the conflict to achieve a peace settlement, including through mediation attempted by the EU institutions.

However, Syria could not exclude the importance of the European Union role in pulling Mashreq states to renew their partnership within the Mediterranean Dialogue context, especially after the Second Gulf War in 2003 and the increasing divergences between the EU institutions and the foreign policy of the United States. 57

On the other hand, the benefits for reviewing the economic relations between the EU and the Mashreq states aim to highlight a liberal perspective of the Syrian involvement in the Euro-Med. The Cooperation Agreement signed by the two actors in 1977 58 has largely shaped economic implications for both Syria and the EU. The number of exports and imports has constantly increased until the recent political and social changes in 2011; meanwhile poor efforts have been implemented by the Assad regime in order to remove the legislative measures which strongly repress any form of


dissent. As a result, the key analysis of this dissertation certainly questions to what extent such economic mutual cooperation has really facilitated the domestic changes within the Syrian regime from a socio-political perspective, meanwhile the foreign policy of Syria has converged (even if only in the last few years) more into a spirit of cooperation and partnership with the same neighbouring countries for the benefit of the Euro-Med dialogue.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered the major approaches in understanding the Euro-Med dynamics, stressing different theoretical perspectives which highlight the rise of regional institutions and their role in shaping the political balance within the region.

Whether we look at the rise of a regional Institution under a liberal or a realist view, one can conclude that the making of the Euro-Med Partnership is the result of both external and internal factors. The collapse of the Soviet Union and need to guarantee a regional stability in the eastern European and eastern Mediterranean regions pushed the EU states to accelerate a dynamic political and economic process which could enforce both economic and political transitions. Reflecting the paradigm of the realist perspective, the case of Yugoslavia represents the best case in which the EU has been unprepared to effectively respond to the political and security crises. Thus, this system of uncertainty, but also expectations for more multilateral and collective actions, has made the EU thinking of the Security issue as the second major macro-thematic in the whole Euro-Med Dialogue.

At the same time, the expansion of regional and international trade markets have facilitated the promotion of the first EU priority which concerns the creation of a
Euro-Med platform for the economic development of the region and through the launching of a free trade area, decreasing the role of States- especially in the MENA region- in the management of tariffs and taxation of foreign companies and import of goods. The ultimate goal of the EU would be to converge both economic changes with socio equilibrium within the MENA States, stressing the need to form a competitive entrepreneurial class, through education and social reforms, ultimately impacting on the same political dynamics of states.

On the other hand, this chapter has outlined how beyond the economic cooperation, the realist perspective on North-South division over political structures remain an important barrier which has an impact on the whole Mediterranean Process and the possibility by the EU Member States to truly integrate the MENA region into a new political framework, fully implementing the Barcelona principles agreed upon over fifteen years ago, but which have limited been implemented to a very limited extent by the Arab regimes.
5.1 Introduction

In the theory chapter, the Euro-Mediterranean dynamics were largely discussed under the regional studies combined with the realist and liberal approaches and considering the interrelation between the European Union members and the Mediterranean states within the Barcelona Process paradigm.

In this part of the dissertation, the history of the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Process is the major political process discussed, including four other important political phases.

The pre-launching of the Barcelona Process and the political and economic interrelations between the European Community states and the MENA region were already established during the 1980s, which shaped the potential basis for the Barcelona Dialogue.

The 1995 Summit inaugurated the process of an official political, socio-economic and cultural interrelation between the 15 EUMS and the Maghreb – Mashreq State Partners which eventually created a common meeting platform, attempting to overcome the historical regional divisions and offering the first regional dialogue on a regular basis in order to discuss security and economic cooperation through the
formation of a Common Mediterranean Market and initiatives on cultural dialogue, particularly supported by the role of numerous NGOs and private institutions.

Afterwards, the Euro-Med could not avoid the international changes and the effects of the 2001 terrorist attacks with the consequent invasion of Afghanistan by the NATO forces, the destitution of Hussein’s regime and the global war on terrorism, whose dynamics increased the divisions among the same European States. Consequently, taking into account the invariable external factors which have an impact also in the Mediterranean region, one should consider the effective capacities of the EUMS to keep a constant dialogue with the MENA actors, which also include political leadership, investment, implementation of agreements and planned goals.

Moreover, an important political process within the same EU, such as the promotion of the European Neighbourhood Policy, is certainly a theme which deserves particular attention in order to understand the concrete political mechanism which the European states established in order to facilitate a more comprehensive and unilateral regional security and diplomatic relations with the Mediterranean region and the eastern European borders and eventually if such new European programme achieved the planned goals.

Finally, this chapter will take into consideration the fluctuating challenges and opportunities which the Mediterranean Dialogue had to face in order to concretely achieve a key role in the foreign policy of the Mediterranean states. Certainly enough, the Paris Summit in 2008, led by the French Presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, remains up to today the last important political attempt by both the EU and the MENA Partners to step forward into the Mediterranean Dialogue project and concretely re-
launch a reasonable cooperation, despite the numerous challenges of the previous years.

In order to effectively present a critical analysis of the events above mentioned, this chapter aims to highlight two major key themes which run parallel to each other. The first is the Track One level of analysis, including political cooperation and dialogue among the Mediterranean Partners, mostly concerned about economic-financial dialogue and security processes. The second looks at the Track Two level of analysis, which includes official and unofficial meetings between diplomatic bodies, NGOs and Universities initiatives in order to highlight more concrete social and cultural issues, in order to establish trust at civil society level.

5.2 The Basis of the Barcelona Process – Political and Cultural challenges

Before entering into the concrete aspects of the Barcelona Process, one should consider the importance of the political relations between the European Community States and the North African and Middle Eastern countries during the 1980s.

Scholars stress that in the light of peace agreements of the 1970s between Egypt and Israel and the extended reinforcement of the European Political Cooperation, the European Community assumed an increasing role in influencing the regional and international discussions on the Middle East peace process. In 1972, the European Commission presented the Global Mediterranean Policy project which had the ambitious objective of unifying the Mediterranean actors.
However, Marjorie Lister 59 highlights the numerous issues related to it. Among those, there were difficulties to implement such an ambitious project, especially North–South cooperation over several trade and agricultural topics; second, the US strongly objected to the EU expansion in the Mediterranean, making pressures on solid allies to refrain from the project.

Moreover, since the 1970s the Palestinian discord divided the same European States. Michael Smith 60 explains that since the 1970s, the nine EC members attempted to converge their political positions on both the right of existence of Israel and the principle of self-determination claimed by the Palestinian community. In addition to this, important steps were taken in order to keep a constant dialogue between the north and south Mediterranean, such as the Euro-Arab Dialogue (1974-1975). Particularly important was the formulation of the “Dublin Formula”, launched by the Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, FitzGerald and the formation of ad hoc delegations between the EU and the Arab countries.

Over time, the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark and Germany shifted their unconditional cooperation with Israel, re-viewing the right of recognition of Palestine through a diplomatic effort by both the parties in dispute. Indeed, in the London Summit (1977), the nine European Member States expressed in their official proposal that the

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59 Marjorie Lister, *The European Union and the South*, 1997, pp.84-85

Middle East peace process depended fundamentally upon guaranteeing the right of the Palestinian population to claim and implement its own self-determination, maintaining at the same time the existing status of the Israeli state.\(^{61}\)

A major involvement and discussion on the ECC- Middle East relations was newly stressed during the Venice Summit in 1980\(^{62}\). The European Council had talks over several issues, including the peace process in the Middle East. Following the principle of the right of existence of states and the right of self-determination (par.4), the Nine EC members aimed to increase the political dialogue with the Southern Mediterranean region (par.2); guarantee regional security (par.5); play an active role in maintaining effective relations with both the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

Despite the positive intentions of both the western European states and the Middle East actors to increase political cooperation, several political and security tensions deteriorated the relations between the north and south Mediterranean States. In 1985, the hijacking of the cruise line Achille Lauro and the Sigonella crisis increased the tensions between Italy and Palestine; meanwhile, the military attack of Libya against the Italian island of Lampedusa (1986) negatively affected the security perception among Mediterranean states, still reflecting the cold war tensions.

\(^{61}\) London Summit, 1977, - Statement on the Middle East - par. 3-4

\(^{62}\) Venice Summit, 1980 – Middle East
Furthermore, as Marjorie Lister\textsuperscript{63} explains, the major difficulty between north and south relations remained also the external interference of the US and the USSR, which both assumed the role of hegemonic actors and transformed the Mediterranean in a lake contended by the superpowers; meanwhile, France remained the only European actor able to strongly enforce its political and military position in the region.

Nevertheless, Lister also stresses that at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the European states inaugurated a new political vision within the Mediterranean which could effectively implement a new partnership between North and South. She outlines the relevance of the Mediterranean partnership, explaining that while the European States were particularly interested in maintaining safe and secure southern borders, the North African regimes were particularly looking at the future EU Institution as a fundamental trade partner, especially for imports/exports relations. Moreover, with the end of the Cold War, the Western European states implemented collective security projects for the Mediterranean, such as EUROMARFOR, joint aero-maritime forces which included Germany, France, Spain and Italy, followed later on by Greece and Portugal.

On the other hand, Joffè and Vasconcelos\textsuperscript{65} explain that the concepts of security in the MENA region remain controversial due to the political and cultural realities of this

\textsuperscript{63} Op.cit. 1997, pp.82

\textsuperscript{64} Op. Cit. 1997, pp.75

\textsuperscript{65} May Chartouni-Dubarry, Political Transition in the Middle East, in The Barcelona Process, edited by Alvero Vasconcelos and George Joffè, , 2000, pp. 55-58
geographical area. The authors stress that during the 1980s numerous political regimes consolidated their authoritarian powers, offering few margins for the rise of a pluralist form of political institutions. Particularly evident was the role of the Army which determined the establishment of central authorities along Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria. Moreover, if the EU looked at North Africa and Middle East for potential economic investments, few changes have visibly affected those areas, especially in the reinforcing of strong “middle class” and business activity able to influence, domestically the policies and spill over into the region. As a result, Joffè and Vasconcelos talk about a MENA region characterized by a strong State apparatus and a weak civil society.

Nevertheless, one may argue that the actual paradigm emerges when considering that during the 1980s and 1990s the whole MENA area was characterized by an increasing number of fundamental religious movements, which expanded their own political forces also through violence and institutionalization into political parties. The case of Algeria offers certainly an interesting scenario, where Islamist religious groups attempted to gain major political power, destabilizing the territory and attempting to control the numerous hydrocarbon resources, fundamental for the export with European States.

In the light of this and numerous other episodes, which saw the involvement of the Islamist groups as challenging and destabilizing movements, the European States have always viewed with suspicion the radical change of regimes along the North African and Middle East countries, fearing worst consequences over the actual economic and financial relations, established with military regimes.
5.3 The Barcelona Agreement

5.3.1 The pillars of the Process

In order to be able to understand fully the Barcelona Process, one cannot ignore external and internal factors within the Mediterranean which determined closer relations between the EU and MENA States which ultimately inaugurated the Barcelona Conference in 1995. Similarly, independent variables contributed to shape the policies of the EU, which took over a major role as key regional actor across an extended regional area.

The first independent variable was certainly the collapse of the Soviet Union and the risk of political vacuum which could have emerged along the eastern European borders, without an economic and financial support by the US and the EU. The second variable was the expansion of the US along the whole Middle East region and the need by the EU states to respond to this new political scenario by reinforcing its institutions and policies, starting from the Mediterranean.

Juliane Brach\(^6\) outlines that three domestic regional factors facilitated the launching of the Mediterranean Partnership: the Oslo agreement in 1993 and the possible reconciliation process in the Middle East; the Euro-Med Partnership, which was launched primarily in order to reinforce the role of the EU as main and direct economic interlocutor and partner with the MENA countries; finally, the pressures

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from the European Mediterranean states, such as France, Italy and Spain to maintain an active dialogue with the MENA region, despite the increasing importance assumed by the east European region.

Stephen Calleya\textsuperscript{67} explains that Malta’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guido De Marco, presented a programme within the Council of the Mediterranean, constituted by a Committee of Members, a Parliamentary Assembly and a General Assembly. Those institutions aimed to first intensify the level of dialogue among all the Mediterranean and EU actors at governmental and state levels; and second, identify the actual communication and \textit{ad hoc} issues present among the member states, including the identification of a Mediterranean culture and identity.

In this regard, James Calleja\textsuperscript{68} stresses that communications and cultural identity remain from the Barcelona Declaration until today, a present and a constant dilemma for all the Mediterranean countries. As a result, joint cultural, educational and working programmes would only transcend the regional identity issue from a governmental to a grass-roots level, favouring intercultural dialogues.

From a political/security perspective, Ricardo Gomez\textsuperscript{69} explains that an important role was played by the Spanish, Italian and Maltese Governments to create an EU-Maghreb Partnership and lately expand it to a EU-Mashreq Dialogue. The Italian and


\textsuperscript{69} Ricardo Gomez, \textit{Negotiating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership}, 2003 pp. 70
Spanish governments inaugurated the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean, CSCM, which had to emulate the future OSCE.

Stephen Calleya\textsuperscript{70} points out that the CSCM was primarily based on security issues and the crisis management among the Mediterranean actors, through the development of confidence building measures aiming primarily to reduce the nuclear armaments in the region. Following this setting, the Institution would also open joint works over economic development, such as industrial and agricultural dialogue, trade and exchange of goods. The final part would consider the human rights aspect, which, however, remained a difficult theme to be discussed, outlining the north-south divisions and perspectives.

In parallel to this event, in 1990, the five Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Malta opened a direct dialogue with their counterparts from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The latter was certainly one of the few actors in the Euro-Med which accepted to accept any direct involvement with most of its neighbouring countries and the EU.\textsuperscript{71}

The “5+5” Talk had the original purpose to institute at highest political levels a direct interaction among the most important Mediterranean actors. Nevertheless, Stephen

\textsuperscript{70} Op.cit, 1997

\textsuperscript{71} Ricardo Gomez, op.cit., 2000 pp. 52-53
Calleya\textsuperscript{72} stresses the weaknesses and the strength of such intergovernmental dialogue. The major challenges included the weak perceptions of unity among the actors, increased by the limits of actual interactions among the parties, due to the irregularity of the meetings. Moreover, the exclusive economic and political discussions reduced to minimal attention issues, such as environment, security and military problems. In addition, numerous diplomatic and political accidents between two important actors, such as Algeria and France, determined the suspension of the dialogue. Finally, the Southern EU countries were not in the political and economic position to take over the whole Maghreb difficulties which inevitably impacted on the whole role of the EUM, including for instance, the irregular flow of migrants.

On the other hand, Calleya explains that the “5+5” Meetings attempted to create the basis for a common dialogue which later was expanded to all the other EU member states and the Arab States, meanwhile, a transnational sense of “solidarity” could have been eventually transcended into a grass-roots level dialogue.

\textit{Gomez}\textsuperscript{73} highlights further difficulties which the Spanish Government and the rest of the EU Mediterranean States had to face in order to bring different parties to the discussion table. Some of those included mostly domestic regional problems. First of all, Libya was excluded as a participant due to the Lockerbie trial, which saw

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Op.cit}, 1997, pp. 146-147

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Op.cit.} 2000, pp. 74-75
the Gaddafi regime as main instigator. Such a situation created divergences between the EU and the pan-Arab states which objected to such a decision. Second, the draft agenda included not only common economic and financial approaches, but also political and security themes like the common fight against terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. These issues highlighted the political hostilities between the Arab countries and Israel. Finally, a second challenge came from beyond the EU and Mediterranean borders, such as the actual role of the US, Russia and the International Organizations during the Conference and the whole political project.

5.3.2 Development of the Barcelona Process – Security Aspects

On 27-28 November 1995, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EUMS, the MENA States and the European Commission listed a common declaration of intents and projects which should have affected the Mediterranean as a whole, touching all the key macro and micro pillars in order to develop a joint Mediterranean dialogue.

The document touched upon numerous economic, cultural and security issues, interconnected to each other and discussed in detail by all the participants. The most important element present in the declaration was the sense of continuity which all the participants wanted to offer to the Process, avoiding a new political failure and considering the political context which was favouring the new spirit of dialogue.

Starting from a political-security perspective, the Declaration appealed to the implementation of the principles of international law and the UN Charter in order to

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74 Barcelona Declaration, 27-28 November 1995
guarantee the spirit of cooperation among the participants and implement future joint policies for promoting dialogue. Moreover, under this paragraph, socio-ethical issues, such as tolerance and basic human freedoms, were strictly linked with the concepts of regional security, including also more concrete political problems, such as, the fight against criminal organizations, terrorist groups and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Pascal Boniface\textsuperscript{75} explains that the European perspective on the WMD brought up not a few concerns from the French government’s side. Indeed, France, as major European power saw an arrest of its military supremacy and proliferation; meanwhile, the ambition to maintain the military supremacy clashed with the Barcelona principles. Such debate had also repercussions in the domestic affairs of France, due to the rise of non-violent political groups and ecologist movements, which eventually lobbied in order to promote a new French foreign policy.

On the other hand, Mohammed Selim\textsuperscript{76} outlines the Arab perspective which includes an analysis of the ambitions of some Arab countries, like Egypt, which aimed to expand the military supremacy against Israel. Furthermore, the scholar stresses that the actual challenge for the Euro-Med Dialogue on this issue was also represented not only by stopping the proliferation of WMD, but also by reducing the risk of


transnational export and import of weapons and materials useful for such construction.

At the same time, terrorism still remained a key challenge, increasingly important also for the EU member states. George Joffè\(^77\) explains that terrorism includes numerous issues, starting from the actual definition of terrorist actions and arriving to the formulation of common legal tools in order to prosecute terrorists and extremists and create a transnational network of security cooperation among the different states against common threats. Especially in the 1980s, terrorist groups were particularly funded by state-sponsors, which increased the suspicious attitude among policymakers over forms of cooperation and trust. Furthermore, numerous terrorist groups have internationalized their activities, spreading their ideologies in numerous countries under a common fanatic fundamentalism.

In this context, Nathalie Tocci and Jean Pierre Cassarino\(^78\) argue that after the 9/11 events, the issue of terrorism has covered numerous other problems within the Mediterranean Partnership, becoming a strongly debated subject among the European States and leading to the acceleration process of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004) and the making process of a regional security policy which, however, limited


\(^{78}\) Nathalie Tocci and Jean Pierre Cassarino, Rethinking the EU’s Mediterranean Policies Post 9/11, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2011.
the involvement of the Arab countries. However, terrorism and security borders covered only a limited part of correlated challenges, which increased after 2001.

Southern Mediterranean countries have been particularly affected by the phenomenon of illegal migration, interconnected with human trafficking, criminal activities and border control. In 2005\(^79\), in the light of the new ENP programme, the Euro-Med countries re-affirmed the need to implement policies, framing common justice measures and identification procedures, accepting the economic benefits from the actual human movements under a legal framework.

However, until today, despite the greater involvement of the European Union Institutions and the cooperation with the MENA countries, few long term solutions have been implemented, leaving greater action to southern Mediterranean states to take political initiatives. In 2008, the Rome Treaty between Italy and Libya, on mutual security and economic cooperation, included an *ad hoc* number of policies on migration flows, which ultimately achieved the drastic reduction of the number of illegal migrants coming from North Africa and mainly directed to Italy and Malta, while Greece, one of the EU State with the highest number of migrants flow, remained largely exposed to new arrivals from the Turkish and the Balkan borders.

\(^{79}\)Euro-Med: Five Year Work Programme

In the case of Malta, statistics showed that between 2003 and 2005, the arrival of irregular migrants to Malta rose to 400% more in comparison to the previous years, shifting from around 500 migrants up to over 1,800. Moreover, in 2008, statistics showed that over 2,500 migrants arrived in the Mediterranean island, outlining the weaknesses of the European prevention policies and the lack of professional implementation of EU-MENA cooperation. On the other hand, the same figures highlighted that after the 2008 Italian–Libyan agreement, the arrival of irregular migrants along the Maltese coasts decreased, in 2010, to 47 cases.

Stephen Calleya argues that since 2002 the number of illegal migrants approaching the European coasts has intensively increased, meanwhile the European institutions have difficulty adopting new measures which could prevent the phenomenon and apply a proper border sharing policy. The Dublin II Agreement has restricted the number of cases for political asylum and refugees, but it has not proposed new alternative solutions to the detention and the repatriation policies adopted by some countries, like Malta and Italy. At the same time, since 2006, the European States have set up a proper “defensive” line through FRONTEX. Despite the commitment of the EU states, military resources and tools remain minimal for an area which has to cover rescue missions from the Levantine area to Gibraltar, down to the borders with Libya and Tunisia.


5.3.3 *Development of the Barcelona Process – Economic and Social Aspects*

From an economic point of view, the European Union states looked at the Barcelona Process as an important occasion in order to stabilize the economic relations established in the previous decades with the MENA partners.

Nevertheless, if the Barcelona Declaration reaffirmed the need of all the Euro-Med state members to invest large financial and human resources in order to develop a common Mediterranean market and open it to regional investments, Michael Chatelus\(^8^2\) outlines that in reality numerous challenges continued to keep the gap between north and south.

The military and security stabilities have for a long time jeopardized the formation of a stable market especially along the Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli borders, meanwhile the north African region has a difficult trained skilled labour force. Furthermore, most of the MENA partners have largely invested in primary natural resources, lacking development in numerous other sectors for long-term solutions. As a result, the dependency on oil and gas has been a constant challenge for keeping a stable market, like in the case of Algeria.

On the other hand, Miller and Mishrif\(^8^3\) explain that the European Union has developed the previous cooperation agreements stipulated in the 1970s and 1980s

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\(^8^2\) Michael Chatelus, *Economic Cooperation Among Southern Mediterranean Countries*, in *Security Challenges in the Mediterranean Region*.

with *ad hoc* Association Agreements. Aiming to reinforce the regional economic policy, the EU invested over €5.3 billion, between 1996 and 2000; 30% of the MEDA I programme (1996-2000) funded industrialization processes, including €250 million just for Egypt; Jordan received €40 million and Lebanon €11 million. In 2001, the external trade of the Arab countries remained mostly connected with the European market starting from Palestine with 9.6% up to Tunisia with over 74%. A total of €14.58 billion were granted by the EU to the MENA region between 1996 and 2006 through the MEDA I and II programmes.

In the meantime, Palestine (1997), Tunisia (1998), Morocco (2000), Israel (2000), Jordan (2002), Egypt (2004), Algeria (2005), Lebanon (2006) and Syria (2009) signed the Association Agreements with the European Union, increasing the economic partnership with the northern Mediterranean states. Nevertheless, Miller and Mishrif highlight the disadvantages which the agreements have caused to the MENA countries. First of all, the actual trade balance has not drastically changed as hoped; meanwhile, the abolishment of tariffs and barriers by the MENA members have increased an unequal import/export relationship between north and south Mediterranean countries. The latter have suffered because of the restrictions of exports of agricultural products imposed by the EU states. At the same time, the MENA region has not fully adopted the structural reforms over the domestic market as suggested by the Barcelona Declaration. The constant and still present political and security instabilities in the territories have also been a pretext for some of these states to limit such economic and social reforms.
5.4 From the Barcelona Process to the ENP

The European Neighbourhood Policy has been considered a fundamental political programme which was based on numerous variable and invariable factors and events, which have affected the European Union since 2001.

The 9/11 events, the rise of Al-Qaeda and numerous other terrorist organizations, within and outside the EU and the war in Iraq in 2003 can all be considered as external invariable factors which certainly affected the need by the EU member states to implement a new security and foreign policy which could actually prevent and eventually solve international and domestic challenges.

In 2004 and 2005, the terrorist attacks, respectively in Madrid and London, and the increasing flow of irregular migrants from North Africa to the European coasts, led the European institutions to increase the actual dialogue with the MENA partners over numerous sensitive issues and missed changes.

However, the first obstacle between the north and south relations through the ENP is connected with the actual enlargement process of the EU, which saw an expansion through the Eastern European states and a limited involvement of the Mediterranean states, except for the cases of Malta and Cyprus. Moreover, the access of the Cypriot Republic increased the already present political divisions between Turkey and Greece within the Levantine sub-regional security.
From the point of view of the southern Mediterranean states, Saleem Haddad and Sandra Pogodda\textsuperscript{84} argue that after the 2001 terrorist attacks, numerous humanitarian and political issues have been frozen by the MENA regimes, in order to guarantee political stability and order.

After ten years from the Barcelona Declaration, few political reforms have granted an extension of power to the other institutions, such as Parliament, Judiciary authorities, Media and also non-governmental bodies (e.g. NGOs), which strictly remain under the control of the Executive authorities. In most of the MENA countries, the Army have difficulty reduced its interference with the rest of the political activities, remaining a key party for balancing the political stability in each MENA state. Moreover, the EU institutions have difficulty accepting inclusion of an effective constrictive dialogue with the Islamist political groups, excluding a large part of the political representation of the southern Mediterranean states.

The conditionality measures which the European institutions attempted to apply in order to moderate and influence the domestic policies of numerous political regimes in the region have largely failed to bring effective reforms and open an internal debate on the balance of power. Fewer economic reforms have also taken place since the launch of the ENP. If from one side numerous states have agreed to the conditions of the Association Agreements, the economic and financial realities in the MENA region remain far from what was politically agreed.

\textsuperscript{84} Saleem Haddad and Sandra Pogodda, \textit{The European Neighborhood Policy. A view from the South}, 2006
Starting from a financial aspect, most of the banks and key investment institutions remain largely controlled by the state. In Tunisia the state controlled 30% of the banks; meanwhile, in Algeria the figures up to 95%. At the same time, numerous reforms needed to be implemented over labour market, open transparency, fight against clientelism over public sectors, a major redistribution of resources, new privatization measures. On the other hand, few improvements were made in the agricultural sector which remained almost completely excluded from the free trade policies which the European Union presented at the negotiation table.

Stephen Calleya highlights some further perspectives on the ENP which also presented some opportunities for the Mediterranean states. First of all, the cooperation between the EU and MENA partners was extended also to educational and scientific purposes, allowing the student engagement in common projects and exchanges. The EU presented a potential budget of €15 billion for long term loans (2007-2013), offered by the European Investment Bank and so giving a new occasion for reforming the domestic market and the structural institutions in the MENA region.

The actual challenges mentioned above should also be interconnected with the actual nature of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Michele Comelli suggests that the ENP cannot be considered as a following step of the Barcelona Process due to the nature of the policy itself.

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86 Michele Comelli, The Approach of the ENP: Distinctive Features and Differences with the Euro-Med Partnership, 2005
Calleya argues that contrary to the Euro-Med, the ENP does not include multilateral political dialogues, but *ad hoc* bilateral talks established with countries which have visibly showed political changes and reforms in order to acquire a stronger relation with the EU States. The Action Plan established between the EU and its partners aims to concretely reach political and economic goals which can fully integrate the neighbouring countries into a cooperative network.

Moreover, after the unsuccessful political dialogue in the Middle East and the little progress for evident political changes, the EU has looked more at the Eastern European Partnership, especially with Ukraine where political changes have evidently taken place, re-opening a more concrete debate over fundamental human rights, including freedom of the press and political elections.

As a result, while the central European states have enforced more political commitment in order to extended the partnership with eastern European states, the southern Mediterranean actors have for long remained a political dialogue which resulted in an unsuccessful vacuum. The re-launching of a Euro-Med policy was recently proposed by France and the French Presidency of the EU Council.

**5.5 The Union for the Mediterranean: old issues and new prospects.**

In July 2008, the French President Nicholas Sarkozy hosted the most important Euro-Mediterranean Summit, which saw the presence of numerous Heads of State (including Syria) and numerous regional organizations, like the Arab League, the African Union and the Arab Maghreb Union.
The new document accepted by the present leaders included a more decisive commitment by the EU and Mediterranean states to implement the several decisions already agreed upon in the previous years. Among those decisions, the Heads of State newly proposed a joint cooperation for reducing the presence of WMD; fight against terrorist organizations (stressing the importance of the Euro-Med Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism, 2005); political action against illegal migration; maintaining cooperation over free trade and economic cooperation; increasing cultural and educational dialogues between the north and south Mediterranean.

From a structural point of view, the UfM differs from the Barcelona Process through the creation of new institutional positions, such as the Co-Presidency, the Secretariat and the Joint Permanent Committee. Such institutions had the fundamental role to remind states to respect the agreements accepted and look after their implementation. Moreover, the Co-Presidency offered a stronger opportunity for the north-south cooperation over numerous political dialogues, including the setting of a common agenda.

The Union for the Mediterranean also intensified the importance of numerous other institutions created in the previous years: the Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly and the ad hoc Committee for the promotion of energy and environmental securities, the cultural and educational relations between the different Euro-Mediterranean states;

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87 Joint Declaration, Paris Summit, 2008
the Euro-Mediterranean Facility for Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), with the assistance to infrastructural projects and private sectors.

Further involvements by the Euro-Med States facilitated the rise of the Euro-Mediterranean University and the Euro-Med Civil Forum in order to increase the cultural dialogue already mainly supported by the Anna Lindh Foundation.

Erwan Lannon and Ivàn Martin 88 highlight the new challenges which the Mediterranean states had to face during the transition phase from the BP to the UfM. Interestingly enough, the report of the scholars stresses that increasingly the discussion has shifted from a purest political and economic debate to a more civil security issue, outlining the importance of guaranting first good governance and respect of human rights as fundamental pillars in order to guarantee the continuity of the Euro-Med Dialogue.

5.6 Empower a new approach?

One of the most important characteristics of the UfM is the communal decisions of the Mediterranean partners to work both at Track I level, through constant and regular Ministerial Meetings where to agree upon legal political measures, and at the same time, empower an effective implementation of decisions also through the reinforcement of numerous NGOs, University Institutions and Para-Governmental working projects over socio-educational problems and human challenges, including water resources, integration and women’s role in society.

The 2009 Euro-Med Report offers some quantitative data which highlights the commitment of states in order to guarantee financial resources to NGOs and Governmental Bodies. Some of the statistics include: between 2003-2007 over €94 million were invested in TEMPUS project and 13€ million for the Erasmus programme (2007-2008), which eventually Euro-Med states agreed to maintain and increase. The Euro-Med Youth III obtained €5 between 2006-2009, while women equality policy included €5 million between 2006-2008 and further €4.5 million between 2008-2011.

One of the key tools for the success of the Euro-Med relations consists in enforcing information and dialogue at official and unofficial level among the diplomatic and bureaucratic sectors of the Mediterranean partners. Thus, even before the actual formation of the UfM, the Euro-Med countries invested large funds in the Euro-Med Bridge Programme in the field of Civil Protection with almost €2.0 million between 2004-2008. Another approach has been the organization of the Malta Seminars for Diplomats, which obtained €0.94 million between 2004-2008 in order to keep informed Euro-Med diplomats on the European policies with the Mediterranean.

Particular attention was also paid to more socio-humanitarian issues, including meetings and policies over water resources and emergencies, especially along the Middle East area.

The Euro-Med Information System on the Know-how in the Water Sector aimed to increase knowledge and cooperation on water resources, funding the activities of NGOs, which obtained over €3.0 million between 2004-2008.
In this context, Annika Kramer\textsuperscript{89} explains that the lack of water resources has been a fundamental casus belli for the Middle East conflict, including Palestine, Jordan and Israel. As member of the Quartet, the European Union attempted to work both at Track I and II levels, creating confidence building among the states in dispute and offer financial and humanitarian aid to the population.

At the same time, already in the 1990s Israel created a Joint Water Committee with Palestine and a second one with Jordan in order to open a dialogue on the water management resources. Numerous projects, such as the Regional Water Data Banks Project and the Good Water Neighbours Project aimed to increase confidence building and trust measures among the parties, working on water management and long term security policies. The principle which motivated parties to work together was that a “win-win” solution would be possible only through cooperation, collecting data, information and spill over political groups to achieve a new political relationship. Indeed, political divisions have been considered the most important challenge which have caused the failures of numerous projects.

Thus, in the light of these activities one may state that the future success of the UfM could depend not only on the actual funding processes and the Track I political dialogues, but also on the engagement of society and non-governmental bodies in

\textsuperscript{89} Annika Kramer, \textit{Regional Water Cooperation and Peace building in the Middle East}, 2008
order to re-locate the human development as an essential goal for the State Partners in order to achieve a proper regional Mediterranean stability.

5.7 Conclusion

The evolving policies of the Euro-Med cooperation have been characterized by the difficult cooperation among the Mediterranean states which have established a form of dialogue under fluctuating performances, mostly motivated by political instabilities, sub-regional conflicts and reforms which were never really applied.

At the beginning of the 1990s, external factors, like the end of the Cold War and the sub regional crisis in the Balkans, motivated the European states to reinforce their political dialogue and cooperation in order to prevail as a new regional and a global identity.

South Mediterranean partners have been reluctant to open to new political changes and until the uprisings in 2011, few domestic reforms had been adopted by the regimes in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. On the other hand, the Middle East scenario has been characterized by continuous inter-state and intrastate conflicts, jeopardizing the level of security and stability in the region and increasing the commitment by numerous European partners and institutions in order to guarantee a constant dialogue among the parties in dispute.

The success of the Euro-Med and its evolving phases, together with the commitment of the EU has mostly been the capacity to create awareness among the Mediterranean states about the need to diversify the political and economic engagement, focusing
also on further problems, including environment, criminality, civil protection and human rights, including empowerment of gender.

On the other hand, in drawing a line on the actual success of such a commitment, one may conclude that despite the actual monetary resources available (although not sufficient in order to endorse such a large change), the Euro-Med states have partially failed to see a real implementation of changes which ultimately took place without any direct EU supervision, but in uncontrolled forms of protests, since 2011.

Further macro problems include the difficult institutional changes which have taken place within the EU, including the lack of effective institutional and legal tools in order to approach issues, such as migration, terrorism and cultural integration. Numerous educational programmes have been launched only in the last few years; meanwhile, the legal frameworks of southern Mediterranean states continue to maintain the state as the most important actor for the actual ruling and control of socio-cultural activities.

In conclusion, from a financial-economic perspective the Euro-Med dialogue has highlighted controversial aspects. The bilateral and multilateral agreements between north and south aimed to increase mutual development, but minimal efforts have been effectively implemented by the MENA regimes.

The disparity between north and south, especially over the diversification of the economies and the promotion of industrial sectors have not guaranteed sufficient economic stability to the MENA region. At the same time, agriculture and exploitation of primary resources, such as oil and gas have remained the most important economic sectors which, however, have not helped these countries to
promote social changes. On the contrary, the over-empowerment of the agricultural sector has also increased the over-consumption of water resources and the potential escalation of hostilities among states with a high level of water needs.
PART II

Syria and the Mediterranean
SYRIA NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY
Isolationism or Cooperative Model?

6.1 Introduction

The relations between the European Union and the Syrian Republic can be analysed by considering a different perspective, including an indirect approach between the two actors and looking at the role which Syria had in the sub-regional context of the Middle East.

This chapter will outline the relations between Syria and the close neighbouring countries, looking at the bilateral relations between the Arabic Republic and the Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Israel, the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Lebanon. Furthermore, the Syrian neighbouring policy will be the object of the analysis in an extended regional context, taking into account the relations with Russia and the Republic of Iran, which both aspired to assume a stronger role in the Mashreq region, establishing a close partnership with Syria.

A correct analysis of the political-economic relations between Syria and the neighbouring states will also outline the variable and invariable factors present at domestic and international-regional levels.

Invariable domestic factors cannot exclude the multi-ethnic character of the Syrian population, divided in numerous religious and ethnic minorities which inevitably
impacted on the domestic stability of the state and partially ked to the formation of a strong authoritarian regime.

Regional invariable elements would stress the geographical characteristics of the Middle East region. The lack of extensive resources of water and further primary resources necessary for a strong industrial development deprived the Syrian territory from staring a modernization of the economy during the last decades. Indeed, only from the end of 1990s did the political conciliation with neighbouring States, including Jordan and Turkey, help Syria to establish new important economic relations, which could favour the creation and the modernization of infrastructure.

In this regard, the political relations with Jordan and Turkey were fundamental in order to maintain a political balance and stability in the Middle East area. During the Cold War period, the Turkey-US alliance based on the NATO Treaty opposed the USSR-Syria partnership, largely based on export of Soviet military equipment to the Syrian government.

As a result, the strong influence of external international actors, such as the US, China and Russia have largely shaped the external relations of Syria with its neighbouring states. Among the numerous international events, which impacted on the stability of the Mashreq region, the most remarkable are certainly the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of a new regional equilibrium; the war on international terrorism launched by the US after the 9/11 events and the condemnation of Syria as a potential State-sponsor of terrorist groups; the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the need to re-negotiate a new regional security programme, including Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.
This chapter aims to identify all these aspects of the Syrian policy, starting from identifying the bilateral relations with the closer geographical countries and lately extending it to Iran and Russia.

The external relations of Syria mostly depended on the domestic political institutions and the rise of the Assad regime. Indeed, after the departure of the French Army and the creation of an independent state, the new Syrian Government had to face numerous domestic challenges. First of all, like other Middle East states, the Syrian institutions were relying on the central role of the army.

Nikolaos van Dam\(^\text{90}\) explains that a strong domestic polarization between the Druze and the Alawi sects led to a form of domestic confrontation within the Syrian army. After having isolated the Druze community, General Assad managed to isolate further opposition leaders and took over power in 1970.

The Syrian regime was based on two emblematic characteristics. In order to respond to the multi-ethnicity of the Syrian population, President Assad established a regime based on secular and socialist propaganda which were combined with Muslim practices. Indeed, over 70% of the population is Sunni with the rest composed of minorities of Christians, Jewish and Druze. \(^\text{91}\) Since 1970, Syria has been characterized by few political changes, with the power strongly represented by the Assad family, which took the control over numerous Ministries and Institutional

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\(^{90}\) Nikolaos van Dam, *The struggle for power in Syria*, 2011 (fourth edition) pp. 53-57

\(^{91}\) *Country Profile: Syria*, 2005
bodies. Restrictions over freedom of expression and political pluralism became emblematic for a military regime which took control over political and religious groups. The strongest opposition to the Ba’th Party was represented by the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who were persecuted: in the period between 1980 and 1982, over 25,000 people were killed by the Syrian army.\textsuperscript{92}

Consolidating the power at domestic level, the Syrian regime received numerous threats from its neighbouring States, which ultimately attempted to invade the country and threatened the Syrian national security.

**Part One: Syria and the Regional Context.**

**6.2 Turkey-Syria Relations: from hostility to partnership.**

**6.2.1 Highlighting the hostilities**

The relations between the Turkish Republic and Syria has involved periods of political tensions and possible military escalations which evolved from 2003 into political and economic cooperation and mutual partnership.

First of all, some historical and political characteristics between the two states are to be addressed in order to present a clear background of this relationship. Yasar Bulbul and Latif Ceviker\textsuperscript{93} outline the harsh Turkish foreign policy against the Arab

\textsuperscript{92} Idem, 2011 pp.110-111

\textsuperscript{93} Yasar Bulbul and Latif Ceviker, *Turkey-Syria Commercial Relations from Past to Present: Challenges and Opportunities of ShamGem,* 2012, pp. 234-248
countries, including Syria, Iran and Iraq in order to prevail as a major regional power. The Turkish Republic shares a common political basis with Syria: both the countries claim to implement a secular institutional structure even if deriving from different political historical routes. Damascus and Ankara played a crucial role during the Cold War period: the United States relied on the Turkish membership in NATO in order to extend the Western influence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, besides Israel. On the other hand, Syria established a close partnership with the USSR and attempted to increase the Soviet influence in the Mediterranean in order to counter the Israeli-US alliance.

After the Cold War, Syria lost an important political ally and the whole foreign policy with the neighbouring countries had to drastically shift through a new political agenda. Thus, the relations with Ankara remained crucial over two important aspects: military security and water resources.

Ozlem Tur\textsuperscript{94} highlights the changing relations between Ankara and Damascus from 1998 until 2011. The scholar explains that the political confrontation was based on the role played by the Kurdish independent movement present in the Anatolian region, which fought against the government of Ankara and which was strongly supported by the Assad Regime. The Kurdish Worker Party (PKK) increased its military offence against the Turkish Government through terrorist activities which were funded by the

\textsuperscript{94} Ozlem Tur, \textit{Turkish-Syrian Relations –Where are we going?}, 2010
Syrian regime. In response, the government of Ankara threatened Syria with a military invasion; meanwhile, Israel opened new diplomatic talks with Turkey.

Facing the possibility of a war which could have not only increased instability in the Middle East region but even destabilized the power in Syria, the Assad regime opted for a reconciliation with Turkey even though numerous obstacles remained.

Ozden Oktav\textsuperscript{95} stresses that since the 1970s the Turkish Government planned the GAP project which would have increased energy control over the Euphrates and Tigris rivers through the construction of twenty-two dams and numerous hydroelectric and irrigation plans, drastically reducing the flow of water into the Syrian territory. Claiming the territorial sovereignty of the water, the Turkish President Demirel initially objected to any form of cooperation. In order to overcome this fundamental obstacle, President Assad and later on his son Bashar Al Assad decided to drastically reduce the support to the PKK and ultimately open a series of economic and trade talks with Ankara.

6.2.2 \textit{The Reconciliation Process}

Scholars point out that three major factors changed the relations between Syria and Turkey: first, the rise to power of Bashar Al Assad after his father’s death in 2000 and the decision to inaugurate a new political dialogue with different states, including Turkey; second, the increasing population growth at 2.7% per annum required an increasing amount of resources, employment and services which could be created

\textsuperscript{95} Ozden Zrynep Oktav, \textit{Water Dispute and Kurdish Separatism in Turkish–Syrian Relations}, 2003
only through an external partnership. Thirdly, at the same time, at international level the United States increased its aggressive foreign policy against Iraq and the Hussein Regime, obliging Syria to re-launch a cooperative model in order to avoid military repercussions. The opportunity for a reconciliation was also favoured by the rise in Turkey of Erdogan and the neo-Islamic party, which partially isolated the secular and military powers in the country.

As a result, Shaista Zafar96 explains that since 2001, the water issue became a secondary problem for the Syrian government since both the countries signed a joint protocol in order to intensify studies and technical cooperation over the water resources. In 2004, Turkey and Syria signed a Free Trade Agreement (ratified in 2007) favouring the volume of trade between the two states, which eventually increased from $824 million in 2003 to $1.8 billion in 2010. The amount of imports in Syria of Turkish products shifted from $463 million in 2001, to over 1.8 billion in 2010; meanwhile, Syria exported to Turkey the value of $660 million of goods.

Furthermore, travelling and tourism were also promoted extensively when the visa requirement was abolished in 2009. In this regard, Bulbul and Ceviker97 point out some interesting statistics: Syrian tourists to Turkey increased from over 330,000 in 2007 to more than 500,000 in 2009 and arriving to almost 900,000 in 2010. Meanwhile, the Turkish visitors to Syria climbed to over 1,600,00 in 2010. Also from

96 Shaista Shaheen Zafar, Turkey’s Zero Problem with Neighbors. Foreign Policy; Relations with Syria, pp.143-158
97 Idem, 2010
a security point of view both the countries established a stronger cooperation: joint military training and exercises were organized by the Syrian and Turkish armies in 2009.

The increasing cooperation between Syria and Turkey influenced the rise of the hypothesis that such partnership could represent an excellent bridge for the European Union States through which they could facilitate import and export of goods and products from Europe to the Middle East.

Nevertheless, since 2011, the uprisings in the whole MENA region have radically changed the role of Turkey within the Syrian development project. The current domestic conflict between the Assad regime and opposition groups and the numerous security challenges, including the humanitarian and refugee problems have shaped a new hostility between the two states, once again presenting the Kurdish problem and endangering the future stability in the whole Mashreq region.

6.3 Syria-Jordan Relations: Different routes for common challenges

6.3.1 Two Different Models and an Improbable Cooperation

In considering the relations between Jordan and Syria, one cannot ignore that the first important difference between the two states concerns the political regimes which were established in these countries, during the 1960s and 1970s. Curtis Ryan98 underlines that while Syria shaped an anti-monarchist and anti-western political regime, the

Jordanian regime was based on a solid monarchic system and a close partnership with the United States.

Thus, the relationship between the United States and Israel in the Middle East inaugurated a period of hostilities in the Arab country, defined also as the “Arab Cold War”. Since the 1970s, the Syrian President Hazif Assad offered his help to the Palestinian movements, including the PLO; meanwhile, Jordan established a sort of “dialogue co-existence” with Israel, arresting members or rejecting any form of support to the Palestinians members of radical political movements. Al-Fawwaz\textsuperscript{99} (et all.) points out that in response to such policy Syria’s regime expressed military threats against Jordan and continued to finance and support the Palestinian movements. Further repercussions against Jordan were taken in economic aspects, including the blocking of imports of Jordanian goods and increasing the level of tariffs.

However, if Syria attempted to prevail as the major regional actor against Israel, using the Palestinian guerrillas and the strong alliance with Egypt, the foreign policy of Damascus was also particularly concerned in establishing a strong pan –Arab union which could have reinforced the Arab countries along the whole MENA region. As a result, after numerous attempts, Syria and Jordan agreed on a temporary status quo of the borders and re-opened an economic dialogue and partnership.

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\textsuperscript{99} Abdulrahman Al-Fawwaz (et. All), \textit{The Political History of the Jordanian Syrian Relations within the Arab-Israeli Conflicts}, 2012
A second important aspect in the Jordan-Syrian security relations was the involvement of Lebanon in the Middle East conflict, since the end of the 1970s. King Husayn strongly condemned the Israeli attack in Lebanese territories and accepted the intervention of Syrian troops along the borders. Moreover, the political parties in power in Jordan at that time tended to increase personal and public relations with President Assad, favouring Syrian-Jordanian economic ties.

Despite the temporary improvements, the divisions between Syria and Jordan were newly reflected during the Iraq-Iran conflict in the 1980s. Damascus offered its military support to Iran, while Amman created an alliance with Iraq. This conflict was ultimately the last serious political division between the two regional states, until during the 1990s a temporary suspension of the relations culminated with the death of both President Assad and King Husayn.

The rise to power in both the countries of two new political leaders, President Bashar Al Assad and King Abdullah II, favoured a new diplomatic dialogue between the two states. If Jordan was already prepared to expand and implement its economic reforms in order to facilitate the access into the Euro-Mediterranean market, Syria first needed to guarantee sufficient political and military stability along the southern borders. In addition, in 2003, the invasion of Iraq by military troops materialized the fears of Damascus of remaining politically isolated and abandoned, starting from its neighbouring states, including Jordan.

As a consequence, Syria and Jordan opened new bilateral talks over a fundamental issue for mutual economic development: the management of water resources.
6.3.2 Water Scarcity as a National Security Dilemma

The 2006 United Nations Report\textsuperscript{100} on the Regional Cooperation for Water Resources outlined the details of the water resources shared between Syria and Jordan.

In Jordan, over 63% of water resources are used for agricultural business and only 32% for drinking and direct human necessities; meanwhile, an increasing demand reflects the growth of the population and the importance of key reforms over water management. On the other hand, between 1999-2001 Syria suffered a terrible water crisis, pushing for the establishment of a new cooperation with Jordan.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia presented several projects to both Syria and Jordan in order to face important questions, such as exploring the region and its resources, cooperating with common tools for the cleaning and redistribution of water resources. Such an initiative has been launched as a mechanism for conflict management and resolution, decreasing barriers between two states over a fundamental issue, like water.

Nevertheless, Maurice Wingo\textsuperscript{102} points out that the bilateral cooperation between the two is affected by the multilateral effects over the region. Syria plays a dominant role over the Jordan river, through direct access to the resources, gaining larger power.

\textsuperscript{100} ESCAWA Report, United Nations, 2006

\textsuperscript{101} For more info APPENDIX fig.n°1

\textsuperscript{102} Maurice Wingo, The Jordan River Dilemma: A Basic Game, 2010
during diplomatic talks. Thus, the impartial bargaining level is one of the major difficulties for the actual cooperation; meanwhile, Jordan attempts to solicit major support from the US. Wingo concludes by explaining that beyond the actual political divergences, the water management along the Jordan and Syria territories requires a large amount of financial investment which goes beyond the national GDP of these agents.

Thus, water resources not only represent a problem related to the economic reforms and the development of the domestic growth, but it concerns also the risk of regional escalation of violence among the Mashreq States for the control of those resources necessary to respond to the increasing domestic demand.

6.4 Lebanon and Syria: an Interdependent Destiny?

The relations between Syria and Lebanon have assumed a sort of interdependent destiny in the last few decades. Both the countries shared the French colonial legacy and had to start a process of political and economic development, through their own domestic resources.

The origin of the Lebanese-Syrian political relations intensified in the last thirty years with the rise of the Muslim political group Hezbollah, which assumed ambiguous roles, both as political party in the Lebanese political system and as terrorist organization, mainly responsible for violent attacks against Israel and the whole Middle East area.

During the beginning of the 1980s, the Israeli military forces escalated the conflict against Palestine along the Lebanese borders, *de facto* including Lebanon as a key
player for the peace process in the whole region. David Whittaker\textsuperscript{103} stresses the characteristics of this moment as peculiar aspects for the successes against Israel. Hezbollah is a movement which is structured as a military organization, whose basis are the religious loyalty to Islam and to “holy war” against the western countries and Israel.

Nevertheless, over the decades Hezbollah opted also for a political process, winning seats in the Lebanese Parliament through elections and claiming to represent the interests of Lebanese Muslim groups.

Emile El-Hokayem\textsuperscript{104} explains that the Syrian-Hezbollah alliance reflects the political intentions of Damascus to defend its interests along the Middle East against Israel, using conventional and non-conventional strategies. The relationship between these two actors is however not the result of an ideological similitude, but more directly political interests. Indeed, if Hezbollah is close to the Iranian religious ideology, the secular structure of Syria stresses the interests of Damascus to have an ally along the southern borders, which does not fully comply with its ideological position, except the war against Israel.

However, acting as a rational agent, Syria was deprived of the necessary military and strategic actions relevant for succeeding in the war against Israeli forces, including the use of terrorist actions and guerrilla systems. Moreover, Hokayem points out that

\textsuperscript{103} David Whittaker, \textit{The Terrorist Reader}, Routledge, 2003

\textsuperscript{104} Emile El-Hokayem, \textit{Hezbollah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship}, 2007
Syria obtained a great success in establishing a strong partnership with the Lebanese group. First of all, Damascus, as state actor, was directly invited at the negotiation table with Israel and the US, thus having the possibility of asserting its own interests in the region. Second, the Taif Agreement and the attempt to decrease the role of religion in Lebanese domestic politics increased the divisions between Hezbollah and the other political groups, requiring the intervention of Syria into the dispute.

If Tehran remained the base of the ideological spirit of Hezbollah, Damascus continued to be a fundamental card for the Lebanese Muslim forces which obtained military equipment and aid necessary to contain the military offence of the Israeli forces in the area. Despite the forced withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005, after international pressures, Hezbollah continued to prove its military capacities against Israel, assuming more an independent role even from Damascus. Indeed, if Hezbollah considered the logistic and intelligence support of Syria as fundamental tools for contrasting the Israeli invasions, the regime of Bashar Al’ Assad seemed more interested in such alliance in order to maintain a constant role in the Middle East political panorama.

Mona Yacoubian\textsuperscript{105} explains that the bilateral partnership between Syria and Lebanon moves also beyond the Hezbollah action in the area and that such relationship continued to further develop in the last few years. Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri visited Damascus several times, re-launching the dialogue with Assad’s regime and

\textsuperscript{105} Monia Yacoubian, \textit{Lebanon’s Evolving Relationship with Syria: Back to the Future or Turning a New Page?}, 2010
empowering the regional role of Syria in the whole peace process. Such political initiatives were also taking place at a moment when Damascus was fully entering into the Euro-Med project after the Paris Summit in 2008, showing the good intentions to facilitate a Mashreq regional dialogue.

Moreover, both the countries continued to have a special relationship also for common important socio-economic issues, including water resources and management. Similarly to Jordan, Lebanon consumes over 58% of its water resources for agricultural purposes; meanwhile, Syria uses up to 85% for the same purpose. As a result, agriculture remains the main economic activity in both countries, which would be largely facilitated through bilateral cooperation. ¹⁰⁶

Differently from Jordan, the Syrian-Lebanese relationship has been highly positive over the cooperation for water management, through the mutual consensus to construct dams and the signing of a bilateral agreement on the use of the Al-Kabeer Al Janoubi river in 2002.¹⁰⁷ Further bilateral cooperation has been considered fundamental for both the actors in order to prevent the desertification of the area, the escalation of bilateral contrasts and use the good water management as a key tool for conflict prevention.

¹⁰⁶ For more info APPENDIX fig.n°2
6.5 The Israeli and the Syrian Antagonism

The Syrian-Israeli relations have been for several decades characterised by a mutual contraposition over numerous topics: from political supremacy in the Middle East to economic development, including the use of key natural resources, like water.

Since the 1960s, Syria has been the promoter of the anti-Israeli and pan-Arab coalition which aimed to invade Israel and cancel it as a state actor in the MENA region. Joyce Lawrence\textsuperscript{108} underlines how Syria attempted to establish a strong relationship with Egypt in order to invade Israel and take control over the Golan mountains, a key strategic area for the water resources in the region.

Before the actual military and political confrontations the anti-Israeli strategy of Syria started from re-launching a clear anti-Zionist propaganda, through the publications of numerous articles and interviews. Hillel Frisch\textsuperscript{109} explains how Damascus attempted to motivate its troops to fight against Israel, defining it as “a Fascist State”. Moreover, the scholar points out that a strong propaganda campaign was adopted, especially after the starting process of isolationism of Syria, when Egypt broke its historical alliance with Assad’s regime, remaining the main political actor against Israel.

Over the decades an increasing lack of trust and mutual credibility have reinforced the international perception that an Israeli-Syrian peace process may appear almost impossible due to the complexities which have increased in the last few decades.

\textsuperscript{108} Joyce Lawrence, \textit{The Israeli-Syrian Conflict: Prospects for a Resolution}, 2007

\textsuperscript{109} Hillel Frisch, \textit{Perceptions of Israel in the Armies of Syria, Egypt and Jordan}, 2004
Alain Gresh\textsuperscript{110} outlines the numerous obstacles to the Israeli-Syrian dialogue in the 1990s. The Madrid and the Oslo Peace Processes opened the possibility of negotiation between the two actors over the Palestinian question. However, the changing leadership in Israel and the decision of Syria to open a second bargaining process over the Syrian-Israeli borders ended in an unsuccessful negotiation for both the parties.

Furthermore, other reasons should be taken into account in the regional context of the Syrian-Israeli antagonistic situation. First of all, the alliance between Syria and Iran, another important regional antagonist in the region, has increased the perception of a security threat from Israel. Secondly, the interference of Syria in the Palestinian and Lebanese conflicts have stressed the political incompatibilities between these two main regional actors. Thirdly, the water dispute of the Golan Heights represents both a challenge and an opportunity for both the states.

Muna Dajani\textsuperscript{111} explains that the water scarcity may be perceived both as an obstacle to peace processes or as an opportunity to develop a mutual understanding for mutual benefits. The environmental cooperation between Israel and Syria may lead to a fruitful effect on the whole Middle East Peace Process. Thus, important steps should be taken to allow the Syrian population to use the Golan water resources and that a de-militarization process from both sides may guarantee more security than what is

\textsuperscript{110} Alan Gresh, \textit{Turkish-Israeli-Syrian Relations}, Middle East Journal Vol.52 N°2, 1998

\textsuperscript{111} Muna Dajani, \textit{Dry Peace: Syria-Israel and the Water of the Golan}, 2011
currently offered from both the security forces of the contending parties. The economic benefits for both sides through a transnational cooperation over civilian projects would determine an important shock for the economies of both states, reinforcing political dialogue and the role of civil society through the commitments of NGOs and expertise in the area. Dajani also adds that further cooperation over water resources may have an impact over the education process in both the states and the prevention of desertification of water resources and the pollution through military presence.

Nevertheless, further obstacles to the cooperation between Israel and Syria remained the unstable political situation which characterized the two countries. In fact, while Israel could rely upon the extraordinary support of the US for funds and political cooperation, Syria has been surrounded by numerous hostile countries and little support has arrived from international actors like China and Russia until recently which could be compatible with the Israeli resources.

In conclusion, if Israel is a key interpreter of the Syrian ambitions in the Middle East region, it also represents the main antagonist for Damascus, through its ability to influence a sort of “good partnership” with potential allies of Syria, including Turkey and Jordan. On the other hand, Israel has constantly perceived Syria as one of the main regional antagonists for its own national security, since Damascus has been the leader of the pan-Arab alliance against the Zionist presence in the Mashreq region.

**Part Two: Syria and the Trans-regional Alliances**

The trans-national partnership between Syria and the other two major international forces, like Russia and Iran, reflects the status of uncertainty which the Assad’s
regime experienced since it assumed power. The need to rely upon stronger allies, which could prevent the invasion of Syria by its neighbouring states, stresses the high level of perception of political and military insecurity in the Mashreq region. As a result, both the relations with Russia and Iran have to be considered as fundamental military but also economic pillars for the political stability in Syria, which eventually affected also the regional balance in the Middle East.

6.6 Syria - Russia Partnership: an anti-US alliance or more?

If the United States has been considered as the major international actor in different contexts and conflicts, including the Middle East Peace Process, Russia also has extended its role as one of the key balancing agents for the stability in the MENA region.

The relations between Russia and Syria were developed, during the Cold War period. The US-Israel axis was considered one of the most important bilateral partnerships in the MENA region. As a result, through this special partnership, the US could control directly a large part of the economic and political interests, including in the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, since the 1950s Turkey has increasingly become an important ally of the American hegemony which has attempted to extend also to the Gulf Region.

On the other hand, during the Cold War period, the Soviet Union could hardly rely on the use of a direct access into the Mediterranean, limiting its political influence in the MENA region. Nevertheless, in the 1950s, the Syrian Republic established an interesting foreign policy with Moscow, which eventually developed during the 1970s and 1980s.
The reasons for such an alliance have to be considered in the light of the geo-strategic game and the internationalization of the Middle East instability. The United States attempted to enforce hegemonistic policy towards the Middle East and Mediterranean regions in order to guarantee a safe military space against the Soviet Union and establish a channel for the import and export of numerous goods, including energy resources. At the same time, using the hostilities between Israel and the pan-Arab coalition, the Soviet Union started to finance Syria and Egypt in the war against Israel.

Marta Tawil and Felix Mostajo\textsuperscript{112} explain that the Soviet Union played a key role in equipping militarily the armed forces of Egypt and Syria during the “Six Days War”, creating a clientele relationship with these two states. Another important factor was that Syria attempted to institute a socialist political structure modelled on the Soviet system.

In the 1990s the relations between the new Republic of Russia and the Middle East evolved into a bilateral partnership with Syria. Tawil and Mostajo argue that domestic and international events caused an evolution of such relations. First of all, the international role of the Soviet Union was enormously decreased due to the failures of the invasion of Afghanistan and maintaining political control in Poland and various other eastern European states. Secondly, the shifting policy of Egypt from enemy to ally of the Western block, including of the United States, strongly jeopardized the

\textsuperscript{112} Marta Tawil and Felix Mostajo, \textit{Las relaciones de Siria con Rusia: juego de equilibristas}, 2009
pan-Arab coalition supported by Damascus against Israel. Thirdly, the actual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 meant also a revision of the bilateral treaties which ultimately offered new opportunities for Syria.

As a consequence of these events, a downgrading period of the bilateral partnership was the momentary decline of Russia as a key international player, since most of the financial and economic resources were used to accelerate domestic reforms and a possible transition into a democratic and neo-capitalist system. However, despite the drastic decline at international level, Russia still attempted to maintain a vivid presence next to Syria, mediating for a negotiation between Jerusalem and Damascus in 1996.

Eventually, the importance of the Russian-Syrian relationship was re-discovered under the ambitious Presidencies of President Vladimir Putin. Between 1999 and 2005, Damascus and Moscow converged their policies over numerous questions: the re-militarization of the Middle East through the military cooperation between the two states; the condemnation of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the reinforcement of the triangle Iran-Russia-Syria. Also the economic partnership between Russia and Syria increased: the trade exchanges between the two states rose from $218 million to over $1,000 million in 2008.

From a similar perspective, Andrej Kreutz\textsuperscript{113} also explains that in recent years, the bilateral relations have also included further aspects. Russia has attempted to intensify

\textsuperscript{113} Andrej Kreutz, \textit{Syria: Russia's Beast Asset in the Middle East}, 2010
its commitment over the Palestinian issue and the stability in the Middle East, while an illegal trafficking of weapons has developed with Hezbollah movement in Lebanon. At the same time, in 2005 during a strong phase of new international political isolationism, Russia maintained a solid relationship with Assad’s regime which was eventually paid back with the support to Moscow during the Georgia conflict in 2008.

Ilan Berman\textsuperscript{114} points out that an important cooperation over economic and trade affairs include the energy resources exchanged between Russia and Syria. Although rich with numerous energy resources, Russia intensified its cooperation with Damascus over atomic energy since the end of 1990s.

In conclusion, the Syria and Russia partnership represents a unique alliance which has shaped the destiny of the Assad’ regime and the stability in the Mashreq region. The strong influence of Moscow over Damascus is currently emerging in the context of the Syrian civil war and the nyet of President Putin to accept any international military intervention in the area, as already stated in 2011 and 2012. This alliance cannot be described as a simple anti-US performance in the Middle East, but on the contrary it reflects the intentions of Syria to assure stability and security from its own neighbouring States. Moreover, although today ideologically different, both the governments of Syria and Russia share common views on the State structural model,

\textsuperscript{114} Ilan Berman, \textit{Russia and the Middle East Vacuum}, 2001
the role of the Army and security forces within the domestic affairs. Both actors aspire to increase their regional and international ambitions.

6.7 Syria and Iran: Alliance through Differences.

If the relationship between Russia and Syria already appears as a unique performance of the real politik strategy, which reflects all the geo-strategic interests of Russia in the Middle East area, the alliance between Damascus and Tehran have assumed characteristics more controversial under a purely ideological aspect but extremely effective when it comes to determine the regional stability in the Mashreq region.

The political interactions between Syria and Iran have particularly increased during the 1980s, when Baghdad and Tehran inaugurated a violent inter-state conflict, which also reflected the divisions among states in the Middle East region. Although ideologically different, Iran was supported by Syrian armed forces, while Jordan supported the Iraqi interests over the Iranian economic and energy resources.

Since 1979 Iran has constituted a state which ideologically reflected a sort of Conservative relation between state and Islamic religion, becoming de facto a theocratic state model. On the contrary, the multi-ethnic and pluralist religious Syrian State was based on a Socialist model, attempting to inspire a forced laicist system which could prevent the escalation of ethnic-religious conflicts.
Lorenzo Trombetta\textsuperscript{115} explains the reasons why the special partnership between Syria and Iran remains so highly important. First of all, having only two actors as part of this axis, the risk of break-up appears much more unlikely than in other multi-lateral level of dialogue attempted by Syria with other pan-Arab partners. Secondly, both the countries attempt to create a sort of regional power sharing, in which Syria dominates the western side of the Gulf-Middle East areas and Iran the Eastern side, limiting the power of Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Thirdly, Trombetta suggests that the ideological division between Syria and Iran should not be interpreted under a competitive system, but on the contrary as different aspirations in which Syria aims to lead a pan-Arab league of states and Iran to become its spiritual guide.

During the 1980s both states converged over common economic and political interests. The exchange of Iranian oil with Syrian phosphates was just the start of an extended economic cooperation which arrived to $3 billion in 2008\textsuperscript{116}. From a security and political points of view, Iran and Syria share a common perception over Israel and both supported the activities of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Indeed, if Syria considers the defeat of Israel under a purely regional competitive aspect, Iran has become the spiritual leader of Hezbollah promoting a strong ideological motivational factor against the Israeli forces. Trombetta concludes by explaining that today Iran

\textsuperscript{115} Lorenzo Trombetta, \textit{Syria and Iran in a Middle East in Transition}, 2007

\textsuperscript{116} Jonathan Gelbart, \textit{The Iran-Syria Axis: A Critical Investigation}, 2010
aspires to increase its geo-political range of influence, especially along the whole Middle East area. The withdrawal of the Syrian armed forces from Lebanon in 2005, intensified the indirect support of Tehran to Hezbollah, offering military training and financial support, thus intensifying the new axis between Iran and Lebanon.

On the other hand, Degang Sun\textsuperscript{117} talks about the Iranian-Syrian political relationship as a sort of “quasi-alliance” system. Such definition is expressed in the light of the dynamic and flexible capacities of both the countries to contract partnership also with non-governmental groups, like Hamas and Hezbollah. Moreover, despite the numerous level of threats, both the countries can rely upon a self-defence system without any direct commitment to intervene one in favour at the other. Rather than enforcing mutual bilateral treaties, both Damascus and Tehran have largely implemented their partnership through mutual official visits of regime members, outlining the necessity to reinforce cooperation but addressing the will to maintain domestic control over the exchange of goods and trade development.

In sum, the Syrian-Iranian axis remains a key partnership which has seriously affected the equilibrium in the political scenario of the Middle East and Gulf regions. The alliance, or “quasi-alliance”, was established by the two parties in order to offer a mutual support at regional and international levels against the possible invasions by the US and the Israeli troops, especially after the Second Gulf War in 2003. Moreover, also through the support of Moscow, both Syria and Tehran can expect to

\textsuperscript{117} Degang Sun, \textit{Brothers Indeed: Syria-Iran Quasi Alliance Revisited}, 2009
continue to have a stronger influence also at the UN Security Council delimiting the ambitions of the United States over the area. However, the alliance between these two actors has been mostly the result of mutual self-defence in a hostile area, combined also by the presence of two political regimes which could easily agree upon numerous issues. As a result, one should eventually question what is the destiny of such partnership once one of the two regimes changes its political figure or if one the two parties achieves a successful negotiation with Israel over the Middle East regional security.

6.8 Conclusion: Isolationism or Cooperative Model?

The aim of this chapter is to outline the context for the last part of this dissertation which concerns the relations between Syria and the European Union. The analysis of the Syrian Neighbourhood Policy reflects a difficult geo-political scenario, where Damascus has been largely perceived by its neighbouring states more as an enemy than a credible ally.

The hostilities among Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel have strongly influenced also the multilateral dialogue at Euro-Med level. Israel, in particular, has negatively perceived the ambitions of Syria in the Mashreq area, considering Damascus as the main supporter of the violence in Palestine and Lebanon. As a result, isolated by its neighbouring countries, Syria has developed bilateral partnership with States, Iran and Russia, which ultimately gain the best benefits through a direct access in the Middle East and Mediterranean areas.

Russia and Iran have both offered an alternative to Syria either as political and military partners or as major economic investors in order to develop import and
export of goods. Moreover, both Damascus and Tehran have contributed to decrease the level of international isolationism of Syria, especially after the rise of Bashar Al'Assad and the creation of a new political dialogue with the regional partners.

In this context, the European Union has certainly attempted to emerge as a credible political and economic interlocutor with Damascus, breaking down the hostile regional environment surrounding Syria and presenting a potential economic alternative to the ambitions of Moscow and Tehran in the Mashreq area.
THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

7.1 Introduction

The relationship between Syria and the European Union is the cardinal chapter of the whole dissertation. This part of the work aims to recall the analyses outlined in the previous chapters and combine those with the actual historical relations between the two institutional agents.

The European Union has looked at Syria with interest due its geographical position and the historical heritage which relates the Mashreq country to France under the colonial and post-colonial period. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the destiny of other close European partners, like Lebanon and Turkey, within the Syrian case remains highly interrelated.

This chapter will start by describing the evolving relations between the European institutions and Syria in the last thirty years, including academic perspectives on how the policy of numerous European states changed when President Bashar Al’ Assad took power after the death of his father and inaugurated a potential intensification of dialogue over numerous aspect, considered particularly sensitive. In particular, this part will analyze the mediation of France as promoter of a new EU-Syria partnership which strongly favoured the temporary stabilization of the Syrian-Lebanese borders and the new external policy of Syria in the context of the Euro-Med dialogue.
Afterwards, particular attention will be dedicated to the case of armaments and regional stability which the Syrian forces assumed in the context of the proliferation and use of advanced weapons. The negotiation over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has been an important subject of discussion between Syria and the EU in order to favour the stabilization of the Middle East region. Moreover, equal important to the external relations, the domestic stability within Syria and the implementation of numerous domestic reforms over economic and social aspects were intensively discussed by Brussels and Damascus in the last ten years, although few reforms actually took place until recently.

The apex of the “good partnership” between Syria and the European Union may, however, be considered when both the partners signed and implemented the Association Agreement and inaugurated a tremendous phase of investments for both the states and making the European Union the largest economic partner of Syria, partially bypassing the influence of Russia and Iran.

Throughout this chapter, the future challenges which concern Syria and the European Union will also be described, leaving space for potential suggestions and recommendations in the light of the analysis of this dissertation.

7.2 French-Syrian Special Relationship

When it comes to consider the relations between Syria and the European Union, one cannot ignore the historical legacy which derives from the colonial experience of the French occupation throughout the whole Middle East region. The importance of such historical aspect finds its importance in understanding how France, both as
international and regional actor in the Mediterranean region, has largely shaped the relations between the EU and Damascus.

After the decolonization process, the first official cooperation between the European Community and the Syrian Republic was established in 1977 with the Cooperation Agreement. Such treaty endorsed the basis for the future mutual economic and trade dialogues between the two agents, including the European Member States.

Eyal Zisser explains that through the 1990s the relations with the EU were far from reflecting a spirit of cooperation. The Republic of Syria suffered regional and international isolationism caused by the US embargo; meanwhile, only in the late 1990s did Damascus attempt a re-conciliation policy with Egypt and Turkey. Nevertheless, Zisser points out that a strong support for the EU-Syrian dialogue was the official State visit of President Chirac during the funeral of President Hafez Al Assad, in 2000. Such a political visit had a more valid political symbol because it de facto inaugurated the new dialogue between one of the most important EU member states with the new Syrian leader, Bashar Al Assad.

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118 Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Syrian Arab Republic, 1977


Tsilla Herschco\textsuperscript{120} writes about the special partnership between Paris and Damascus and underlines how the new French President Sarkozy assumed a leading role in promoting the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, stressing the importance of the bilateral relations between Syria and the EU for the Middle East Peace Process. Indeed, Herschco argues that after the 2005 terrorist attacks against Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, President Chirac strongly condemned the role of Syria in supporting the terrorist movements in Lebanon, pushing for the immediate withdrawal of the Syrian military forces from the region and applying the UN Security Council Resolution 1559\textsuperscript{121} (2004). On the other hand, French President Sarkozy attempted to mediate among the divided Lebanese political forces endorsing the Doha Accords, which eventually left a great power to Hezbollah along the Lebanese territory.

President Sarkozy also attempted to re-launch the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue through the regional Summit, held in Paris in 2007. More than promoting the actual Mediterranean dialogue, the Paris Summit attempted to inaugurate a new page of the French interests at regional and international levels. The Union for the Mediterranean managed to achieve numerous successes, including the participation of President Assad at the Summit and the decision to newly address the need for cooperation over

\textsuperscript{120} Tsilla Herschco, \textit{Sarkozy in Syria: Discrepancies in French Middle East Policy}, 2008

\textsuperscript{121} United Nations Resolutions 1559, Calls for the Immediate Withdrawal of Foreign Forces from Lebanon (2004)
several issues regarding the Mediterranean stability. Herscho\textsuperscript{122} explains that even Israel welcomed the intentions of the French President, to extend at a regional level the Middle East political stability, although Jerusalem remained highly skeptical about the pan-Arab dialogue of Sarkozy.

The political ties between France and Syria, under the first part of Sarkozy’s presidency, allowed France to expand its international role as an international mediator. In 2009, the International Crisis Group stated that the Doha Agreement and the re-conciliation of France with Assad’s regime intensified also the range of influence of the French policy, impacting on more delicate questions, such as the proliferation of WMD and the ambitions of Iran in Central Asia, together with the post regional stability along the Mashreq region after the Iraqi conflict in 2003. Indeed, France seemed willing to overtake the unconditional mediation of the United States along the Middle East area, bringing a more European influence on the negotiation table.

Nevertheless, although the French ambitions tended to reflect more the national interests than the actual European position, Sarkozy’s pro-Syrian integration in the international scenario found a skeptical and in other cases strong opposition from other important European member states, like the United Kingdom and Germany which found it difficult to believe in the good faith of Syria.

\textsuperscript{122} Tsilla Herschco, \textit{France, the European Union and the Middle East in the Sarkozy Era}, 2008
7.3 EU-Syria Partnership: Economic Aspects

As previously stated, as one of the most important EU member states, France worked to present an intergovernmental approach to the Middle East stability and to open new relations with Syria. Nevertheless, such a strong unilateral position was possible due to the bilateral relations already existing between Syria and the EU.

Lacking an actual unilateral military and political force, the bilateral relations between Damascus and Brussels reflect primarily economic interests rather than an actual military confrontation. Due to the initial weaknesses of its military institutions, the Barcelona Process favoured the rise of stronger economic ties with Syria, considering that the country was suffering from one side a strong political isolationism and from the other an increasing internal demand for economic development, youth and populations growth and industrial modernization. In the previous chapter the military relations between Syria and the axis Iran-Russia were highlighted in order to stress the basis of the military security of Damascus’ regime. However, both Moscow and Tehran could not guarantee a solid economic partnership as instead represented by the European Union.

A concrete economic dialogue between Brussels and Damascus took place only by the end of the 1990s, when Hazef Al’ Assad attempted to leave to his son, Bashar, a safer and better control over the State, planning a series of domestic reforms, which Bashar carried on when he took over power in 2000. The ambition to join the World Trade Organization required structural economic and social reforms which Syria could improve only through the cooperation of developed states and institutions, such as the EU.
7.3.1 Services Development Programme

The EU official document on the Syria Partnership 2005-2006\textsuperscript{123} highlights a series of objectives which Damascus started to achieve when a new dialogue was established with the European Union authorities. The report explains that Syria started to implement important structural reforms for the development of private business activities, counting on both the funds derived from the European Investment Bank and on the budget of the European Neighbourhood Policy, between 2002-2004. Syria has suffered for long periods from unemployment which has increased with the population growth and the lack of social reforms. The economic growth from 1\% to 2.9\% between 2003 and 2004 has not, however, matched with the ideal 6\% in order to offer over 350,000 new jobs per annum. Important reforms required new industrial and agricultural programmes.

The report outlines the relevance of the Syrian industrial development in order to access a modern competitive market in the Mediterranean and Europe. The construction of infrastructures, through the Industrial Modernization Programme, would empower numerous sectors, such as labour growth, the health sector, public services and the entrepreneurial activities.

The Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) 2008 report\textsuperscript{124} stressed that over €1.1 billion of EU investments were accredited to Syria

\textsuperscript{124} FEMIP Report 2008: Financing Operations in Syria
between 1978 and 2007, over a numerous range of different economic sectors. Over €610 million were invested in the energy sector amounting to 55% of the total investments; further resources were distributed in transport and communications (€100 mil - 19%), water and health resources (respectively €85 mil - 8% and €100 mil- 9%).

7.3.2 Agricultural Partnership

On the other hand, similar to the rest of the South Mediterranean countries, the European Union has been particularly concerned about the development of the agricultural sector and its impact on the Euro-Med market. Garcia-Alvarez\textsuperscript{125} explains that the European Union has difficulty invested in the agricultural sector in Syria in order to defend its internal domestic market against foreign competition. Moreover, the harsh domestic competitive laws and the lack of structural reforms over the opening of private investments have decreased the interest of numerous European investors in the area. Nevertheless, Alvarez points out that the EU funds have largely supported further Syrian-EU projects, including the construction of water supply and irrigation systems, through the MEDA I regional programme. In order to empower the agricultural sector several other policies had to be implemented. First of all, the right for private services to work and invest without the interference of public sectors is one of the key criteria for the development of an internal and external growth; secondly, \footnote{Josè Maria Alvarez Garcia Coque, \textit{Syrian-EU Association and Its Impact on Agriculture}, Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA Assistance in Institutional Strengthening and Agricultural Policy, 2001, pp. 65}
transparency and the decentralization of domestic monopolies could facilitate the success of aid and investments; and thirdly, technical assistance is a key player for the actual achievement of results in the agricultural area.\textsuperscript{126}

Parallel to the technical and environmental aspects, the most important aspect of the bilateral relation between Syria and EU over agricultural development focused on the trade aspect of goods. The EU has always attempted to exclude the agriculture field in the free trade process; the import/export relations over fruits and vegetables with Syria have been negotiated in a way to defend the European Market, increasing tariffs and controls on Syrian products.\textsuperscript{127} As a result, Damascus had to intensify the negotiation process with Brussels, which eventually impacted on the acceleration of domestic reforms.

7.3.3 Association Agreement (2009)

In the theory chapter Liberalism and the concepts of global economic development presented by Ohmae were discussed, explaining how the liberalization of the international market tended to affect the global economy, including the Euro-Mediterranean region. Jorg Michael Dostal\textsuperscript{128} points out that in order to respond to the global competitiveness Syria, more than any other southern Mediterranean state had to implement urgent reforms, including: privatization of the public sector, removal of

\textsuperscript{126} Idem, 2001, pp.69
\textsuperscript{128} Jorg Michael Dostal and Anja Zorob, Syria and the Euro-Mediterranean Relationship, St. Andrews University Centre for Syrian Studies, 2009
barriers and tariffs, promoting social reforms and increasing the level of education at national level. Damascus’s regime found difficult in implementing any of these reforms; meanwhile, only under the new Presidency of Bashar Al’Assad, did the Syrian government take more serious stages of bilateral dialogue with the European Union.

Dostal \(^{129}\) argues that the Association Agreement between Syria and the EU has been a long political process which took over thirty years of bilateral discussions and intensified between 1998 and 2004, when a first draft was agreed by the two parties. Nevertheless, more political aspects, such as the conflict in Lebanon and the new isolationism phase of Syria, rather than economic reforms, affected the momentary suspension of the dialogue. On the other hand, Syria has sought for a long time long-term reforms which could hardly come from the bilateral partnerships with Russia and Iran, both also in need to develop further domestic changes.

As a result, Syria and the European Union managed to achieve a concrete success through the signing of the Association Agreement in 2009\(^{130}\). Syria was the last of the Euro-Med Partners to fully agree on the EU proposals over numerous aspects, including economic and trade development. The second part of the Agreement specifically stresses the partial abolishment of numerous tariffs and customs duties (Art.8-9), together with the empowering of free movement of goods (Art.7);

\(^{129}\) Idem, 2009, pp.13-17

meanwhile, Art. 17 of the Agreement promoted the gradual liberalization of trade on agricultural products.

Since 2004, the effects of the bilateral agreements between Damascus and the EU have been evident through the economic development of both the parties and the predominance of the EU27 as major economic and trade partners of Syria. Official EU statistics\(^\text{131}\) showed that in 2010, the EU27 were the first exporter to Syria with a value of over €3500mil. (18% of the total goods imported by Syria) and the first trade partners with a value of almost €7000 mil (21.6%). However, such figures have completely changed since the up-risings which have affected the Syrian territory: the EU-Syrian imports/exports have drastically collapsed respectively to 5.3% and 1.4% due to the numerous sanctions of Brussels against the Damascus’s regime. Syria remained an important partner for the EU27 for oil export, which arrives to 95%\(^\text{132}\), especially in countries like Germany, France and Italy.

**EU-Syria Partnership: Security Aspects**

The EU has been a valid economic partner for Syria, increasing the integration process in the Euro-Med and the GATT system, through the Association Agreement. Moreover, as stated in the previous chapter, Syria intensified its economic dialogue with Turkey, another European key partner in order to stabilize the economic area in the Mashreq region. However, the economic and financial successes did not reflect

\(^{131}\) EU Bilateral Trade and World Trade: Syria, 2012

\(^{132}\) BBC News, *EU steps up Syria sanctions with a ban on oil imports*, 2\(^{nd}\) Sept. 2011
the same political cooperation between Damascus and Brussels. The EU encountered difficulties in influencing Bashar’s regime to implement political measures over both domestic reforms and international relations.

The Association Agreement signed in 2009 does not only reflect an economic partnership but also a political cooperation for implementing social reforms within Syria, including political pluralism, freedom of speech and gender equality. On the other hand, parallel to such domestic reforms, the EU attempted to interrupt the Syrian-Iranian axis, especially over the bilateral cooperation on nuclear capability, proliferation of WMD and chemical weapons in the region. In addition, Syria continued to play a fundamental role for the Middle East Peace Process when it came to discuss the future of Lebanon and the stability with the Israeli borders.

7.3.4 EU – Syria Security Dialogue

The European Union has developed numerous channels for the dialogue with Syria, both at multilateral and bilateral levels.

The apex of the multilateral dialogue between Syria and the EU was achieved in the Paris Summit in 2008. The Joint Declaration stressed the importance of the reduction of the WMD and the use of chemical weapons and the proliferation of numerous other weapons together with the common disarmament of the Mediterranean region.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{133} Paris Summit Joint Declaration, 2008 – Art.5
Zuhair Diab\textsuperscript{134} claims that Syrian CWs could prevent a military invasion by Israel and countries, but it would still have devastating effects on both enemies and Syrian population. Indeed, the proximity of urban areas and environmental changes could jeopardize rather than reinforce the Syrian strategic use of chemical arsenals.

Micheal Elleman (et.all)\textsuperscript{135} argues that Syria has always been considered a key threat for Israel, because of the ambition to establish a stronger role in the Middle East area. Indeed, since the 1970s, Damascus has increased its ambitions over the proliferations of WMD through the cooperation with the USSR (lately Russia) and Iran. In 1993, Syria did not sign the Chemical Weapons Convention and it actually increased its arsenals becoming one of the major Arab countries with such military power. In 1972, Syria signed the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention but it did not ratify the Treaty leaving space for further experiments. Finally, Syria attempted studies on the construction of nuclear weapons, becoming the most important partner of Iran and Russia and cooperating for experiments considered devastating for the population, such as the El-Kibar experiments.

As a result, the European Union aimed to change and limit the ambitions of Syria in the Middle East, through a “stick and carrots” system, limiting the impacts of international sanctions and embargos and opening its market to Damascus. A soft approach by Brussels was favoured by the case in point of the effects of the US

\textsuperscript{134} M Zuhair Diab, \textit{Syria’s Chemical and Biological Weapons: Assessing Capabilities and Motivations}, 1997

\textsuperscript{135} Micheal Elleman (et.all), \textit{Syria’s Proliferation Challenge and the European Union’s Response}, 2012
sanctions against Iraq and the failure in finding the WMD of Hussein’s Regime, in 2003. Thus, the European Union attempted to increase its influence on the Syrian regime through bilateral agreements over economic and trade affairs, necessary for Syria in order to access the WTO. Moreover, Brussels included in the Association Agreements clear articles which would limit the use of the Syrian arsenals.136

In conclusion, the limits of the EU on the Syrian proliferation of weapons are related to the impossibility to fully influence Damascus decisions to assume a leadership role in the Middle East region. However, Brussels aimed to mitigate and restrict such ambitions, playing the card of the bilateral economic partnership, fundamental for Syria, but which unlikely decreased Assad’s projects.

7.3.5 Prevent the escalation of the Syrian Crisis

As highlighted in the previous chapters, the Lebanese-Syrian relations have particularly intensified in recent years, due to the political interrelation between the Syrian regime and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon. The mutual support has affected the whole regional stability, including the emerging of new political hostilities within the Lebanese territories. Francesco Cavatorta137 points out that the Syrian-EU relations over Lebanon were facilitated by the international pressures upon Damascus’s regime, between 2003-2005. The EU pushed for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and for the mediation of Assad’s Regime in the Middle East Peace Process.

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136 Association Agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic and the European Union, 2009 - Art. 5
137 Francesco Cavatorta, *EU – Syria relations in Bashar Al’Assad era*, 2011
including influencing the cooperation between Hezbollah and the other political groups.

However, Syria has minimally influenced the dialogue between the different Lebanese political groups; on the contrary, it intensified the support to Hezbollah, which has paid back such alliance in recent times. The Syrian civil war has escalated beyond the Syrian borders, influencing the domestic scenarios in Lebanon. Thus, Julien Dacey\(^\text{138}\) argues that the EU could play a crucial role in avoiding the regional escalation of the conflict. First of all, counting on the role playing as an important economic partner, Brussels should continue to mediate among the different Lebanese political groups in order to guarantee political stability in the national territory, limiting the influence of the Assad family to involve Hezbollah’s militia into the Syrian conflict. Secondly, the EU should continue to pursue the UNIFIL mission in the area, which is under the European Armies, including Italy, Ireland, France, Germany and the UK military forces. The EU member states are already actively contributing to support the Lebanese authorities on the refugee crisis (over 59,000 Syrian refugees who eventually will increase) present on the Lebanese-Syrian borders, offering over €60mil. in aid.

However, the Syrian-Lebanese tensions risks affecting the EU’s mediation attempts in the Middle East Peace Process. Dacey\(^\text{139}\) explains that the increasing political tensions

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\(^{138}\) Julien Barnes Dacey, *Lebanon: Containing Spillover from Syria*, 2012

\(^{139}\) Julien Barnes Dacey, *Syria: the view from Lebanon*, 2013
along the Lebanese territories are already taking place with the postponement of the elections in 2014 and the rise of a new conflict between the Shia and Sunni sects and the escalation of violence with the involvement of the Christian communities.

7.4 Social Reforms and the Human Rights Issue

One of the most critical aspects of the EU-Syrian relationship has certainly been the implementation of policies which could guarantee freedoms and the respect of human rights by the Assad’s regime.

Since 1995, the Barcelona Process stated the relevance of the respect of human rights and basic freedoms in order to guarantee security at both domestic and regional levels in the Mediterranean. The bilateral Association Agreements between the EU and the other MP, including Syria, attempted to highlight the importance of the mutual understanding of the actors also in cultural cooperation and educational exchanges, which integrated basic cultural and political concepts, such as the respect of human rights.

The cultural and political differences between the two parties would not allow an easy and immediate change in Syria. Bashar’s family unlikely accepted radical reforms over human rights and social aspects. Nevertheless, the EU has been the promoter and funder of numerous projects, among them: Studio Massar (€60mil) on
youth empowerment; Training Seminars for NGOs and Journalists (€7.5mil); Cultural Heritage programme (€50mil).

Further work and researches were conducted on women’s rights and gender equality. The studies highlighted in the Syrian National Report on Gender Equality by the European Union (2008-2011) pointed out that important legal reforms needed to be taking place over the empowerment of women in job places, a stronger legal punishment on violence against women and more political measures in order to defend the rights of women, supporting the roles of NGOs.

In 2010, after the signing of the AA, Damascus’s regime continued to apply harsh policies against dissidents. In 2010, the EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Lady Ashton, condemned the arrests of Syrian political dissidents, but few measures were taken by the Syrian regime in that case. Similarly in 2011, the EU High

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140 Studio Massar- EU Project 2010-2012

141 Training Seminar on Non-State Actors in Development through the TAWASUL Network for Young Syrian Journalists EU Project 2010-2012

142 Cultural participation for heritage regeneration – EU Project 2009-2011


144 EU Declaration by HR Ashton on Syria human rights cases, 2010
Representative\textsuperscript{145} presented an official declaration in which she condemned the Syrian forces for violently repressing demonstrators in Spring 2011.

In conclusion, the Assad regime strongly reflected the limited interests and impacts of the EU partnership over human rights issue. Syria has constantly looked at the economic and political dialogues in order to increase its regional power and break the policy of isolationism, but it has rejected radical reforms which could impact on the institutional changes.

7.5 From Partnership to Civil War

Parallel to the protests in the rest of North Africa and Mashreq regions, Syria also was characterized by numerous protests in 2011; dissidents asked President Assad to resign in order to establish a new political system as it had taken place in Tunisia and Egypt. However, Derek Lutterbeck\textsuperscript{146} explains that the role of the Army in the MENA political system has played a key role for balancing the political power and in more than case determined the rise or the fall of political leaders. In Tunisia and Egypt, the Army openly supported the protestors facilitating the fall of the previous regimes and the rise of a new transitory political phase. On the contrary, the Lutterbeck points out that in Syria, the Army has remained strongly attached to the Assad family, escalating the level of violence into an ethnic-religious conflict.

\textsuperscript{145} EU Declaration by HR Ashton on unfolding situation in Syria, 2011

\textsuperscript{146} Derek Lutterbeck, The Role of Armed Forces in the Arab Uprisings, in Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean, edited by Calleya and Wohlfeld, 2012, pp. 161-170
In response to such political crisis, the European Union has both activated a diplomatic channel directly with the Syrian authorities and implemented a series of measures which cut off the bilateral partnership. Clara Portela\textsuperscript{147} explains that sanctions against Assad’s regime, imposed by the EU since 2011, are currently having an important impact on the bilateral partnership between the two agents and a whole political influence on the regional stability. First of all, the EUMS took a decision when the International Community seemed highly divided in responding to the Syrian conflict, enforcing more a regional action rather than an international response, also through the cooperation with further Mediterranean partners, like Turkey, and the Arab League.

Secondly, the set of sanctions was directed both against the State of Syria, through the suspension of the bilateral cooperation over numerous EU projects, and most importantly against the Assad family and the Army. Imports and exports of oil resources and weapons were suspended, affecting both the European economy and the Syrian sector which lost the most important economic resources. Also, restrictions over numerous energy, industrial and agricultural sectors have completely isolated Assad’s regime from the EU and the rest of the Euro-Med members.

In addition, in the light of what had already happened in Libya and Egypt, the United States recognized the Syrian opposition group against Assad in December 2012\textsuperscript{148};

\textsuperscript{147} Claudia Portela, \textit{EU’s Sanctions against Syria : Conflict Management by other Means}, 2012

\textsuperscript{148} Jill Dougherty, \textit{Obama recognizes Syrian opposition coalition}, CNN, 12 December 2012
meanwhile, the European Union restricted the weapons embargo only against Assad’s forces and not to the opposition groups, in May 2013. The UK and France pushed also for an open support to the new Syrian transitory political groups in order to enforce the changes through legal measures and indirect military actions. In November 2012, France recognized the Syrian National Coalition as the “the sole legitimate representative of Syrian people” excluding de facto the Assad family from any further political mediation.

7.6 Conclusion: The Future of the Syria- EU Relations: a lost case?

The relations between Syria and the European Union have constantly been characterized by tensions and divisions, which never facilitated the bilateral partnership within the Mediterranean Dialogue. Damascus increased its dialogue with the EU and its member states, looking primarily at the economic opportunities which Russia and Iran would find difficult to offer to the Syrian economy.

Considering the political implications of the Assad cooperation with the EU, an important role has been played by both the European institutions and the political decisions of President Chirac and Sarkozy under their presidencies.

Through the special historical relationship between Syria and France, both the French Presidents attempted to mediate on the international stage restricted measures against Syria proposed by the US. On the other hand, France did not hesitate to condemn

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149 EU arms embargo on Syrian op position not extended, The Guardian, 27 May 2013

150 Syria: France backs anti Assad coalition, BBC News, 12 November 2012
Damascus’s regime when it influenced the political instabilities in Lebanon, causing the rise of new ethnic conflicts. However, the difficulties of the US Administration to conduct an effective policy in both the Middle East Peace Process and the post-conflict phase in Iraq favoured the rise of the new political ambitions of President Sarkozy.

The Paris Summit in 2008 and the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean empowered both France, as a state mediator in the Euro-Med region, and also the European Union, which contributed to finance new multilateral projects. Moreover, the bilateral meeting between Bashar Al Assad and the EU representatives offered a new occasion to finally apply the negotiated Association Agreement.

The bilateral relations between the EU and Syria reached the apex in 2009-2010 when the EU became the economic and trade partner of Damascus, financing numerous projects over energy and industrial development. On the other hand, less progresses was achieved over the social reforms. The EU has struggled with Assad’s Regime over the implementation of human rights, which were violated by the security forces, when it came to openly ask for a change of government, the making of a new Constitution and the legitimization of new political parties.

The intensive domestic economic growth affected the making of little important social and political reform. Thus, when the whole MENA region was characterized by drastic political changes, Syria could not avoid being involved in, becoming immediately a place of an important conflict scenario.

In response to such events, the EU was newly characterized by institutional mechanisms and limitations in assuming a stronger leadership at both regional and
international levels. Member states stated different opinions over the official recognition of the opposition groups; meanwhile, few actions were taken over the possibility of a military act, as in the case of Libya. Moreover, if the EU Institutions were limited to identify scenarios and present diplomatic proposals in order to get the parties in a common negotiation table, other EU Member States have adopted stronger measures, including the political recognition of Assad’s opposition, legitimizing the rise of a new political scenario.

In the light of these events, one should question if at the end of the Syrian conflict, the whole EU-Syria relations risk being newly restricted. The Euro-Med region has positively responded in integrating numerous MENA countries after their political changes; meanwhile, the EU institutions attempted to recover the economic losses through new investments, encouraging not only economic growth, but also new reforms and the work of numerous NGOs. However, in the case of Syria, the re-integration process within the Euro-Med may become more difficult if one considers certain invariable factors.

The first challenge concerns the way in which the Syria crisis will end and how the transition process will affect the domestic stability. Secondly, Syria’s new Government will face numerous domestic issues, including the Kurdish separatist movements, the self-determination of several ethnic and minority groups and the demilitarization of the area. Thirdly, Russia and Iran may positively accept the formation of a new regime, but they might also increase their opposition to the current political groups, which eventually could reinforce Syria’s relations with the EU.
The scenarios described, however, remain only speculative political analyses in a crucial moment where Syria might face a new difficult time, when both opposition and Assad’s forces deny the use of chemical weapons (August 2013).
CONCLUSION

The relations between the European Union and the Republic of Syria have always been strictly interrelated with two major phenomena: the regional expansion of the EU in the southern Mediterranean region, and the external relations between Syria and its neighbouring countries.

The first part of the dissertation stressed the importance of the regional dynamics within the Mediterranean. The launch of the Euro-Med Partnership was the result of the cooperation between the northern and southern Mediterranean countries, which could start a new cooperative process after the bilateral division between West and East during the Cold War era.

The European Union has been the most important promoter of the regional cooperation, considering the political opportunities offered at the beginning of the 1990s. First of all, the EU attempted to implement both the regional and neo-liberal academic perspectives, counting on the strong historical relations between Europe and the MENA region and the pushing of the global market to open the state borders to new investments and cultural exchanges. Moreover, during the 1990s, the world political structure tended to move from state-state relations to regional-regional partnership. The rise of the Asian market and the empowerment of the American influence at global level risked jeopardizing the European influence at political and economic levels. As a result, the European Union started a new process of regional
economic development which allowed its domestic market to expand along the eastern Europe and the Mediterranean borders. On the other hand, the MENA member states sought new economic opportunities, considering that large parts of their economies were based on strong military and state apparatus systems which could unlikely respond to the globalized economy. Thus, a new form of economic and political cooperation was necessary for both the North and South in order to reinforce a new regional entity which could prevail at international level, unifying different political and cultural entities.

Secondly, in the light of the reforms necessary to inaugurate a new dialogue process, one of the major challenges for the Mediterranean states concerned the economic disparities between north and south. Indeed, the southern Mediterranean states did not have the economic and political resources in order to fully implement the cooperation with the European States. As a result, the EU attempted to implement an important structural reform which included the establishment of new institutions and the application of policies which could fund numerous projects in order to modernize the economies of the MENA region. The MEDA investments projects, the formation of the European Investment Bank and numerous other Institutions are just examples of further structural reforms, promoted by the EU in order to empower a sense of regional unity, through economic cooperation. Thus, such political decisions favoured the formation of a stronger EU-MENA dependency relationship which was also extended to political aspects.

Another important aspect for the EU in promoting the Euro-Med dialogue was represented by the opportunity to play a major diplomatic role within the mediation
process in the Middle East Peace Process and ultimately expand its political influence in the sub-Saharan region and in Central Asia.

Nevertheless, this dissertation also highlighted the difficulties and the challenges which the EU had to face in order to reinforce the making of the Mediterranean dialogue. The regimes in North Africa and the Middle East were unlikely to accept promoting both economic and political reforms in their territories, which eventually concerned more difficult aspects rather than purely social reforms.

Realist and Constructivist scholars stress that the security issue and regional predominance remained an important characteristic of the political scenario in the Middle East region. The conflict present in the Mashreq area reflected also cultural divergences not only among the different state members in the same area, but also cultural and ideological barriers between the Northern European states and the southern Mediterranean states. The development of democracy and new political reforms clashed with cultural and political perspectives, stressing the limits of the political pluralism in MENA countries and the impossibility to implement economic and social reforms without political changes.

Another challenging point for the Euro-Med development remained the willingness of the North African and Middle Eastern regimes to accept political reforms in the region. Parallel to difficult economic structural reforms, limited changes were implemented by governments in order to guarantee the respect of human rights, political pluralism and the freedom of speech. Limited progress was considered in numerous states, excluding Syria, where the Assad family continued being isolated from important reforms for a long time.
As a result, the European Union has successfully adopted a new political approach through the creation of ad hoc bilateral agreements with each North African and Middle Eastern partner.

The Association Agreements aimed to intensify the bilateral cooperation in order to achieve bilateral and multilateral targets with the Euro-Med members. Nevertheless, the negotiation processes for the making of the AAs found their limits when it came to a discussion of bilateral dialogue over tariffs on agricultural exports and imports and privatization of economic sectors. In addition, if the EU considered the economic aspect of primary importance, the MENA countries were mostly affected by an insecurity perception, which continued to prioritize the military and political aspects. In this context, the European Union accepted bilateral and multilateral discussions over the use and proliferation of the WMD, the reduction of offensive weapons and the export and import of armaments in destabilized territories.

The successful implementation of both bilateral and multilateral dialogues by the EU in the Euro-Med context found its strength and limits in different state partners. In the case of Syria this dissertation aimed to stress that the limits of the European cooperation with Damascus were related to variable and invariable aspects.

More than any other Mashreq State Member, Syria always suffered external political instability due to its political divisions with bordering states, including Israel and Arab states. Jordan and Turkey both represented difficult political and economic interlocutors. The former strongly clashed with Damascus’s regime over the Kurdish question, while the latter limited its military support to the Palestinian Authority and excluded the empowerment of Syria as leader of a pan-Arab coalition against Israel.
In response to this political turmoil, the regional policy of Syria has pursued a difficult cooperative dialogue with the neighbouring states, while a stronger partnership was established with two other countries: Russia and Iran.

The Tehran Regime is an unlikely ideological partner to the Syrian authorities, but both established a bilateral partnership on security matters, sharing the conflict against Israel and the support to the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon. At the same time, Damascus and Moscow shared further common interests. The relations between the two state actors had already been expanded during the Cold War, challenging the bilateral alliance between the US and Turkey in the Mediterranean and responding to the new Egyptian alliance with the US. Moreover, Syria’s political apparatus reflected a socialist structure, concentrating the power in the hands of the Ba’th Party. Also after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ambitions of President Putin reinforced the military relations, through the training of the Syrian army by Russian assistance and the construction of numerous defensive systems.

As a result, these elements should already help to reflect the actual difficulties which Syria’s regime had in fully participating in the Euro-Med process and cooperating with the European Union. However, if Russia and Iran guaranteed security support to Syria, the political challenges which Damascus had to face could have not been overcome without the European Union support. When Bashar Al’Assad took over power in 2000, Syria faced a transition phase. At regional level, the rise to power of a new King in Jordan and the victory of Erdogan in Turkey offered a new opportunity for Damascus to create a sort of coexistence with its neighboring states.
In addition, the US invasion in Iraq, in 2003, threatened the political security of Syria which could hardly rely on the immediate intervention of Russia and Iran. As a result, listed as one of the major state sponsors of terrorist groups, Syria faced a new period of political isolationism which reached its apex with the involvement into the Lebanese conflict in 2004-2005.

Nevertheless, despite the difficult regional policy, the EU never dropped the bilateral dialogue with Syria which eventually increased during the negotiation process for the drafting of the Association Agreement (1998-2004). Brussels considered the political isolationism of Damascus as an opportunity to model the behaviour of Assad’s regime in a way to refrain from political and military offences against its neighbours. Moreover, seeking to implement important economic and financial reforms, Syria accepted to reinforce the bilateral dialogue with the EU, counting also on the close partnership with France.

However, more than establishing an actual partnership, Syria and the EU created a sort of political coexistence in order to guarantee security to other EU partners, such as Lebanon, Israel and Turkey. Indeed, the EU attempted to influence the policy of Assad towards the domestic conflict in Lebanon and the Middle East Peace Process with the Palestinian Authority. In addition, in relation to security aspects, the EU institutions expressed their concerns over the possibility that WMDs and CWs could be trafficked between the Iraqi and Lebanese borders throughout the Syrian territory. Damascus openly declared the presence in its territories of numerous weapons which could provoke an escalation of violence, especially if used by non-governmental actors. Thus, if limited results were achieved by the EU on the proliferation of such
weapons by the Syrian authorities, the concentration of such arsenal in the hands of a state-actor, which had no interests in further increasing the regional instability in the Middle East area, minimized the risks of an actual escalation of violence along the Mashreq area.

At the same time, Syria has intensified its partnership with the EU to break both the isolationism period and the embargos created by the US and accelerate economic growth in order to maintain domestic equilibrium and eventually access to the World Trade Organization. Despite the planning of numerous reforms, the social changes in Syria have been particularly limited, similar to the cultural cooperation with the EU institutions and the implementation of the promised reforms over gender equality and human rights.

In this context, The EU as well as governments of individual EU member states constantly criticized the brutality of Damascus’s regime in repressing any form of political protest by the opposition political groups. Despite the multilateral cooperation accepted at the Paris Summit in 2008, with the invitation of the French President Sarkozy and the making of the bilateral Agreement with the EU, Assad continued to object domestic political reforms.

The 2011 uprisings have ultimately designated the destiny of the bilateral partnership between Syria and the European Union. The EUMS, together with the rest of the EU Institutions have officially rejected the legitimacy of Assad’s family as possible political interlocutor for the new Syrian government. However, the EU has newly manifested its inter-governmental nature, leaving great political actions to its member states, as in the case of France and the United Kingdom which have also recognized
the Syrian National Council as the legitimate political representative for Syria. The inter-governmental approach of the EU has also presented difficulties over the negotiation process for the resignation of Bashar Al’ Assad; meanwhile, few diplomatic initiatives have been taken at UN level by the EU Institutional authorities in order to bring effective proposals for the end of the conflict. Moreover, both France and the United Kingdom presented joint proposals asking for the use of the veto in the UN Security Council in order to promote also a military action against Assad’s regime.

On the other hand, despite the end of the official diplomatic cooperation between Damascus’s regime and Brussels, the European Institutions have continued to keep a sort of dialogue with Syrian population at Track II and Track III levels; the EU has constantly offered financial aid to numerous international and regional humanitarian organizations in order to limit the effects of the devastation of the conflicts and provide first aid to the numerous Syrian refugees along the Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian borders.

In conclusion, if the EU had already experienced difficulties to fully integrate Syria in the euro-Med process due to the strong alliance with Russia and Iran, from one side, and the difficult partnership with its neighboring states, few predictions can be formulated for the future relations between Damascus and Brussels. Nevertheless, the post-conflict scenario in Syria may still represent a new occasion for the European institutions in order to support the formation of a pro-Euro-Med regime which would not ignore the importance of a more transparent partnership in order to accelerate the re-construction process, after the conflict.
APPENDIX

Figure 1 Water Use in the Syrian Arab Republic

*Source: ESCAWA- United Nations, 19 December 2005

This chart shows the use of water in Syria, according to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in 2005. The statistic shows that water spares are most used for agriculture purposes (87.9%); meanwhile, only a short percentage is used for drinking and industrial purposes (3.6% and 8.5%) respectively.
Figure 2 Characteristics of the four major Syria Partners


This table outlines the economic interactions between the four major regional partners in the Mashreq region and beyond. This table indicates the strong Syrian-Lebanese economic interdependence when it comes to agricultural export and import. Agriculture represents for Syria over 18% of its GDP, having Lebanon as one key importer. On the other hand, Lebanon represents both the most important importer and exporter of Syrian products over agriculture products, representing to 5% of its GDP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP (billion $)</th>
<th>GDP per capita (1000$)</th>
<th>Agriculture contribution in GDP</th>
<th>Main importers</th>
<th>Main exporters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>659.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Iraq, Lebanon</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>741.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>8199</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Turkey, Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>9990</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>China, India</td>
<td>China, UAE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 Turkey-Syria Economic Partnership


This table indicates the increasing economic relations between Syria and Turkey between 2001 and 2010. The export of Turkish products to Syria has increased from $281 mil. in 2001 to $1.849 mil. in 2010, increasing nine times more in just less than
ten years. On the other hand, the import of Syrian products to Turkey has fluctuated during the same period. The value decreased from $463 mil in 2001 to $358 mil in 2004. The effects of the conflict in Iraq and the international sanctions have particularly affected this trend, which eventually slightly improved in 2007 to $377 mil and reached a final positive trend in 2010, to $663 mil.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Government</th>
<th>ALG</th>
<th>CYP</th>
<th>EGY</th>
<th>ISR</th>
<th>JOR</th>
<th>LEDs</th>
<th>MAL</th>
<th>MOR</th>
<th>SYR</th>
<th>TUN</th>
<th>TUR</th>
<th>WB/G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,381.7</td>
<td>9.35</td>
<td>1,001.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>457.8</td>
<td>182.2</td>
<td>163.6</td>
<td>769.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population mil.</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth rate %</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment %</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under 25 years</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP mil. $</td>
<td>47,560</td>
<td>10,272</td>
<td>123,039</td>
<td>127,167</td>
<td>11,312</td>
<td>20,121</td>
<td>3,881</td>
<td>40,853</td>
<td>22,109</td>
<td>24,219</td>
<td>246,224</td>
<td>4,648%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth rate %</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per capita $</td>
<td>2,006</td>
<td>12,438</td>
<td>1,602</td>
<td>104,906</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>5,627</td>
<td>9,604</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>2,419</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>1,640%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGR % of GDP</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND % of GDP</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERV % of GDP</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total IM mil. U$</td>
<td>13,533</td>
<td>4,466</td>
<td>10,893</td>
<td>34,211</td>
<td>5,653</td>
<td>71,767</td>
<td>7,277</td>
<td>13,731</td>
<td>5,111</td>
<td>10,147</td>
<td>69,340</td>
<td>2,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total EX mil. U$</td>
<td>24,612</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>6,161</td>
<td>31,783</td>
<td>3,082</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>1,959</td>
<td>6,777</td>
<td>5,791</td>
<td>7,354</td>
<td>47,235</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise % of GDP</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>104.9</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>104.9</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services % of GDP</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM from EU % of GDP</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX to EU % of GDP</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI rank/177</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 Mediterranean Partners economic status (2005)


This table illustrates the general economic and financial conditions of some Euro-Med Partners in 2005. In the case of Syria, the data collected show that the country has the poorest level of income per capita in contrast to the other Middle East and North Africa Partners, with $1,161. The agriculture sector represents more than 21% of the total GDP, which is one of the highest in the region, while just more than 50% is represented by services, followed by 26% of industrial production. The service sector development is one of the poorest in the area, after the cases of Algeria and Egypt, respectively 29.4% and 47.4%.
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BIOGRAPHY

Luca Lacitignola grew up in Italy. He attended the University of Malta, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in International Relations in 2012. He went to receive his Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from the George Mason University in 2013.