The Middle East in the European Union's Foreign Policy Strategy

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This article explores the debate whether the European Union has common and comprehensive strategy toward the Middle East and North African region (MENA). In principle, the EU founded a number of institutions to deal specifically with major issues of the Middle East. In action, the European common foreign policy towards the MENA region seems less binding to the principles of unanimity. The region poses serious threats to EU member states, but provides potential as well. The Middle East region is fulcrum point of Great Power competition that is one of the reasons makes the EU's distinct strategy prone to the US's policy in the region. The article argues that, despite policy initiatives to create a European foreign policy for MNEA region, there is a paradox in the EU member state approach to the Middle Eastern politics. Member states seem to be more united to counter security threat from the Middle East and North African region, but they value more unilateral policy in the time of stability.

Keywords: Middle East and North Africa, European Union, Foreign Policy, Global Strategy and Geo-strategy

1. Introduction

There is no single, agreed definition of the political and geographical boundaries of the Middle East. There are various geographical definitions of the term which are used by politician, geographers, historians, journalists, and government bureaucrats. Concerning the historical background of the Middle East term,

"Its meaning has been determined by political rather than geographical factors and therefore has changed in corresponding to the growth of Western interest and involvement in the region" (*Jacqueline and Ismael*, 2011:1).

In the nineteen century the major European powers regarded the East or Orient as the region of Eurasia (excluding Russia) that began where Western civilization ended, which is to say with the African continent and the Ottoman Empire (*Kemp and Harkavy*, 1997:13). With the intensification of Western strategic power competition among the Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia to control and access to the area (which to be known as the Eastern Question), it became necessary to distinguish between the Near East and Far East.

The term "Middle East" originates with Alfred Taylor Mahan[1], an American naval strategist, who coined it in 1902, and advised Britain on the importance of securing and maintaining the Gulf area on the way to India (*Jacqueline and Ismael*, 2011:1). Jacqueline[2] and Ismael[3] argue that

"Mahan did not give any definitive geographical boundary to the term, but he used the term to name the area between the Near East (Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley) and Far East (China and Japan)" (*Ibid*).

Since that time the terms has been used, sometimes synonymously with the term Near East. The U.S. Department of State refers to the region as the Near East and includes within that designation North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco), the Levant, and the Gulf Countries but not Turkey (*State.gov*, 2019).

Another version of the term is fashionable, the Greater Middle East, among a great numbers of American research institutions and scholars of the Middle East studies. According to Amineh[4] the Greater Middle East expands geographical boundaries of the Near East version, it adds Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Central Eurasian Countries (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan), and three new states in the South Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) (*Amineh*, 2007:1). In regard of the dominant version of the term the Near East, Fawcett[5] explains that

"the term itself, "the Middle East" slipped into common use after the Second World War, replacing more limited definition such as the Near East, but interpretation over

its extension have varied over time" (*Fawcett*,2012:4).

Despite a clear geographical definition for the region, the European Union refers to the area as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and it deals with the region according to its two main institutions, European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), and Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) (*EEAS - European External Action Service, 2019*). This thesis uses a broad conception of the "Middle East" as a geographical area that extends from Iran in the east to Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, the Gulf countries, and the North Africa including countries, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.

The terms "Contemporary Middle East" and "Modern Middle East" have been using to refer to the modern era in the region. That was the time, the term of Middle East has rooted in study of the area which previously mainly ruled by the Ottoman Empire. Mehran Kamrava[6] supports such claim that the concept of the Modern Middle East starts with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire which brings the modern state system into the region. He explains that" The end of the Ottoman dynasty marked the termination of caliphal rule as the Middle East had come to know it since the earliest years of Islam. The dramatic changes that were to come had actually started a few years before the death of the Ottomans, with Europe's growing economic and military interests in the region and an incipient Arab revolt

having expedited the sultanate's demise" (*Mehran*,2005:36).

In the first decade of the 21st century, the term of the "New Middle East" was invented to describe the new era in the region. Haddad[7] explains that

"regardless of any official description by the American government of the concept, the US accepted the new concept and gave it a meaning as its strategy to revision of the Sykes-Picot Agreement which gave the region its modern political reality" (*Haddad*, 2017).

According to Haass[8] the Modern Middle East has brought to an end by a number of events. In his word,

"the most significant one, it was the American decision of regime change in Iraq, in 2003" (*Haass*, 2006).

However, regardless of such chronological order to the emergence of the concept of the "New Middle East", the term became fashionable among students of the Middle Eastern Studies, more precisely, after the mass uprising in the Arab World, "Arab Spring", in 2011. Since then, a great body of literature on the Middle East has been written under such phrase, "the New Middle East" and suggesting a strong interconnection between the terms with events of the Arab Spring. (For instance, Fawaz A. Gerges[9], 2014 "the New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World", and Paul Danahar[10], 2013 "The New

Middle East: The World after the Arab Spring", etc.)

2. The EU in the Middle East

Historically, the evolution of European integration and the development of a European foreign policy seem to be neither simultaneous nor consecutive.

Concerning the gradual progress of the European integration project, the EU foreign policy did not develop correspondingly, but a common foreign policy took root among very first participant, then member states. Taking the first agreement, the Treaty of Paris, in 1952, established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Keukeleire and Delreux argue that,

"the creation of ECSC presented
European integration as a
radically new method to finally and
definitively resolve
hostility between states and, more
generally, to organize
*interstat*e relations on the basis of
equality as well as
mutual solidarity and control"
(*Keukeleire and Delreux*, 2014:38 italic
added).

As Jean Monnet[11], who was the pioneer of the European Union project, noted in 1962:

"we adopted to our situation the
methods which have allowed
individuals to live together in society:
common rules which
each member is committed to respect,
and common
institutions to watch over the
application of these rules". (*Monnet*,
2003:23)

With ECSC in place, it can be argued that the belief in a rule-based international order and Multilateralism was born.

The EU member states were successful in adopting a common foreign policy domestically, but they were facing challenges to pursue or even formulate a European foreign policy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) can be one of them. Regarding the establishment of the organization, it was not the US but the Europeans (including France) who advocated for greater American military presence with aim to defined the region's territories (*Keukeleire and Delreux*,2014:39). Cook[12] argues that the Americans viewed the new Atlantic Alliance as part of the US's economic recovery plan to the post-war Europe, but with empathize on military, in Cook's ward,

"a military Marshal Plan to help the
Europeans pull up
their own socks and take the future in
their own hands"
(*Cook,* 1989:225).

As the treaty was upgraded to a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the American role entered into a new stage. David Calleo[13] explains the scale of such elevation,

"with the NATO, America's
European policy moved out
of its Marshal Plan phase, which had
emphasized
economic recovery and European
initiative,
and into a new phase that featured
massive
rearmament and *direct* American

leadership" (*Calleo*, 1987:28, italic added).

In bit early work, Calleo explains that face of that new era of the US involvement in the European affairs, "Along with militarization came a different style
in transatlantic political relations, a move from a
'two pillars' pattern, emphasizing a European
unity distinct from American ties, towards
a hegemonic pattern, emphasizing America's
direct role in managing European affairs" (*Calleo*, 1983:8).

The repercussions of Americans as principle actor for the security and defense of Western Europe were reflected upon the Europeans incapability to pursue a European foreign policy. Keukeleire[14] and Delreux[15] explain the reasons for such incapacity,

The parameters set by the globalization of
America's military presence, by the globalization of the East-West confrontation and by the highly confrontational approach of the US, implied that in addition to structuring Western Europe's security and defense policies, the US also structured Western Europe's foreign policy. Given that the US bore

the burden of the West's military efforts, it understandably expected at least a political return from its NATO allies through their active support for the American foreign policy objectives and actions. Thus, the scope for Western Europe to pursue or even formulate its own foreign policy interests, to take its own foreign policy initiatives and to approach foreign policy issues in a different way was dramatically reduced (*Keukeleire and Delreux*, 2014:40).

However, parallel to the growing influence of the United States leadership in Europe, there have been serious attempts to formulate a European foreign policy through framing institutions. The initiative for the establishment of a European foreign and security policy has been evolving through introducing a number of treaties, including:

- □ Treaty of European Union, in 1993, framed common foreign policy responses by a mechanism which operates according to common positions and joint actions among member states of the European Union. The method completely based on intergovernmental procedure and consensus. The agreement anchored the legality

of European Political Cooperation (EPC) which was a result of Luxembourg Report of 1970- adopted by the ministries of foreign affairs emphasized "the need to intensify political cooperation, and in initial phase, to concentrate specifically on the co-ordination of foreign policies in order to shop the whole world that Europe has a political mission".

- Treaty of Amsterdam, in 1997, established a more efficient decision-making in respect to foreign policy through introducing mechanism of constructive abstention and qualified voting (QMU). The resulting of Amsterdam Treaty, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy was created which entered into force in 1999.

- Treaty of Nice, in 2003, mandated the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which facilitated crisis management operations.

- Treaty of Lisbon signed in 2007, and was put into force in 2009. The treaty provided the European Union with legal personality and an institutional incarnation of its external services. The treaty expanded the role of the High Representative of the Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. As inclusive part of the Lisbon Treaty, the European

External Action Service (EEAS) was created, as the treaty took action. The EEAS is the European Union's diplomatic service. It helps the EU's foreign affairs chief – the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – carry out the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (*EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission, 2016*), (*European Union,2018*).

However, the Union still does not have foreign minister, but there are some key intuitional actors which take part in formulating the EU's Foreign and Security policies, including European External Service, High Representative and European Commission. There are a number of foreign policies in place. First, European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), through that, the EU works with its Southern and Eastern Neighbors to foster stabilization, security and prosperity, in line with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (*EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission, 2016*). The Union and its Neighborhood partner countries work both bilaterally and regionally to advance the cooperation. There are sixteen ENP countries, including ones from the Middle East and North African Region like Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia. The partnership, in political

terms, includes four main domains, as following:

(1) Good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights;

(2) Economic development for stabilization;

(3) Security, and

(4) Migration and mobility (Ibid).

Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) is another common foreign policy institution in place which promotes economic integration across fifteen neighbors to the EU's south in North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans region. In respect to the MENA region, there are number of specific institutions in place to deal with major issues in the area. First, the EU's policy of "Middle East Peace Process" includes the resolution of Arab-Israel conflict, and the Union's objective is two state solution (*European Union, 2018*). This is a bilateral agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the European Union member states. The EU signed Cooperation Agreement with GCC states, in 1988, intended to:

- Strengthen stability in a region of strategic importance;
- Facilitate political and economic relations;
- Broaden economic and technical cooperation;
- Broaden cooperation on energy, industry, trade and services, agriculture, fisheries, investment, science, technology and environment (*EEAS - European External Action*

Service - European Commission, 2016).

Also, The Agreement allowed for the development of closer cooperation on issues such as energy, transport, research and innovation, and the economy (*Ibid*). Second, EU's bilateral agreement is with League of Arab States (LAS). It started during the Libyan crisis in 2011. The Agreement's general goal is for concentrating on regional challenges. After the 2014 Athens Declaration, the agreement took a new phase. The resulting of the Declaration, the "EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue" was established with aim to foster a regular dialogue on political and security issues, including crisis management, counter-terrorism, etc. The outcome of the Athens Declaration was lunched one year later in November 2015, in Brussel (*European Union, 2018*). The last EU's bilateral cooperation with nations in the MENA region is more about cultural ties and understanding.

3. EU's Global Strategy

At the global level, the European Union pursues five priorities in its External Action. First, the security of the Union, here, the ultimate goals are to guarantee unprecedented security, preserve democracy, and promote prosperity, for all the Union's citizens. Second, state and social resilience to East and South, the EU aims to invest in the resilience of states and societies those who suffer from conflict and crisis. To do so, the Union supports

different paths to resilience also via the EU enlargement policy and the European Neighborhood Policy. Third, an integrated approach to conflicts and crisis, in such regard, the EU engages in a practical and principled way in peace building and peacekeeping. The Union implements the "comprehensive approach" to deal with conflicts and crises. Fourth, cooperative regional orders, the European Union support regional governances for two reasons: <u>first</u>, because it seems as a fundamental rational for the EU's own peace and development in the 21st century and <u>second</u>, the EU supposes that regional cooperation makes it easier to manage security concerns, reap economic gains, and project influence. Fifth, global governance for the 21st century, the EU is committed to a global order based on the force of law rather than the law of force. The principle aims are to ensure human rights, sustainable development and lasting access to the global commons (European Union, 2016).

At the regional level, but in line with global strategy, the European Union follows five lines of action to bring a peaceful and prosperous Mediterranean, Middle East and North Africa. First, the EU will support functional multilateral cooperation. Second, the Union will deepen sectoral cooperation, while striving to anchor Turkish democracy in line with its accession criteria, including the normalization of relation with Cyprus. Third, the EU will pursue balanced engagement in the Gulf region in the Middle East. It will concern the contained cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and deepen dialogue between the GCC member states and Iran. Fourth, the EU will support cooperation across sub-regions of the North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. That is to include fostering triangular relationships across the Red Sea between Europe, the Horn, and the Gulf to face shared security challenges and economic opportunities. Fifth, the EU will invest in African peace and development as an investment in the European's own security and prosperity. The Union will pursue to intensify cooperation with and support for the African Union, and intergovernmental authority (European Union, 2018).

4. EU's Middle East Strategy

In respect to the impact of various political systems on the process of foreign policy-making of member states, Manners[16] and Whitman[17] argue that,

"Constitutional design of member states influences the foreign policy process in the EU" (*Manners and Whitman, 2000*:252-7).

The conational design is matter because it determines the nature of government, and the relationship between the head of state or government and other governmental actors (particularly the minister of foreign affairs), and the role of parliament and sub-national entities.

A part from France (at least in terms of presidential elections), all member states have a governmental

system based on proportional representation electoral system. The majority of member states also have coalition governments.

As such, two, three or more political parties concurrently share power. In these countries, policy formation will be more complex, particularly when the head of state or government and foreign ministers belong to different parties. Coordination and consultation between the various members of government is difficult enough. In coalition government, this is further complicated by the fact the different political parties might not only have divergence views on foreign policy, are also in continuous competition to strengthen their position vis-à-vis their collation partners. This can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of national foreign policy-making and on the position and consistency of that member state within the EU.

5. The Interests and Values of the EU in the MENA Region

First, the settlement of the Arab –Israeli conflict, EU member states are directly and indirectly implicated in the Middle East conflict because of their geographical proximity, dependency on Middle Eastern oil, and security needs, as well because of the historical role played by several of them in the region (Greilsammer and Weiler, 1987). Costanza Musu[18] explains that,

"the Arab-Israel conflict, and the subsequent peace process, have been among the most strongly debated issues by

member states, not only since the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1991, but since the creation of European Political Co-operation (EPC) in 1970. The Peace process has been the subject of innumerable joint declaration and joint actions on the part of the EC/EU, and has always reminded a high-priority issue in the European foreign policy agenda (*Musu,* 2010:3).

The EU pursues two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Such position of EU seems to be in compatible and even convergent with one of the United States. Musu, after reviews literature written one the subject of compatibility between the EU and US interest in terms of the Israel-Palestine conflict, comes with a conclusion:

"the most standard characterization that is normally given of the different American and European attitudes is that the United States is more supportive of Israel whereas the EU tends to be more supportive of Arab side" (*Ibid*.146).

There have been a great numbers of peace talks and agreements, since the outbreak of the conflict. It approved the Barcelona Declaration, which endorsed the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Musu explains that,

"as a result of France's desire to keep this process as an exclusively European initiative and free

from American interference, the United States
was completely excluded from the EMP" (*Ibid*.56).

In a policy brief report of a joint project between the Foundation for European Progressive Studies and European Council on Foreign Relations, Huge Lovatt[19] assesses the EU's approach in line with recent development in the Middle East Peace Process. As executive summary, Lovatt argues that,

"During the last 25 years of its engagement with
the Israel- Palestine conflict, the EU has (despite its many efforts and best intentions)
increasingly contributed to a reality that is at odds with Israelis' and Palestinians'
desire for self- determination"
(*Lovatt*,2017:1).

In terms of the factors challenge the EU long-lasting position and peace initiatives, the report points to a several reasons. First, the failure of the US-led version of the Middle East Peace Process which has trapped the EU in a peacemaking model. As a result, the EU has become an enforcer of the status quo rather than an effective actor. Second, Israel society has shifted away from the two-state solution in favor of policies and actions that normalize Israel's occupation and settlement project. Third, US policy regression, this was capped off by Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017 which made the US reneged on its long-standing

commitment to a two-state solution as the goal of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Last factor, intra-European divisions has limited the EU's capacity to act effectively in support of Israeli- Palestinian peace. That was due to several internal crises, from the United Kingdom's pending departure from the EU to large-scale migration; from Eurozone reform to the rise of illiberal governments in Poland and Hungary (*Ibid*, 2-4).

Larisa Kuzmicheva[20] explains the nature of EU's approach to the respected side of the Arab-Israeli conflict:

"The EU has traditionally used the principle of conditionality,
albeit almost entirely on the Palestinian side. Since the Action
Plans are not legally binding documents, representing a set
of jointly agreed priorities (thus, the EU partners can decide
how much they want to reform), there is less space for the
EU to endorse any conditionality"
(*Kuzmicheva*, 2016:7).

In a study to assess the EU's role as a mediator in the Arab-Israel conflict, Patrick Mueller[21] examines the Union's evolving institutional capacity as an international actor and its external performance in the resolution, management and prevention of conflict. He concludes that:

The European Union management to gradually enhance its actorness and to improve the internal workings of its conflict

resolution policy. EU confusion has been strengthened overtime, with the EU progress developing an impressive acquis of foreign-policy statesman and declaration on the Arab- Israeli conflict. Europe's Middle East policy was, furthermore, characterized by enhanced horizontal coordination and a growing degree of autonomy of supranational EU foreign policy actors. On the whole, the EU's improved actor capacity also allowed it to establish a greater influence on the conflict situation (*Mueller*, 2013:32).

Taking into account the recent development in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the EU seems to have little effect compare to its much time and effort. In such regard, Musu suggests a set of possible explanations. First, that can be due to the failure in reaching a sufficiently convergent approach among EU members. Second, the EU lacks the relevant levers and instruments to affect the Middle East peace process. Third, strategic US interests in the Middle East and dynamics of EU-US relations have relegated the EU to a secondary role in the Middle East peace process (*Musu*,

2010:3). Finally, in principle, the interest to achieve peace seems to be a collective which means all member states share the fundamentals of how the conflict should be settled. However, in reality, the member states' interest is more divergence rather than convergence.

Second, the free flow of oil, in general, as industrial powers, the EU member states depend on oil to guarantee their economic prosperity, so if their access to such important energy supply is to be limited or disrupted, they would suffer greatly. In this chapter, the position of the Middle East and North African region in the global market of energy is explained, and the scale of the EU member state's dependency on the oil and natural gas of the region is also clarified.

Such dependency on the MENA region's natural resources has led the EU to concern about the security and stability of the region. Hubel, Berger and Heise explain the importance of oil as factor behind the EU reason to involve in the Middle Eastern affairs. They argue that, "economic concerns were obviously the second major reason for the increased European interest in the Middle Eastern and Gulf affairs. The two oil crises of the 1970s demonstrated Europe's vulnerability". That energy dependency and vulnerability, according to them, had led the EU to engage further in Middle Eastern domestic affairs through direct involvement. "Increased forced the EC members to engage not only in domestic measures, such as measures to

save energy, diversification of energy imports and the expansion of nuclear energy, but also in foreign policy initiative like the Euro-Arab dialogue, by developing stronger contacts with the oil-and gas-producing countries of the Middle East, particularly the Gulf region" (*Hubel, Berger and Heise*, 2005:9-10).

However, the scale of involvement has been decreased as the importance of oil in market. Because of the changed conditions in the oil market by the mid-1980s, i.e. an over-supply of oil markedly reduced prices, the EC members felt less of a need for new political initiatives" (*Ibid*,11). So, the importance of oil is not only economic, but it is also concerns political power and dependency. In such regard, it would not be surprising, that the European Union would increase their political and economic ties with rich-natural resourced nations in the Middle East and North African region.

Third, a further interest for the EU is regional stability and security, which would protect the supply of oil, reduce the demand for direct military intervention, limit the flow of immigration, challenge the spread of terrorism and lastly create a market for European products and investment opportunities for the firms. Compare to other global or regional powers, except Russia, because of the factor of geographical proximity,
"Europe tends to focus its attention on the Middle East
and North African region, the stability of which

influences Europe's prosperity more directly,
and where its economic interests, as well as its
historical and political links, are stronger" (*Lesser*,1998).
For European Union member governments, the Mediterranean is the near south, and the Middle East an integral component of the EU's Mediterranean Partnership policies.

The EU tends to pursue its objective in the region such as the achievement of regional political stability, the maintenance of good relations with countries in the region, and the strengthening of trade relations that contributes to the economic development of the Middle Eastern countries, thus reducing the risk of an instability spillover for Europe-by means of economic political tools. Musu explain:
"Through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP),
the EU attempts to promote close political, economic
and social cooperation …with the declared long-term
goal of progressively establishing an area of regional
security and free trade"
(*Musu*,2010:156-7).
Later in 2004, as the EMP was upgraded to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), unlike EMP, ENP is based on bilateral agreement between the EU and countries in Europe's immediate neighbors including a number of states from the MENA region (*Ibid*).

Anthony H. Cordesman[22] explains his justification for such claim, he argues that,

"This is true in both in the case of creating stable structures
of regional military power and deterrence, and in the case
of dealing with the growth threats posed by terrorism,
non- state actors, and the instability caused by poor
governance, weak development, and ethnic, sectarian,
and tribal differences"
(*Cordesman*,2016:5).

The European Security Strategy (ESS), adopted in 2003, identified a number of key threats (terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime) facing the EU today. It empathized the impact of the EU's neighborhood on EU security, arguing that,

"neighbors who are engaged in violent conflict,
weak states where organized crime flourishes,
dysfunctional societies or exploding population
growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe"
(*The Economist*, 2016).

Among the major threat to the EU security is terrorism. In the 2008 report on the implementation of the ESS emphasized that "terrorism, within Europe and worldwide, remains a major threat to our livelihoods.

To deal with the threat of terrorism, the EU adopted Counter-Terrorism Strategy, since 2005. It follows a four-pronged approach: preventing radicalization and recruitment and the factors behind them; protecting potential targets; pursuing terrorists; and responding to the aftermath of an attack (*Ibid*, 2019).

The EU takes a strategy which needs to be operating on a global scale by working with the third countries in a number of forms including, high-level political dialogue, the adaptation of cooperation clauses and agreements, or specific assistance, and lastly capacity – building projects with strategic countries (*Ibid*.,20019). That approach, specifically having cooperation and relations between the EU and the third countries which most are non-democratic, brings criticism to the very premise of the policy. As it points out by the EU that,

"the EU Counter- Terrorism Strategy, also from 2005,
is based on respect for human rights and international
law" (*Consilium.europa.eu*, 2008).

A group of scholars support such critique,

"in fact, a consensus appears to have emerged
that the EU prioritized security issues over long-term
democratic reform and human rights. By doing so,
the EU legitimizes authoritarian regimes,
which serves to maintain the status quo in the region".

They highlight counter-terrorism policy as example,

"European Union counter-terrorism policy has arguably
been the focus of much of this debate"
(*Kaunert, Leonard,
Berger and Johnson,* 2014:499).

Vincent Durac[23] refers to the Arab Uprising of 2011, as a moment in which the EU risks its commitment to democratic reform and respect for human rights in favor of security and stability. In Durac words,

"this is evident both in the content of
EU *Counter-Terrorism* policy
and   the nature of its engagement in the region".

He explains the consequence of such approach, argues that

"but the attempt to purchase stability at the expanse of democracy runs several risks. The first is that EU CT policy as with other aspects of its dealing in the neighborhood tends towards regime maintenance in the Southern Mediterranean rather than the promotion of meaningful political reform, while significantly circumscribing the extend of CT cooperation with those regimes"
(*Durac*, 2017:2).

Durac further argues that,
"to the extent that status quo maintenance is built into EU CT policy, it is potentially counterproductive to the achievement of the goals
of that policy, insofar as the persistence of authoritarian and
incompetent regimes in the region is, in itself, a potential cause

of terrorism" (*Ibid*.2-3).
That brings fourth interest of the European Union in the MENA region which includes promotion of democracy.

Haizam Amirah-Fernandez[24] and Irene Menendez[25] argue that,
"EU efforts to pursue democratization in its southern
neighborhood have been a defining feature of European
policy, and democracy promotion policies have   been a
longstanding objective of the EU as a product of
moral and strategic imperatives"
(*Amirah-Fernandez
and Menendez,* 2009:326).

The reasons for that has more to do with the
"very nature of the EU as a grand peace project through integration, together with the gradual move beyond mere economic integration towards a community
of values" (*Ibid*).

The two author explain that,
"the EU's military weakness has pushed it to
become a civilian superpower aiming to promote
stability through economic and trade development,
democracy, good governance and the rule of law" (*Ibid*).

Tobias Schumacher[26] studies the EU approach to the event. According to him,
"in the very first month of the even, the EU clearly revealed

itself as both an actor and spectator by restoring to both
activism and passivism in a seemingly erratic fashion"
(*Schumacher*, 2011:107).

Behind such dualism as Schumacher calls it, there are a number of reasons. Above all, the inconsistency between particular interests and common interest among the EU member states.

Schumacher explain:
"The reactions of both the EU and EU governments
throughout the first six months of the Arab Spring
confirmed the endurance of the strained relationship
between individual and common interests of this
dichotomy on EU actorness in general and in the
MENA in particular. What Gordon Called the
"logic of diversity" the absence of common interests
among EU members states' governments, continues
to dominate EU foreign policy-making in spite
of the gradual supranational advances since the
adoption of the Lisbon Treaty"
(*Ibid*.115).

EU's policy in response to the Arab spring, Federica Bicchi[27] argues, has been fundamentally conservative, reflecting the attitude of European policy-makers towards change in the Mediterranean, but also greatly limiting Europe's relevance in political

developments post-Arab spring. Bicchi further explains that
"as a pro-status quo actor, Europe did not push
for change in the Mediterranean, and finds
itself in the post-Arab Spring context in the
difficult position of having to adapt to change,
rather than being able to participate in it and
contribute to shaping the future of the area"
(*Bicchi citied in Gerges*, 2014:430).

F.Gerges beliefs that the pattern of the European foreign policy towards the Mediterranean countries is more in line with being reactive power. He argues that,
"Europeans' response(s) to the Arab uprisings was
in line with being reactive. Rather than a 'more
for more' approach, Europe has thus opted for
'more of the same' approach, in which the EU is in
charge of protecting a conservative vision
for the Sothern neighborhood beyond the
demise of the 'Arab President for life'
maintaining rather than reversing the order
of European priorities and re-packing old
concepts in new bottles" (*Ibid*,442-3).

6. Conclusion

The concept of "Contemporary Middle East", or "Modern Middle East

is used to describe changes in the socio-political landscape of the Middle Eastern nations. The 21st century's version of the term is "the New Middle East". The Middle Eastern people share a great number of common features which are equally important and compelling unified characteristics of the region. The shared similarities would be common history of colonialization, ethnic identity, language, and religion.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has always been in the policy agenda of European countries. Since the European Union has developed, the EU tried to establish a comprehensive approach to the region. In such regard, the European Union has established a number of policy institutions, and signed bilateral agreements with a number of nations and representative bodies in the area. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and Union for Mediterranean are the two principle polies initiatives by the EU to the MNEA region. The polices are part of broader EU's global strategies. The EU's Middle East grand strategy reflects intergovernmental nature of the member states foreign policy, and the nature of political institution, constitutional design.

The European Union Middle East foreign policy concerns a number of issues. The Union has pursued two-state solution policy toward the Arab-Israel conflict, but that common stand has been challenged by a number of member states. The EU has always put the policy of the free flow of oil as the Union's constant strategy in the MENA region. The data presented here are processing less in the change of the EU major source of energy supply at least in coming decades. And, even, the dependency of European member states is expecting to increase as they are making priority to decrease their reliance on Russian natural resources. The MNEA region's security and stability are so critical due to geographical proximity of the two regions. The scale of threat poses by MENA region to EU that promises further progress toward more common policy.

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