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EU and GCC Countries' Foreign Policies and the Mediterranean Neighborhood – Towards Synergetic Cooperation?

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EU and GCC Countries' Foreign Policies and the Mediterranean Neighborhood – Towards Synergetic Cooperation?

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Recent years have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in analyzing and understanding better the role of external actors in the political and socio-economic development of Arab Mediterranean countries. This interest has grown even stronger since the outbreak of popular uprisings all across the Middle East and North Africa in early 2011, which are widely termed as "Arab Spring." Since the initiation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in November 1995 and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003, a large body of studies, analyzing mainly the potential and limits of direct and indirect EU democracy and human rights promotion (Gillespie and Youngs 2002; Youngs 2002; Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005; Pace et al. 2009; Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011), region- and security-building (Jünemann 2003; Adler et al. 2006), and bi- and multilateral Euro-Mediterranean sectoral cooperation (Amoroso and Gallina 2000; Costa-Font 2012; Panebianco 2003; Schäfer and Henry 2009) in what the EU calls its southern neighborhood, has dominated the literature. This is complemented by some studies that either discuss different US administrations' democracy promotion efforts in the Middle East and North Africa (Hassan 2008; Snider and Faris 2011) or compare the US and EU approaches to partnership and democracy assistance (Huber 2008; Youngs and Wittes 2009). In this context, and taking into account the emergence of rapidly growing trade links between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and some Arab Mediterranean countries in the 2000s, the German Marshall Fund of

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the United States (GMF) and the Italian Institute for International Affairs (IAI) established a strategic partnership in 2009 to analyze, among others, the emergence of new actors in the southern Mediterranean. This was preceded by the creation of the Al Jisr Consortium, which focuses on EU-GCC public diplomacy and outreach activities, and both initiatives have already led to two of the first-ever studies analyzing the prospects of transatlantic relations in the southern Mediterranean in conjunction with the ever-increasing presence of GCC states (Aliboni 2010; Schumacher 2010). Subsequently, these projects set in motion the elaboration of some, mainly policy-oriented studies discussing the extent to which collaboration between the EU and GCC countries in their respective Mediterranean neighborhood could benefit the latter.

Undoubtedly, this development is an acknowledgement of the failure of both the EMP and the ENP to induce polity-related reforms and contribute to sustainable socio-economic development in Arab Mediterranean countries. It is also a direct function of the current political developments and the economic malaise that is affecting almost all societies in the EU's and the GCC countries' Mediterranean neighborhood.

In recent years, the GCC countries have scaled up their presence in the Maghreb and Mashreq considerably, though it is noteworthy that the beginning of this engagement preceded the eruption of the Arab Spring. In particular in the economic sphere, and more specifically as far as trade and investment are concerned, state-sponsored Gulf holdings do nowadays play a crucial role in the two sub-regions, targeting primarily the tourism, real estate, energy, industry, transportation, and telecommunications sectors. They also consider the enormous capital demand of transition countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia in particular, as an opportunity to invest oil rent and expand their influence. While Qatar has recently earmarked $18 billion to be invested in Egypt's tourism, energy, and metallurgy sectors until 2018, it was also instrumental in creating a partnership with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and Morocco which aims at utilizing their sovereign funds to invest $2.5-4 billion in tourism projects in Morocco (Hussein 2012). A similar trend is discernible in the political and diplomatic sphere. For example, the UAE and Qatar participated pro-actively in the enforcement of UNSC Resolution 1973 (Roberts 2011), with Kuwait providing substantial financial assistance to the Libyan Transitional National Council in 2011, and Qatar – once a vocal supporter of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad – and Saudi Arabia heavily supporting the rather fragmented Syrian opposition, albeit for different ideological reasons (Souaiaia 2012).

This is complemented by the GCC's pledge to provide Morocco and Jordan with $5 billion in assistance for development, following the invitation extended to both monarchies in May 2011 to join the organization. A growing intensification of ties between Qatar and Oman on the one hand and Egypt and Tunisia on the other (and with it with the Muslim Brotherhood and En-Nahda, respectively), accompanied by a more visible Saudi support for Salafist movements in both countries, round off the emerging picture of new/reinforced ties and loyalties.

Like the GCC, its member states, and all other external actors, the EU was overwhelmed by the outbreak of mass uprisings in North Africa and their contagious effects on other Arab societies. After some initial hesitation and the issuing of rather incoherent statements by some of its officials in the early phase of the Tunisian Jasmine revolution and the Egyptian 25 January revolution, it responded on March 8, 2011 with the publication of its newly-developed "Partnership for Democracy and Prosperity with the southern Mediterranean" which was merged two and a half months later, on May 25, 2011, with the EU's revised ENP entitled "A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood." In contrast to the reactions of the GCC countries and all other external actors, the EU's revised ENP was the outcome of collective bargaining on the intergovernmental and inter-institutional level, thus transcending the sphere of bilateralism. Moreover, it has also been the most advanced and inclusive policy framework hitherto offered by any external actor to Arab Mediterranean countries in their struggle towards political liberalization and/or democratization and economic modernization.

While EU and GCC foreign policy action vis-à-vis Arab Mediterranean countries in times of political transition and/or upheaval differs to the extent that EU action is characterized by a considerable degree of collective action as opposed to the more individualist approach of the member states of the GCC, more substantial questions need to be raised. Obviously, the adoption of a revised ENP – considered by High Representative and Vice-President (HRVP) of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, and Stefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, to be the EU's strategic response to the outbreak of the Arab Spring – and the increasingly prominent place that the Maghreb and Mashreq hold in the foreign policy and external economic agenda of the GCC countries indicate the considerable significance that the EU and the Gulf monarchies attribute to the southern Mediterranean. But what are the underlying motivations of the EU and GCC countries to engage themselves and what is the nature of their perceptions of the multi-faceted processes of transformation in this troubled neighborhood? Do these motivational and ideational frameworks converge or diverge? What is the substance of EU and Gulf monarchies' policies vis-à-vis Arab Mediterranean countries and to what extent do they resonate with the respective domestic political and economic situation in the latter? Are there similarities or even overlaps in the

EU's and GCC countries' engagement in terms of sectoral and issue-area emphasis?

Against the backdrop of these questions, this study aims to provide a comparative analysis of the EU's reinforced, yet ongoing, foreign policy engagement in the Arab Mediterranean and the GCC monarchies' widening foreign policy activism in the region with a particular emphasis on the period after the outbreak of the Arab Spring. This is embedded in the recently emerging debate on analyzing the intersection of the actors' interests and the extent to which these may generate synergetic foreign and external economic policy action. Picking up on this discourse, and in conjunction with the abovementioned questions, this study argues that even if the EU strengthened its rather under-developed bi-multilateral relationship with the GCC and its member states – in place since the signing of a cooperation agreement in 1989 – the prospects of synergetic or even joint foreign and external economic policy action in the southern Mediterranean are relatively low.

This does not imply that there are no issue-areas where there is potential for such collaboration; in fact, this study does identify a number of areas. But the nature of governance structures in the Gulf, and thus the self-preservation logic that underpins regime behavior, points against too strong a synchronization of Gulf monarchies' foreign and external economic policies with those of an EU that is first and foremost absorbed in solving its economic and fiscal crisis and whose foreign policy is theoretically driven by the ambition to export (democratic) EU norms and values. In fact, this is complemented by a number of additional factors and developments on both the regional and EU level, all of which render the prospect of any structured and coordinated EU-GCC cooperation in the Arab Mediterranean rather questionable.

These considerations provide this study with its structure. The first section will discuss and critically analyze the EU's response to the outbreak of the Arab Spring and relate it to its past issue-area-specific actions in the southern neighborhood. The subsequent section will shift the focus to the GCC and its member states and provide an overview of their engagement in Arab Mediterranean countries in the political/diplomatic and commercial spheres in recent years. Both sections seek to prepare the ground for the third section, which will present the findings and discuss both the extent to which collaboration between the EU and GCC countries in the Arab Mediterranean is possible and the reasons why such collaboration has not yet materialized and is unlikely to occur in the near future. Finally, the study will conclude with some summarizing remarks regarding the evolving role of the EU and GCC countries in their Mediterranean neighborhood and the prospects of EU-GCC cooperation in their common neighborhood space.

EU Foreign Policy in the Southern Mediterranean Two Years into the Arab Spring

Studies analyzing the EU's response to the outbreak of the Arab Spring have one thing in common: regardless of whether they are policy-oriented or characterized by a more analytical and academic approach, they criticize the EU on a variety of grounds. This critique refers mainly to the EU's initially hesitant behavior and the revised ENP's objectives, methods, funding schemes, instruments and discourse (Behr 2012; Bicchi 2013; Schumacher 2012; Schumacher 2013; Silvestri 2012; Tocci 2012; Youngs 2012; Teti, Thompson and Noble 2013). While they largely ignore the fact that of all external actors the EU was and, in fact, still is the only one that has a holistic framework in place vis-à-vis the southern Mediterranean with a combined focus on democracy and governance promotion, socio-economic modernization, as well as micro- and macro-economic development, civil society and humanitarian assistance, there is also consensus that the revised ENP, based on the "Partnership for Democracy and Prosperity with the southern Mediterranean" and the "New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood," with which the "Partnership"converged, is essentially a remake of the original ENP initiated in 2003. By the same token, it is equally overlooked that the "new" ENP must be read, at least to some extent, as an attempt to discontinue recent practices within Euro-Mediterranean dynamics to focus exclusively on technical, project-based cooperation in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Since the creation of the latter, Euro-Mediterranean relations have become increasingly depoliticized as a consequence of the persistence of "stubborn authoritarianism" (Pripstein Posusney 2005) in the southern Mediterranean and the regimes' resistance to pursue externally prescribed paths of political reform.[2] ENP 2.0 however, brings democracy promotion, broadly speaking, back onto the agenda as it focuses on "[providing] greater support to partners engaged in building deep democracy – the kind that lasts because the right to vote is accompanied by rights to exercise free speech, form competing political parties, receive impartial justice from independent judges, security from accountable police and army forces, access to a competent and non-corrupt civil service — and other civil and human rights that many Europeans take for granted, such as the freedom of thought, conscience and religion" (European Commission 2011, 3). In other words, with this announcement, ENP 2.0 goes back to the discursive and ideational underpinnings of its predecessor

2. Depoliticization refers only to the downgrading of the democracy and human rights promotion dimension in Euro-Mediterranean relations between 2008 and 2011. At the same time, Euro-Mediterranean relations continued to be highly charged, and thus politicized, as a consequence of the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the negative repercussions of the functioning of the UfM.

(Teti 2012) and, in fact, the EMP and complements the purely functional focus of the UfM with a reinforced and rather ambitious commitment to building "deep" or "healthy democracies" (European Commission 2011).

While the EU refrains from defining the meaning of these two adjectives, the revised ENP holds on to the paradigmatic foundations of its predecessor in that it is rooted in the seemingly sacrosanct assumption that Arab Mediterranean regimes are not only willing to adopt and implement externally prescribed reform measures but also consider the vaguely defined offer of a successive integration into the EU's single market as more attractive than the financial and political costs such a process may generate. This has already proved unsuccessful and out of touch with reality in the past and it is rather unlikely that predominantly religiously inspired governments, such as the ones in Egypt and Tunisia, or their (semi-)authoritarian counterparts in other parts of the southern Mediterranean, subscribe to such a notion, given their exposure to rapidly deteriorating micro- and macro-economic developments, sincere popular discontent, and thus a massive erosion of political and financial capital.

Moreover, and in spite of the revised ENP's declared objective of creating civil society partnerships through the establishment of a civil society facility and the emerging European Endowment for Democracy (EED), Tocci rightly points out that the EU continues to prefer liberal-minded non-governmental and governmental actors over increasingly powerful and popular Islamist movements (Tocci 2012). This is reflected by the fact that neither the EU's "new response" nor subsequently adopted strategy papers devote a single word to the changed power structures in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Such an omission is inexplicable as the success of Islamic parties in the three countries stood out early on and it is problematic because the associated long-simmering conflict between secular and religious movements and currents in the Arab Mediterranean states has surfaced in the last two and a half years, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia.

Although the revision of the ENP was partly based on the realization that Arab Mediterranean regimes had responded in differing ways to the multi-faceted offers of cooperation in the context of the EMP, it was widely expected that the ENP 2.0 would pick up on these differing responses and reinforce the principle of differentiated bilateralism, already present in the original ENP (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). However, the revised ENP turned out to be a disappointment in this regard as well, as it maintains the original discourse and simply reiterates yet once more that while involving "a much higher level of differentiation, each partner country [will be allowed] to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and capacities allow" (European Commission 2011, 2). In purely practical terms this means that every neighbor "able and willing to take part" will benefit from "closer economic integration and stronger political cooperation on governance reforms, security, conflict resolution matters, including joint initiatives in international fora on issues of common interest" (European Commission 2011, 2). Such a promise, however, provides ample room for debate. Strictly speaking, from a purely discursive point of view, the emphasis on voluntary participation of Arab Mediterranean regimes in the EU's new foreign policy scheme and their reward for reform-minded behavior – nowadays labelled "more-for-more" – contradicts the holding on to the logic of the EU's emphatic reference to negative conditionality, or "less-for-less" according to the new ENP terminology. If the EU does stress the issue of ability and willingness explicitly, then it cannot but respect the regimes' effective or just putative inability and/or unwillingness without declaring at the same time that in cases "were reform has not taken place [it] will reconsider or even reduce funding" or use "other policy measures" or even "targeted sanctions" (European Commission 2011, 3).

Secondly, the EU continues with its past practice of not defining in more detail the envisaged rewards in exchange for reforms and therefore berefts itself and its targeted partners also in the framework of the new ENP of a system of intelligent benchmarking (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011).

Thirdly, by omitting explicitly formulated incentive or reward systems, the EU has once again failed to directly link the former to conflict resolution – a policy field in which, as is mentioned earlier, it promises to become more active in exchange for political and economic reform. Apart from the fact that not all parties subject to a conflict in the neighborhood wish for a greater involvement on the part of the EU, the problems such a promise generates are further substantiated by the absence of a clear-cut definition or conception of security that should underpin the closer political and security partnership that the ENP 2.0 claims to offer. Eventually, it reinforces rather than narrows the capability-expectations gap (Hill 1993) that has been characterizing EU foreign policy in its southern neighborhood for almost two decades. The EU's response to the domestic conflict in Syria is a case in point in this regard. Until early April 2013, the governments of the 27 member states managed to agree on 19 rounds of sanctions, targeting mainly the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad.

However, the announcements by French President Francois Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron at the Brussels European Council Summit in mid-March 2013 to act unilaterally and provide arms to the Syrian opposition in the event that there is no agreement on the level of the EU shows the degree to which the latter is divided and incapable of acting as a conflict resolution actor as the ENP declares. This became even more visible in May 2013 when no agreement could be reached by EU foreign ministers to uphold an EU arms embargo on Syrian rebel forces.

Fourthly, instead of considering the political, economic, social, cultural and historic specificities in each neighboring country, and carrying out a policy to promote democracy customized and tailored to requirements as well as local, national and regional conditions, the EU has pursued a "one-size-fits-all" policy and stuck to this approach even before and also after the outbreak of the Arab Spring. One example of this practice is the adoption of negotiating directives of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council on December 14, 2011 for Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreements with Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco. Already during the scoping exercise that the EU undertook in the latter three countries, and that has been concluded only with Morocco so far, it became clear that the envisaged DCFTAs – an idea that was already aired by the Commission in 2007 – will be based on a model template.

This leads directly to the economic dimension of the revised ENP and the EU's engagement in the Arab Mediterranean. Apart from some minor variations, the template, lacking rights-based and developmental considerations, as well as sound partnership mechanisms (Mohamadieh 2012), imposes upon the economies of the four countries the EU's entire trade-related acquis and thus all technical and sanitary standards that are in force in the EU. The so-called "3M's", i.e., money, markets, and mobility, that the EU nowadays promises all reform-minded partners in the South, however, do not mitigate the negative effects of this imposition. The EUR4.2 billion in grants, complemented by EUR2.7 billion in loans from the EIB and the EBRD, that the EU has pledged for the period 2011-2013 are needed to keep the entangled states somehow afloat and to address socio-economic development, rather than to dampen the costs of regulatory reform. And the reference to markets and mobility is not helpful either, as the EU is not offering the prospect of fully joining its single market with its "four freedoms" – free movement of goods, services, capital and people. In fact, the mobility partnership, a much promoted flagship tool that the EU offers southern neighbors, and to which Tunisia and Morocco subscribe, foresees only visa facilitation, whereas visa liberalization is just a distant prospect.

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Table 1: EU trade with Arab Mediterranean countries (in billions of EUR; in %)

	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		Balance of trade (millions of EUR) 2011	Share of total EU imports & exports (%) 2011
	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.		
Algeria	20.5	11.2	28.2	15.3	17.4	14.8		15.5	27.6	17.2	-10.4	1.6 (I) 1.1 (E)
Morocco	8.08	12.3	8.39	14.4	6.56	11.9	7.73	13.7	8.75	15.5	6.78	0.5 (I) 1.0 (E)
Tunisia	8.97	9.50	9.49	9.90	8.04	9.02	9.53	11.0	9.88	10.9	1.04	0.6 (I) 0.7 (E)
	37.4	4.15	35.2	5.74	20.9	6.30	29.2	6.70	10.4	2.09	-8.35	0.6 (I) 0.1 (E)
Egypt	7.0	10.3	8.2	12.7	6.1	12.6	7.2	14.8	9.5	13.9	4.38	0.6 (I) 0.9 (E)
Occupied Palestinian Territories*	14	46	7	61	6	51	35	80	12	87	75	0.0 (I) 0.0 (E)
Jordan	0.2	2.6	0.29	2.9	0.17	2.5	0.24	2.7	0.31	3.2	2.95	0.0 (I) 0.2 (E)
Syria	3.38	3.20	3.60	3.47	2.32	3.08	3.59	3.65	3.,20	3.03	-0.17	0.2 (I) 0.2 (E)
Lebanon	0.30	3.3	0.36	3.9	0.26	4.2	0.33	4.7	0.41	5.3	4.86	0.0 (I) 0.3 (E)
Total	**85.8**	**56.6**	**93.7**	**68.4**	**61.7**	**64.4**	**78.9**	**72.8**	**70.0**	**71.2**	**1.16**	**5.9 (I)** **4.7 (E)**

Source: European Commission, DG Trade Statistics (2012); *in millions of EUR.

Table 1 clearly shows that the entering-into-force of the revised ENP does not break with past trade patterns. With the exception of EU trade with Algeria, Libya, and Syria whose exports to the EU are predominantly composed of high-value hydrocarbon commodities and thus outweigh EU exports in absolute terms, trade relations with all other Arab Mediterranean countries are still highly asymmetric, favoring the EU. None of the remaining six southern neighbors has hitherto been able to utilize the new ENP to its advantage and close the gap between imports from and exports to the EU.[3] Of all non-hydrocarbon neighbors in the south, Morocco is still the most important trade partner, followed by Egypt and Tunisia. In contrast, and while the overall trade volume with Syria has massively declined in 2012 as a result of the adopted sanctions regime,[4] the EU's trade share with Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied Territories as a share of total EU trade in 2011 and 2012 stayed on the same rather low level as in previous years.

3. According to the European Commission, DG Trade (2012), this applies also to the first three quarters of 2012.
4. See European Commission, DG Trade (2012), Syria. EU Bilateral Trade andTrade with the World, Brussels.

As far as foreign direct investment (FDI) is concerned, and as can be seen in Table 2, the EU as a whole has been a net investor since 2000.

Table 2: Foreign direct investment outflows from the EU to southern neighbors participating in the ENP (in million EUR)

	2000	2005	2008	2009	2010
EU-27 to the world	n.a.	-239880	-383545	-316470	-145567
Algeria	-20	-18	-212	n.a.	n.a.
Morocco	-64	-60	-331	-337	-444
Tunisia	-2	-8	-26	-50	-50
Egypt	-46	-31	-755	n.a.	n.a.
Occupied Territories	-231	-10	6	11	n.a.
Jordan	-2	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Syria	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lebanon	-0.2	-575	-671	-808	-432

Source: Eurostat/European Commission (2012), Pocketbook on Euro-Mediterranean statistics, Luxembourg. n.a. = not available.

Although the total amount of EU-originated FDI in the southern neighborhood has always been relatively low compared to EU's FDI activities in other parts of the world, the EU was for many years the most important source of FDI. However, while all southern neighbors participating in the ENP have kept their status as net recipients, inward FDI coming from the EU-27 has decreased in recent years. On the one hand, this is due to the outbreak of the Arab Spring and a deterioration of the investment climate in particular in Egypt and Tunisia. On the other hand, the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 and then the sovereign debt crisis that came to the fore just shortly thereafter left a strong imprint on FDI outflows from the EU. So far, at least, the revised ENP has not succeeded in facilitating FDI activities in the southern neighborhood.

GCC Countries and the Arab Mediterranean since 2011

The GCC countries' active involvement in the Mediterranean has been highlighted as one of the emerging factors in the reshaping of the regional environment unleashed by the Arab Spring uprisings. Far from representing a joint strategy of a homogeneous regional bloc, in the political realm this search for renewed influence has been primarily driven by the individual interests and leadership aspirations of two prominent players, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, competing with each other as well as with other dynamic non-Arab Middle Eastern actors such as Iran and Turkey. In contrast to the primarily conservative and self-defensive approach of the Gulf's longstanding hegemon Saudi Arabia, the Qatari regime has made quite audacious moves to try to turn new threats into opportunities, causing as much surprise as controversy in the Arab and international media. In essence, its newly perceived hyper-activism in regional and global politics does not depart from its decade-long experience as a small state struggling to preserve autonomy and security by diversifying and balancing alliances. The desire not to join the Saudi Arabian bandwagon anymore has its origins in 1995, the year when Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani came to power through a peaceful coup against his father, and a new elite emerged that soon proved to be less inhibited about antagonizing the regional 'big brother.' Since then, enjoying US security coverage, Qatar has successfully pursued an international brand strategy based on conflict mediation, financial aid, and public diplomacy (Roberts 2012).

Besides the Saudi-Qatari dynamic, the third GCC state involved in the quest for influence in the Mediterranean is the UAE, which concentrates its efforts mainly in the economic sphere. The UAE has conspicuously conducted a more active and visible foreign policy on the regional and international scenes since 2004, the year when Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan succeeded his father as president. The main new features of the policy are the stated priority of economic interests over identity and even security concerns – though the territorial dispute with Iran over the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa remains a central issue – and aspirations to have a global outreach and thus develop closer links mainly with Asia. Another role which has helped this small country enhance its international profile is that of aid donor.[5] A report by the Development Assistance Commission (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) places the UAE as the 16th largest international aid donor (in terms of percentage of the GNI) in 2012.[6]

As regards Kuwait, external action has been constrained during recent decades by the need to secure its territorial sovereignty against neighboring Iraq, leading to a staunch pro-US alignment and the conclusion of defense arrangements with other international powers (the United Kingdom, Russia, and France). More recently, as in other GCC countries, there has been a growing emphasis on "economic diplomacy"

5. See Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, "New Assertiveness in UAE Foreign Policy," *Gulf News,* October 9, 2012. See also Khalid Almezaini, "Bold Foreign Policy of the UAE Brings Benefits for GCC," *The National* (UAE), December 15, 2011.
6. See WAM, "UAE World's 16th Largest Foreign Aid Donor in 2012: OECD," April 5, 2013.

and development aid, channelled through institutions like the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).[7] But Kuwait remains a rather discreet and comparatively less important player in regional political affairs. The same could be said of Oman, if it were not for its independent views on some regional issues, such as the current non-interventionist stance on the Syrian crisis.[8] On the other hand, Oman's pragmatic strategy of widening cooperation and economic diversification has led it to conclude a number of sector-specific agreements with Arab Mediterranean countries (Schumacher 2010: 17). Finally, the Gulf state which presents the lowest developed regional profile, because of its sustained subordination to Saudi policies, is undoubtedly Bahrain (Ragab 2012).

Put into perspective, the engagement of Gulf countries in their Mediterranean neighborhood does not seem to be an absolute novelty of the post-2011 context. It was already a trend in the previous decade, both in the political and the economic sphere. On the one hand, the 2000s witnessed an increase in the foreign policy activism of – again – Saudi Arabia and Qatar, firstly in response to changes in the regional balance of power provoked by the Iraq War (2003) and, secondly, as a consequence of the ensuing extension of Sunni-Shii sectarian tensions and their spillover into domestic politics. Apart from reinforcing a "Sunni axis" against Iran and its allies (Syria, the new Iraq, Hizbollah in Lebanon), these two GCC members attempted for some time to reduce their dependence on the US on sensitive issues like Iran's nuclear program, Lebanon's domestic unrest, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, all areas in which they preferred not to align themselves with the hard-line policies of the Bush administration (Ottaway and Herzallah 2008).

On the other hand, the growing FDI of GCC states in the southern Mediterranean, as well as an increased involvement in Islamic banking, spread beyond their neighbors in the Mashreq, mainly reaching parts of the Maghreb. Gulf investors first set eyes on this area after 9/11 at a time when it was increasingly viewed with suspicion in both the US and, albeit to a lesser degree, the EU. Back then, destinations like Morocco or Tunisia offered good political understanding and willingness to cooperate at the highest political level, apparent stability, relatively consolidated and open market economies, and preferential trade agreements with the EU and the US.[9] Yet it was the boom of oil prices which occurred in 2005-2006 that represented a turning point. In 2006, for the first time ever, the Gulf countries overtook their European counterparts as the leading investors in the Middle East

7. See KUNA, "HH Amir Outlines Kuwait's Foreign Policy," March 11, 2013.
8. See "Official: Oman Foreign Policy Not Isolationist," *Gulf News*, October 18, 2012.
9. See Faiçal Faquihi, "L'incroyable boom des investissements arabes," *L'Économiste* (Morocco), September 28, 2007.

and North Africa (MENA).[10] For example, the UAE announced investments in Morocco amounting to $12 billion, complemented by similar activities of Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. The emergence of capital-rich companies of these four countries changed the distribution by origin of Gulf FDI and considerably reduced the virtual monopoly hitherto enjoyed by Saudi Arabia.[11] Emirati companies stood out by far as the most dynamic at that stage and the bulk of the capital was concentrated on tourism, banking, real estate, and huge infrastructure projects, the latter of which were marked by "gigantism", according to some, raising doubts over the quality and sustainability of these investment activities in general.[12] All in all, according to Baabood, during the period 2003-2010 Gulf investors have invested roughly EUR 70 billion in almost 700 projects (Baabood 2010, 231).

Against the backdrop of this rather diverse political and economic engagement, the Gulf regimes' reactions to the events following the outbreak of the Arab Spring can best be described as heterogeneous and complex. First and foremost, as seen from the Gulf, the Arab Spring in the Arab Mediterranean is much more than just a regional development in some distant part of the region and contains a potentially crucial domestic element for each of the six Gulf regimes. The need to contain such a transnational wave of political change outside khaliji borders was – and still is – crucial for regime survival. This became particularly obvious during the unprecedented intervention of the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force, composed of Saudi troops, Emirati police officers, and Kuwaiti navy units, to quell the uprising in Bahrain at the request of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (March 2011). This went hand in hand with a growing desire among Gulf monarchs to reduce their security dependency on the US particularly after watching the hesitant reaction of the Obama administration in response to the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

The same perception of connected internal and regional threats – with growing Shii unrest paving the way for Iranian meddling – would also precipitate a Saudi attempt at reinforcing political integration within the GCC, so as to allegedly move from the stage of cooperation to that of a "union", at least in foreign policy and defense issues. The initiative was launched by King Abdullah in December 2011 and eagerly supported by the Bahraini regime, but was put on hold as result of strong opposition by the other four GCC members. Nonetheless, Saudi-Arabia and Bahrain did not abandon the initiative instantly, but have ever since been pondering the idea

10. See, for example, ANIMA Investment Network (2013: 13).
11. See "Fort engagement des Emiratis pour le Maghreb," *L'Économiste* (Morocco), August 13, 2007.
12. See Jean-Michel Meyer, "OPA sur le Maghreb," in *Jeune Afrique,* May 26, 2008. See also Nachida Bouzidi: "Investissements arabes au Maghreb: quel bilan?" in *Afkar/Idées,* no. 26 (Summer 2010): 66-68.

to even go ahead with fewer members.[13] What this meant in practice, according to some observers, was that Riyadh was determined to play an even more direct role in Manama's domestic affairs, gaining a "de jure say over any reform proposal within the new borders" and "legal cover for its monopolisation of Bahrain's security framework" (Khorrami Assl 2012).[14] However, in May/June 2012, these plans were eventually postponed indefinitely.

Outwardly, the GCC states' response to the Arab Spring has led to a visible involvement in southern Mediterranean countries. The widespread perception is that this search for influence has been pursued through two channels: at the political-religious level, by supporting different kinds of emerging Islamist organizations or parties – seen as increasingly powerful actors in a fast-changing regional scene, and at the economic level, by providing these countries with generous financial assistance and much-needed investments through sovereign wealth funds (among other assets). However, it is noteworthy to stress that the GCC has been far from acting as a monolithic entity or agreeing on common positions in this context, particularly vis-à-vis revolutionary and transitional countries. Diverging individual interests have invariably prevailed, with the most significant fault-line dividing Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on the other (Coates-Ulrichsen 2012). Needless to say, the relevance of the different Maghreb and Mashreq countries is also very uneven when seen from the perspective of Gulf monarchies (Ragab 2012).

With regard to support for Islamist groups and new Islamist-majority governments, both in ideational and material terms (Maestri 2012), Saudi Arabia and Qatar pursue different objectives and by different means. The House of Saud, instrumentalizing powerful religious legitimacy bestowed upon it by the custody of the Two Holy Mosques and huge financial resources, continues to hold on to its longstanding practice of protecting and funding the most conservative Salafist organizations, charities, and preachers all across the region. In contrast, Qatar has sided to a great extent with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and ikhwan-related parties (such as the Tunisian En Nahda) which nowadays represent the largest Islamist current in most Arab countries. This division can be explained by the fact that Saudi Arabia broke relations with the Brotherhood after 9/11,[15] while the Qatari regime is the only one in the Gulf that does not currently see it as a threat. Instead, in

13. See Bari'ah Alam-al-Din, Sa'ud al-Tayyawi, Abkar al-Sharif and Khalid al-Umari, "Gulf Summit Starts the 'Union' with a Declaration of Intentions that includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait," *Al Hayat,* May 14, 2012.
14. Internal consensus over further GCC integration was lacking also in Bahrain, most notably within Shii groups. See "Thousands of Shia Muslims Protest over Gulf Union Plans," *BBC News,* May 18, 2012.
15. See James M. Dorsey, "Saudi Arabia Embraces Salafism: Countering the Arab Uprising?" *Eurasia Review,* January 13, 2012.

the last two decades prominent exiled figures of the Brotherhood have found refuge in Doha and a tacit entente has been established by which the Brotherhood does not meddle in Qatari domestic affairs – it dissolved itself as a formal organization there in 1999[16] – in exchange for material and non-material support. Or to put it pragmatically in the words of other observers: "Qatar quite simply wants to support the winners" (Roberts 2012).

In any case, the GCC states' reactions to the post-2011 regional transformations have been as heterogeneous and asymmetrical as the political changes that have taken place in the different southern Mediterranean countries. A brief overview comparing the different Arab Mediterranean countries allows us to distinguish four major patterns of behavior: (1) adaptive responses to the fall of friendly regimes (Tunisia and Egypt), (2) promotion of regime change at convenience (Libya and Syria), (3) efforts to strengthen the alliance with resilient monarchies (Morocco and Jordan), and (4) re-engaging unruly (and temporarily isolated) Algeria.

Adaptive Responses to the Fall of Friendly Regimes: the Case of Tunisia and Egypt

In both the Tunisian and the Egyptian cases, two authoritarian regimes that shared with the GCC states a firm pro-Western, moderate international alignment – yet with very different degrees of interdependence – were quickly overthrown by popular uprisings in early 2011. Tunisians toppled President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali who fled with his family to Saudi Arabia, where he still lives in exile in the city of Jeddah. Once these revolutionary changes were accomplished, Gulf leaders had no option other than to cautiously adjust to the new and rather volatile developments by coming to terms with whoever was about to fill the power void. The good news for them was that the need for pragmatic adaptation was even more compelling conversely, on the side of their North African counterparts. As a consequence of political unrest, the Tunisian and Egyptian economies – already fragile and exposed to severe micro- and macroeconomic problems – plunged into a critical state, given the paralysis of domestic economic activity, the decrease of revenue in the hitherto booming tourism industry, foreign investors' reluctance to take risks in what they perceived to be a rather unfavorable investment climate, and a considerable capital outflow. Against this backdrop, financial support from GCC countries was key to compensate for the severe drop in foreign exchange reserves and current account deficits.

These powerful economic constraints explain why gestures of revolutionary solidarity by the new forces in power in Tunis or Cairo were soon to be replaced by realpolitik considerations and action. For example, in December 2011 the newly

16. See Ahmed Azem, "Qatar's Ties with the Muslim Brotherhood Affect Entire Region," *The National,* May 18, 2012.

appointed president of Tunisia, Moncef Marzouki, publicly declared his support for the Bahraini people revolting against the regime by stating that "Bahrainis are suffering from corruption, injustice and oppression just like what Tunisians had suffered."[17] Yet, this rather undiplomatic statement of the secular-leftist interim head of state, perceived by many in the Gulf as highly unfriendly, did not prevent a flurry of official visits taking place shortly thereafter, with the Amir of Qatar visiting Tunis, then Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs Rafik Abdessalem visiting Abu Dhabi, then Tunisian Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali travelling to Riyadh, and Tunisian President Marzouki himself visiting Kuwait. Diverging foreign policy agendas of the forces of the troika were coupled with some evidence of overt Qatari support to En Nahda. Just at the level of personal ties, (former) foreign minister Abdessalem – son-in-law of Rashid al Ghanouchi – was the former head of the Research and Studies Division in the Al Jazeera Centre in Doha.[18]

These diplomatic interactions were accompanied by a number of initiatives of a predominantly economic nature. The visits of the Qatari Amir in January 2012[19] and the crown prince just seven months later[20] led to the signing of several bilateral cooperation agreements and memoranda of understanding in the field of banking and finance, protection of mutual investments, water, gas and electricity, phosphates, oil refining, development, justice, humanitarian and charitable institutions, as well as cultural heritage. In April 2012, Qatar granted a $500 million loan with a 2.5 percent interest rate to the Tunisian central bank (Talbot 2012). With a view to decreasing dependency and thus diversifying financial assistance and cooperation as much as possible, the Tunisian government also reached out to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, two countries with which economic cooperation had already attained a certain degree of institutionalization under Ben Ali (examples are the Kuwaiti-Tunisian Bank, the Kuwaiti-Tunisian Investment Group, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Tunisian-Saudi Investment and Development Bank, and the Saudi Fund for Development). In recent months, several delegations of Kuwaiti businessmen have repeatedly travelled to Tunis to explore new investment opportunities and the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia recently discussed the initiation of a "strategic bilateral cooperation" with his Tunisian counterpart.[21]

17. See Eslam al-Rihani, "Tunisia: 'Bahrain Free Free, Khalifa Out Out'," *Al Manar,* December 15, 2011.
18. See Ahmed Azem, "Qatar's Ties with the Muslim Brotherhood Affect EntireRegion," *The National,* May 18, 2012.
19. See Sana Ajmi, "Visit of Qatari Emir Divides Tunisian Political Society," *Tunisia Live,* January 15, 2012.
20. See "Qatar, Tunisia Sign Agreements," *Gulf Times,* July 17, 2012.
21. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Saudi Arabia), "Minister of Foreign Affairs and his Tunisian Counterpart Chair Second Session of Political Follow-up and Consultation between Kingdom

In spite of Egypt's much greater geopolitical relevance and economic and social interdependence with the Gulf States, the general dynamics of GCC-Egypt relations have been akin to those observed in the Tunisian case: progressive engagement of the new leaders and diverging strategies among the GCC actors. It is the Egyptian domestic turmoil that has made the Saudi-Qatari divide more obvious. Saudi Arabia's rather stubborn support for President Mubarak until he was finally ousted, visible discomfort with the successive electoral victories of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)[22] as well as with the announced Egyptian overture to Iran were not to make post-Mubarak bilateral relations easy.[23] In contrast, Qatar perceived all these changes as a window of opportunity and significantly improved its relations with the new Egyptian leaders, coming mainly from the Muslim Brotherhood (Ragab 2012).

However, these political differences did not preclude a shared commitment by the GCC states to collectively provide the Egyptian transitional authorities with financial support amounting up to $10 billion (figures vary depending on the sources). In practice, though, disbursements were delayed for months. It was not until May 2012 that a first Saudi aid package worth $500 million was received. A month later Saudi Arabia injected $1 billion in the Egyptian central bank and bought Egyptian T-bonds for $500 million. Moreover, the Islamic Development Bank, linked formally to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) but dominated in practice by Saudi Arabia, signed a $1 billion cooperation agreement to support Egypt's food and energy sectors. Not surprisingly, in view of the state's pressing financial needs, the new Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi showed remarkable pragmatism vis-à-vis Riyadh, which he symbolically chose as the destination for his first official trip abroad. During the summer of 2012, similarly, Qatar announced a $2 billion deposit in the Egyptian central bank (Talbot 2012) and pledged to invest $8 billion in Egypt's refinery structure, as well as the real estate, tourism and industrial sectors (Ragab 2012). The latest Qatari promise, made after an unexpected trip by members of the Egyptian government to Doha, is an additional $3 billion in financial aid (either as a deposit in the central bank or a purchase of bonds).[24] As to Kuwaiti

of Saudi Arabia and Tunisia," January 29, 2013.

22. Distrust of the Muslim Brotherhood was also shared by UAE. See Sultan al-Qassemi, "Will Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Mend Ties with Gulf States?" *Egypt Independent,* February 7, 2012.
23. Diplomatic tensions also arose between Egypt and Saudi Arabia over the arrest of an Egyptian lawyer accused of smuggling banned prescription drugs into the kingdom (April-May 2012), and between Egypt and UAE because of the arrests of several Egyptians accused of links to the Muslim Brotherhood (January 2013). See Plotkin Boghardt (2013).
24. See Bourzou Dragahi, "Qatar Grants Egypt $3bn in Aid," Financial Times, April 11, 2013. See also Bissan Kassab, "Egypt Receives $3 Billion in Additional Aid from Qatar," *Aswat Masriya,* May 13, 2013.

contribution, it is noteworthy that they have not consisted of financial aid as much as of significant investments in the Egyptian economy (about $2.5 billion).[25]

Promoting Regime Change à la carte: Libya and Syria

The cases of Libya and Syria share two prominent features from the point of view of Gulf regimes. Firstly, uprisings have targeted two allegedly "progressive" regimes with which relations had been for decades quite strained and troublesome. Although less confrontational than the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, the Syria of the Alawi presidents Hafez al Assad and Bashar al Assad has been, and is still, the main Arab ally of Iran in the Middle East, thus a key component of the feared "Shii crescent." Secondly, extremely violent and systematic state repression of popular protests swiftly led to fully-fledged civil conflicts. The conjunction of these two elements provoked rather unprecedented activism of the main GCC countries in the push for international military intervention and the promotion of regime change. Needless to say, in view of the precedent of Bahrain it was the interests mentioned earlier rather than human rights concerns that prevailed.

The Arab League provided a suitable diplomatic cover for these interventionist moves, raising concerns that it had been hijacked by its new de facto leaders. Decisions to suspend Libya and Syria's membership after bloody crackdowns on protestors (in March and November 2011, respectively,[26] gave way, on the one hand, to outright support for the UN-backed NATO intervention in Libya and, on the other hand, the search for a negotiated solution to the Syrian crisis, coupled with unprecedented sanctioning measures. Furthermore, the UN, NATO, and several governments of EU member states were demanding this kind of Arab cooperation and guidance, deemed to be vital to legitimize any sort of action in the region.

It was Qatar that played a leading role in the NATO-led intervention against Gaddafi's regime. Not only did it exert huge diplomatic pressure to launch the war through the Arab League and the GCC, but it also contributed to the military campaign by sending its own fighter aircraft and providing rebel militias with monetary, military, and logistical support (weapons and equipment, infantry training, and even oil supplies on their behalf). Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the head of the National Transition Council (NTC), acknowledged afterwards that to a great extent their success was owed to Qatar, which was said to have supported the Libyan opposition with $2 billion. Additionally noteworthy is the contribution of Al Jazeera's coverage

25. See Hala Amer, "Kuwait Investing $2.5 Billion in Numerous Egyptian Companies," [in Arabic], *Al Hayat*, September 18, 2012.
26. In the meantime, suspension of Libya's membership has been lifted following Gaddafi's ouster.

and personal ties with some prominent Libyan Islamists.[27] Such an active intervention in an international dispute represented a qualitative change in Qatari foreign policy (Roberts 2011). Of course, this involvement did not cease after the fall of Gaddafi, as bilateral economic deals are nowadays said to amount to $8 billion (Ragab 2012).

The other Gulf country that participated in the military operations, sending 12 fighter jets under US command, was UAE. Some observers ascribe this decision to UAE's closer commitment with NATO, being the first Arab country to send an ambassador to this organization, as well as the desire to demonstrate military potency and international backing as a means of deterrence against the Iranian bilateral threat.[28] In contrast, Saudi Arabia engaged itself mainly at the post-conflict stage, when the new Libyan authorities turned to it in search for FDI in the national oil industry.[29]

In the Syrian case, the lack of consensus in the UN Security Council has prevented the international community from following the Libyan path and somehow forced regimes in the Gulf to develop a more sophisticated approach, thus attempting to broker a peaceful solution through the Arab League Action Plan, the imposition of economic sanctions on the Syrian regime, and the deployment of an Arab League Observer Mission (November-December 2011). The turning point in the evolution towards harsher positions was the decision by the League's Council in February 2012 to sever diplomatic relations with Syria,[30] to ask the UN Security Council to send a joint peacekeeping force – a decision that was opposed by Lebanon and Algeria – and to provide all forms of economic and political support to the opposition (Küçükkeleş 2012). Furthermore, during the first meeting of the "Friends for Syria" group, held in Tunisia in the same month, when 60 countries recognized the Syrian National Council (SNC) as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal explicitly advocated the option of arming the rebels.

Since early and late 2012, respectively, as frustration grew, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have stood out as the major arms suppliers to these opposition forces. The officially unacknowledged shipments of military materials via Turkey and Croatia,

27. See Lina Khatib, "Qatar's Involvement in Libya: A Delicate Balance," *Reinventing Peace,* January 7, 2013.
28. See Khalid Almezaini, "Bold Foreign Policy of the UAE Brings Benefits for GCC," *The National,* December 15, 2011. On the other hand, Kuwait contributed to funding Libyan rebels, according to the National Transition Council (NTC). See Dahlia Kholaif and Donna Abu-Nasr, "Kuwait Is Giving $181 Million to Fight Muammar Qaddafi, Libyan Rebels Say," Bloomberg, April 25, 2011.
29. See Nihal Zaroug, "Oil Minister Calls on Saudis to Invest in Libyan Oil Industry," *Libya Herald,* February 3, 2013. See also "Vers une coopération entre la Libye et l'Arabie Saoudite dans le domaine du pétrole," *African Manager,* April 4, 2013.
30. In spite of its previously good relations with the regime of Bashar Al-Assad, Qatar was the first Gulf country to close its embassy in Damascus.

also supported by Jordan and the CIA, are estimated to have amounted to some 3,500 tons by March 2013.[31] The questio n of which factions have been backed by which one of the two Gulf patrons – with Qatar said to have given preference to the regional military councils and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood – has been subject to much speculation.[32] The most recent move in the diplomatic sphere has been the invitation offered by the Amir of Qatar to the SNC to take up the old seat of the Al Assad government in the Arab League summit, held in Doha in March 2013.[33]

Strengthening Resilient Monarchies: The Case of Morocco and Jordan

A third pattern of behavior of Gulf regimes can be detected in the context of relations with the monarchical regimes of Morocco and Jordan, two long-standing allies that have weathered the storm of the Arab Spring uprisings and softened protests through top-down and largely cosmetic reforms. The priority here was – and still is – to reinforce alliances and the regimes themselves, as any revolutionary outburst or reformist process putting an end to the authoritarian rule of Abdullah II or Mohammed VI could seriously jeopardize the legitimacy of their khaliji brothers. In addition, as far as Iran is concerned, the King of Jordan had stood out in 2004 as the first Arab leader to speak of the threat of a "Shia crescent."[34] Also, Morocco broke relations with Tehran in March 2009 as a result of a bilateral crisis possibly instigated by Saudi Arabia, according to observers.[35]

The clearest evidence of these anxieties was the surprising offer of membership made by the GCC to monarchical Morocco and Jordan. The invitation originated at a summit of heads of state of the Council, held in Riyadh in May 2011. It is in particular the envisaged inclusion of distant Morocco that would make the GCC geographically and politically more incongruent, as neighboring Jordan – sharing a border with Saudi Arabia – already demanded adhesion to the GCC in 1996. In Rabat, the proposal was received initially with a mixture of surprise and delight. The official statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation said Morocco welcomed the initiative "with a great interest" and stated "its full and complete

31. See C. J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt, "Arms Airlift to Syria Rebels Expands, With Aid from C.I.A.," *The New York Times,* March 24, 2013.
32. See Rania Abouzeid, "Syria's Secular and Islamist Rebels: Who Are the Saudis and the Qataris Arming?" *Time,* September 18, 2012.
33. See Ian Black and Martin Chulov, "Qatar Pushes to Give Syria's Seat on Arab League to Rebels," *The Guardian,* March 25, 2013. "Arab League: Legitimising Syria's opposition," Al Jazeera, March 25,2013.
34. "The Gulf Co-operation Council. A Club Fit for Kings," *The Economist,* May 19, 2011.
35. See the cable of the US embassy in Rabat published by Wikileaks. Robert P. Jackson, "XXXXXXXXXXXX links Moroccan break with Iran to Saudi Arabia" [cable 09RABAT289], April 6, 2009.

readiness to conduct extensive consultations with the GCC in order to define the framework of optimal cooperation."[36]

Behind the initially positive reactions of both Rabat and Amman are mainly economic interests – as opposed to the GCC's motivations, which are primarily political and strategic. Apart from a desire to attract more FDI from Gulf countries, thus reinforcing the trend already in place in the 2000s, access to the GCC would generate new opportunities for the free movement of labor to comparatively thriving labor markets.[37] In particular for Morocco, the deep economic crisis in the EU and the Eurozone, the country's natural economic partners, makes such a membership perspective, in fact, highly attractive.[38] However, significant reservations began to emerge in the following months as is reflected in official Moroccan statements, most of which nowadays mainly speak of an "advanced partnership" or "advanced status" and no longer of full membership in the GCC.[39]

That enlargement plans stand only a minimal chance of success already became somewhat discernible during a ministerial meeting held in Jeddah in September 2011, when two working groups were tasked with studying joint cooperation areas and outlining the content of future partnerships between the GCC and Morocco and Jordan.[40] A five-year economic development plan for both countries, amounting to $5 billion in total, was approved later in December.[41] However, the increasingly cautious position of Morocco emerged mainly out of fear that an official entry into a club of conservative Arab monarchies most reluctant about democratic change might backfire politically, particularly at a time when internal and external reform expectations are high and great efforts are being made to sell the constitutional reform of July 2011 in Europe and the United States. But also within the GCC the idea ran increasingly out of steam as a result of the lack of consensus among the GCC members and the withdrawal of support from Saudi Arabia.

However, none of this prevented the continuation of privileged relations on the bilateral track. Apart from contributing to the new GCC fund, whose operational

36. See MAEC, "Communiqué Officiel: Le Maroc accueille avec un grand intérêt l'invitation d'adhérer au CCG," May 10, 2011.
37. See "The Gulf Co-operation Council. A Club Fit for Kings." Lahcen Achy, "Morocco: What a GCC Membership Would Mean for the Economy," *Babylon & Beyond/Los Angeles Times,* June 3, 2011.
38. See Tom Arnold, "Morocco Aims for GCC Trade as European Picture Looks Cloudy," *The National,* October 28, 2011.
39. See MAEC, "Le Maroc aspire à 'un partenariat institutionnel avancé' avec les pays du CCG et place l'Afrique au centre de sa politique extérieure," November 2, 2011.
40. See MAP, "Gulf States, Morocco, Jordan Agree to Set up Two Working Groups to Study Joint Cooperation Areas," September 12, 2011.
41. See "Gulf States Approve $5 Billion Aid to Morocco, Jordan," Reuters, December 20, 2011.

capacity is in practice extremely slow,[42] in late 2012 Saudi Arabia pledged a separate deposit of $250 million with the central bank of Jordan.[43] Moreover, Moroccan King Mohammed VI himself toured the Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar) not only to consolidate political alliances but also to attract financial aid and foreign investment.[44]

Re-engaging Algeria

The only southern Mediterranean regime that does not fit into any of the earlier mentioned patterns is Algeria, and the reason is fourfold: (1) no change of regime or serious domestic political unrest occurred; (2) its political system is republican and not monarchical; (3) the regime did not align itself with the Western alliance and (4) it abstained from any interventionist approaches in the context of the Libyan and Syrian crises. Its rather independent foreign policy behavior in the 2000s is the result of a mixture of political will and politico-economic factors, the latter of which are mainly underpinned by booming gas exports. Also, some of its uncompromising positions on regional affairs would put it radically at odds with the leading Gulf States, particularly with respect to the intervention in Libya. Also, the authorities in Algiers did not appreciate either the GCC's membership offer to Morocco, Algeria's regional rival in the Maghreb, or their perceived support for Islamist or Salafist groups across the region. All this reinforced their sense of growing isolation or encirclement during the first stage of the Arab Spring (Spencer 2012, Darbouche and Dennison 2011).

Later on, amidst the renewed international courtship of Algeria, provoked by the crisis in Northern Mali, Qatar took the initiative in trying to re-engage Algiers by following a strategy that, ideally, would circumvent persistent foreign policy differences and focus mainly on economic cooperation. In January 2013, Qatar's Amir Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani paid a visit to Algiers, resulting in the signing of eight bilateral accords stipulating the construction of a steel plant, the production and marketing of fertilizers, fuel and petrochemicals, and close cooperation in the field of maritime transport, mining, oil and gas.[45] The Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, travelled to Algiers shortly afterwards for the first

42. See Alistair Lyon, "Jordan's King Pinched by Absence of Gulf Aid," Reuters, November 16, 2012. "Gulf States Hand Morocco First Chunk of $2.5 Bln Aid Package," Reuters, February 1, 2013.
43. See Hani Hazaimeh, "Jordan Secures Financial Assistance from Saudi Arabia," *The Jordan Times,* November 28, 2012.
44. See Elizabeth Dickinson, "Morocco's King Tours Gulf as Economy Weakens," *The National,* October 18, 2012.
45. See "Qatar, Algeria in Steel Plant Deal," *Gulf Times,* January 8, 2013. See also Fouad Kemache, "Algeria and Qatar Relations," *Your Middle East,* January 19, 2013.

bilateral session of political follow-up and consultation between the two countries.[46] Nonetheless, this recent activism falls short of changing the general picture of low economic (inter-)dependence and thus rather weak political leverage of the Gulf States vis-à-vis Algeria.

Potential Areas for Synergetic EU-GCC Collaboration in the Arab Mediterranean

The outbreak of the Arab Spring has re-invigorated a discussion on opportunities for increased cooperation between the EU and the GCC countries with regard to the Arab Mediterranean countries in some specific areas. Some studies have touched upon the potential to initiate burden-sharing or a potential division of labor either at the economic and financial level or in the political and diplomatic realm (Brookings Doha Center and FRIDE 2013), claiming in a rather outright fashion that "the GCC states are better positioned than their European partners to make targeted and quick interventions in North Africa" (Coates-Ulrichsen 2012). While such claims would benefit considerably from empirical substantiation, it cannot be denied that the debate as such continues to remain open, not only with respect to the contents or the priorities of such potential joint action, but also as regards the most suitable frameworks for cooperation. In other words, any discussion on whether targeted collaboration would be most adequate to be placed within the scope of the EMP, the UfM, or the ENP, and whether it would require additional ad-hoc arrangements or simply assume the role of a driver and potentially even pave the way for a possibly emerging strategic multilateral cooperation framework in the Arab Mediterranean, is highly dependent on both the issue-areas and the interests at stake. Also, should such collaboration be envisaged and eventually materialize, it would have to be preceded by a clear-cut issue-area-related decision on whether priority should be given to a bilaterally or multilaterally structured initiative.

While collaboration with other external actors or even synchronizing foreign and external economic policies in the Arab Mediterranean have hitherto not featured in the governmental discourse in GCC countries, they feature at least to a very minimal extent in the communications underpinning the revised ENP. The EU does not touch explicitly upon the issue of synergetic collaboration with GCC regimes in response to the outbreak of the Arab Spring either in its communication of March

46. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Saudi Arabia): "Minister of Foreign Affairs and his Algerian counterpart chair the first session of political follow-up and consultation between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Algeria," January 30, 2013. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Saudi Arabia): "Minister of Foreign Affairs meets with Algerian Prime Minister," January 30, 2013. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Saudi Arabia): "Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed a message from Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Algerian President," January 30, 2013.

8, 2011 or in its communication of May 25, 2011. But it does so at least indirectly in its "New Response" by stressing its ambition "to step up efforts of coordination with [...] other bilateral donors [...]." According to the EU, such enhanced coordination efforts "can take the form of joint programming, joint cooperation initiatives and cofinancing programmes and projects" (European Commission 2011, 21). Yet, it is noteworthy to stress that at no point in any of the EU's communications adopted so far, did the EU specify how it conceives of these joint actions.

Arguably, the most suitable institutional framework currently available for such EU-GCC joint coordination or even collaboration targeting Arab Mediterranean countries appears to be the UfM, the stated objective of which is precisely to enhance cooperation and partnership in the Mediterranean through the implementation of "concrete" and seemingly de-politicised regional projects in six priority areas: environment and water, transport and urban development, energy, business development, social and civil affairs, and higher education and research.[47] At this moment in time, and as a consequence of the severe financial constraints in the Eurozone, the UfM's efforts are virtually concentrated on the search for extra-European funding, allowing envisaged activities in the six sectors mentioned to move forward eventually. Interestingly, its representatives like to portray the UfM as a platform for coordination and synergies of activities of all key stakeholders in the Euro-Mediterranean region and beyond, and attempting to attract capital from the Gulf countries has been, in fact, a strategic goal since the UfM's inception. This objective underpinned also the formal inclusion of the Arab League's General Secretariat as a permanent observer into the UfM in 2008, despite strong objections on the part of Israel.[48] Financial support from GCC countries for UfM projects, such as, for example the Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip, is currently channelled through the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the president of which recently expressed a desire to reinforce this partnership with a view to promote new projects aiming at creating job opportunities for young people in the framework of the Mediterranean Initiative for Jobs (Med4Jobs).[49]

Against this backdrop, in what follows, an attempt has been made to outline some concrete sectoral issue-areas in which a coordinated collaboration between the EU and individual GCC countries could, in fact, generate synergies and thus be beneficial for Arab Mediterranean countries' socio-economic development. The

47. See the Paris declaration of July 13, 2008.
48. Eventually, the foreign ministers who participated in the Marseille conference in November 2008 agreed that the Arab League "shall participate in all meetings at all levels" of the UfM.
49. See EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, "Islamic Development Bank Extends Support to UfM Projects," March 18, 2013.

subsequent overview of sectors looks into financial, economic, development, and social sector-related area cooperation, ideally to emerge in the framework of the UfM, and is preceded by a brief discussion of security-related aspects which, in any case, would have to take place, at least for the time being, on an ad-hoc basis.

Security-related areas:

- **Control of weapons of mass destruction (WMD):** The EU, Gulf countries and Arab Mediterranean countries alike share a genuine interest in curbing the spread of WMD and nuclear proliferation in the entire Middle East and North Africa. The GCC leaders have long advocated the establishment of a WMD free zone in this area,[50] a position which allowed them at the same time to demand guarantees and protection from Iran's nuclear program and to single out Israel as a threat to regional stability and peace. Seeking greater coordination and, in fact, collaboration as regards the creation of such a zone free of WMD would not only correspond with the ideational and discursive parameters in the EU, the Arab Mediterranean, and in GCC countries, it would also be in line with the EMP and the ENP, both of which state explicitly such an objective, and reinvigorate a long-standing debate which in recent years has succumbed to the predominant debates on political liberalization in the region, Iran's nuclear ambitions and, lastly, the global financial crisis.
- **Mediation in regional conflicts:** In particular Qatar has emerged since the mid-2000s as a ubiquitous player as regards mediation in regional and intra-national conflicts in the Middle East and parts of Africa. This hyper-activism includes hosting peace talks between rival factions from Lebanon, Sudan/ Darfur and Yemen, as well as acting as a political interlocutor of Hamas, the Taliban[51] and other Islamist groups from all across the region (Kamrava 2011, Khatib 2013). Besides this engagement, Qatar has also mainly since early 2011 assumed the role of an advocate for conflict intervention by evoking the principle of responsibility to protect (R2P), thus shifting from "from mediator to actor."[52] Undoubtedly, the EU, itself in search of a greater role as a conflict prevention and conflict resolution actor, benefits from deepening its political links with Qatar and to some extent Saudi Arabia, not least due to their

50. See KUNA, "GCC Chief Calls for WMD-free Gulf, Middle East," November 10, 2012. See also "Kingdom Urges a WMD-free Middle East," *Arab News,* April 16, 2013.
51. See Matthew Rosenberg, "Taliban Opening Qatar Office, and Maybe Door to Talks," *The New York Times,* January 3, 2012. See also Nathan Hodge and Ziaulhaq Sultani, "Hope for Talks with Taliban Sends Karzai to Qatar," *The Wall Street Journal,* March 30, 2013.
52. See Elizabeth Dickinson, "Qatar's Role as Peace Broker at Risk in Syria," *The National,* October 18, 2012.

status as acknowledged regional actors with a certain degree of (political and religious) legitimacy in the Arab world. In turn, Gulf regimes would find such a strengthening of ties beneficial, as it would contribute to status elevation internationally and could complement (hitherto rather unsuccessful) European efforts to contribute to conflict resolution in the Maghreb and peace-making in the Mashreq. As a side effect, such a deepening of relations may generate positive spillovers to EU-GCC relations and the negotiations of an EU-GCC free trade agreement suspended since 2008.

Financial, economic, development and social sector-related assistance:

- **Complementing European expertise with Gulf capital flows:** Stabilizing macro-economically, or even reconstructing the economies of Arab Mediterranean countries, particularly those that were exposed to drastic political changes (Egypt, Tunisia and Libya) or that lack energy resources (Morocco and Jordan), requires both immediate financial support and short-, medium- and long-term FDI. For example, the drop in FDI in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia in 2011 amounted to $7.2 billion from $17.7 billion in 2010 (Alessandrini 2012). Undoubtedly, EU-Gulf cooperation seems hard to envisage with respect to large-scale state financial aid (through deposits in central banks or purchases of treasury bonds). However, it could be considered as far as public funding of specific development projects or private FDI is concerned, in particular in sectors where EU member states or European companies could provide significant expertise that is not present in the Gulf, thus making the most of capital flows coming from individual GCC countries and creating economies of scale.
- **Supporting Arab Mediterranean partners in negotiations with multilateral financial institutions:** Linking EU political support with parallel financial support by individual GCC countries could significantly strengthen the bargaining position of Arab Mediterranean regimes in their talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and other international donors. Ideally, this would facilitate their efforts to conclude less restrictive deals affecting domestic public spending. Also, while having a potentially conducive effect on economic growth and labor market development, this is bound to generate greater domestic consensus and thus provide publicly pressured regimes with room for maneuver and breathing space.
- **Renewable energies:** The Gulf countries are nowadays among the world's largest investors in renewable energy projects, with a particular emphasis on

solar technology.[53] The UAE stands out in this regard, after signing on to the United Nations' Sustainable Energy for All initiative and winning the bid to host the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Abu Dhabi hosts since March 2013 the world's largest concentrated solar power plant, Shams 1, a joint project of UAE-based Masdar, French Total and Spanish Abengoa. Also, UAE businesses are currently in the process of exploring investments in Egypt, hoping to capitalize on recent findings by the Egyptian New and Renewable Energy Authority (NREA) that wind energy resources in many parts west and east of the Nile valley are much larger than originally expected. The UAE and Portugal signed a cooperation agreement on renewable energy in May 2005,[54] while the Kuwaiti authorities have explicitly requested the transfer of the best economic and renewable energy practices to their country and repeatedly acknowledged their interest in making use of relevant expertise of European companies. Many of the latter are, in fact, involved in the Desertec industrial initiative in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. At the same time, Saudi developer ACWA Power, winner of the tender to build the world's largest concentrated solar thermal plant in the southern Moroccan city of Ouarzazate, has set up a Spanish consortium, composed of Acciona SA (ANA), Sener, and TSK, to get engaged in this venture.[55] While the GCC countries would not always be able to provide technical know-how for these kinds of projects, they could undoubtedly, not least through capital investment, contribute to their financial consolidation and ensure the creation of a region-wide electricity supergrid. In turn, such a construction is bound to generate considerable return-on-investment as a result of the export of desert power to regional and European economies. More importantly, it would strongly contribute to the GCC and Arab Mediterranean countries' diversification efforts in the field of domestic energy consumption, not least in view of finite oil and gas resources and a forecasted doubling or even tripling of domestic energy consumption in many parts of the region in the next two decades.[56]

- **Water management and desalination:** The water sector in the Gulf grew by 14 percent in 2012 with the six GCC states having awarded contracts worth

53. Abu Dhabi aims to produce 7 percent of its energy needs with renewables by 2020, while Dubai aims at 5 percent, whereas Qatar has a target of 20 percent by 2030 and Saudi Arabia targets to cover roughly a third of its energy needs with alternative energies by 2032. See "Green Energy Revolution in the Gulf?" *Deutsche Welle,* February 21, 2013.
54. See "UAE to Diversify Portugal Investments," *Nuqudy,* May 2, 2012.
55. See Wael Mahdi, "Saudi Power Developer Gives Spanish Firms Work in Morocco," Bloomberg, April 30, 2013.
56. See Chris Stanton, "GCC Countries Face Electricity Squeeze," *The National,* October 31, 2010.

$6.4 billion recently. The country leading these investments is Saudi Arabia, followed by Oman, UAE, and Qatar. Responding to shared concerns about sustainability, the EU, the GCC, and Arab Mediterranean countries would benefit from the establishment of a structured dialogue on these matters and could capitalize on an emerging link between Gulf capital resources, European expertise and, as regards desalination, the presence of the Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC) in Oman (Schumacher 2010: 26).[57] This would also generate spillovers into other related environmental areas, such as the prevention of desertification and waste management.

- **Transportation infrastructure and the safety of passageways:** Transnational motorway projects, rail networks, as well as ports and harbors, considered to be of vital importance for economic development and inter- and intra-regional trade of Arab Mediterranean countries, are currently being developed or modernized in collaboration or with material and non-material support from EU partners. This is complemented by a growing importance of maritime passageways in conjunction with their links to modern and effective land highways. As more than three quarters of global maritime transport passes through the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Atlantic (Aliboni 2010, 70), keeping these routes safe and free from piracy has become both a security and economic/financial challenge that requires the joint efforts of the few multinational corporations that dominate the system and governmental actors, such as the EU and the GCC countries. The enormous capital demand of such projects and their rather attractive perspectives as regards return-on-investment make them potentially interesting for Gulf investors in search of sustainably successful investment opportunities. While such investments could certainly be seen as complementary to some regimes' efforts to contain further spillovers of the revolutionary dynamic to the Gulf, they have – not least in view of their developmental character – the potential to contribute to the ENP's objective of strengthening regional trade integration in the southern neighborhood, thus fostering economic interdependence and transnational activities and exchanges.
- **Aviation:** Opportunities for synergies in the aviation sector in countries like Morocco and Jordan stem from the fact that they have both signed Euro-Mediterranean air transport agreements with the EU in 2006 and 2010, respectively, aiming at, among other things, the creation of new economic and investment opportunities and a process of regulatory convergence leading to

57. A potential target of such sector-specific cooperation is the Jordan Red Sea Desalination Project where collective EU involvement has been thus far at least rather absent.

fairer and more equitable competition conditions, and they are currently in the process of restructuring their national aviation industry. The national carriers of Morocco and Jordan, i.e., Royal Air Maroc (RAM) and Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJA), have been exposed to serious financial troubles in recent years and are in the process of scanning possibilities to enter into new partnerships with other airlines. For example, in the context of a tour by Moroccan King Mohammed VI of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Jordan in October 2012, the sale of a 44 percent stake in RAM was discussed; in the meantime, RJA have initiated a full codeshare agreement with Gulf Air, hoping that this would generate financial rewards and generate new markets. This dual process of liberalizing domestic aviation sectors and restructuring the national aviation industry is a win-win situation for both the EU and GCC countries and thus the national carriers of the latter, as well as for Morocco and Jordan. It is bound to ensure a more transparent and accountable management of the Moroccan and Jordanian air transport industry; it contributes to making the latter more competitive and integrated; it will ensure the adoption of stricter safety standards; and it opens avenues to boost local economies and the tourism industry. While this would not necessarily imply concrete EU-GCC collaboration, it would nonetheless greatly benefit from greater coordination between the two as regards the sequencing of regulatory and acquisition practices.

- **Healthcare and elder care:** Healthcare and elder care have been on the periphery of national and international development priorities in almost all Arab Mediterranean countries for years, despite numerous partnership initiatives, different policy approaches, and bilaterally concluded agreements. While an elder care sector proper cannot even be said to exist in either the Maghreb or the Mashreq, the health sector is highly underdeveloped and underfinanced. This is problematic from a development policy point of view and it blatantly underestimates the integral links between the development of society as a whole, socioeconomic modernization, and the existence of a readily accessible and functioning health system and elder care. For the EU in the context of its TAIEX programme, national and local authorities operating in these sectors, as well as for care operators from the Gulf, this is an opportunity to jointly initiate or support already ongoing processes of modernization (such as in Algeria, where the government has started with the construction of 60 new hospitals) in both an advisory and support capacity, but also in purely financial terms. Not only are such exchanges of best practices and know-how potentially beneficial for relevant actors from both the EU and the Gulf as far as information-sharing and quality improvement in their own countries are concerned, such joint activities, burden-sharing and investment activities, besides having a positive impact on Arab Mediterranean labor markets, promise also to be economically attractive for European and Gulf investors, most of all in elder care, as there is a growing demand, particularly in aging societies in Europe, for affordable, high-quality retirement and nursing homes in southern destinations that are geographically close to Europe.

Impediments to EU-GCC collaboration in the Arab Mediterranean

In contrast to these potential, relatively non-sensitive areas for joint collaboration or at least coordination of foreign and external economic policy action, some factors can be identified that render the emergence of such a prospect relatively unlikely, if not to say illusionary. While in purely quantitative terms they are less noteworthy, they weigh heavily on EU foreign policy in general and on EU-GCC relations and thus EU-GCC cooperation in the two actors' Mediterranean neighborhood in particular.

First, the mismatch of governance structures in the Gulf and within the EU, with the former featuring different forms of authoritarianism and the latter uniting consolidated liberal democracies, may not necessarily be an impediment as such, given the long-standing and in some cases even very close bilateral ties that exist between individual governments of EU member states and Gulf regimes. Yet, while joint activities in the field of external democracy promotion, broadly speaking, are ruled out anyway in light of the autocratic nature of Gulf regimes and thus their reform-averse interests, collaboration with autocratic regimes in a region such as the Arab Mediterranean, whose societies are still struggling to overcome decades of non-democratic rule, may raise eyebrows among human rights activists in the region itself and in Europe and the Gulf. What is more, it could generate a serious public debate in a number of EU member states and backfire on their respective governments, the latter of which are already under considerable pressure, given the fiscal and economic crisis in most parts of the EU. In view of the relatively broad media coverage that regularly emerges, at least in some EU member states, such as for example in Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands, every time their governments consider arms sales to the Gulf, it is fair to assume that any more visible collaboration between the EU and the GCC in the Arab Mediterranean would suffer from a lack of societal support, at least in EU member countries. Moreover, the EU itself would face the risk of undermining its self-imposed objective of acting as a normative or even ethical power that, according to the Lisbon Treaty and, in fact, the ENP, aims at exporting its norms, values, and principles beyond its external borders.

Second, for years the EU and the GCC were in negotiations over a Free Trade Agreement which eventually collapsed in June 2008 as a consequence of continuous disagreement over the inclusion of a conditionality clause, petrochemical subsidies, tariffs and export levies, and stipulations related to the issue of majority stakes in GCC companies. Since then, some occasional, rather half-hearted, and mainly informal efforts to revive negotiations have occurred. However, it seems as if the EU-27 and the GCC have accepted this impasse for the time being. As far as the EU is concerned, this is not surprising, as it fits the lack of strategic understanding for the Gulf, discernible in the EU's General Affairs Council for years and the EU's ridiculously under-developed institutional representation in GCC countries. Likewise, as long as the GCC countries succeed in penetrating (new) markets outside Europe and benefit from their growing demand in hydrocarbon commodities, they are not inclined to change their negotiation position. Against this backdrop, any discussion of potential synergetic collaboration between the two bodies and/or with individual GCC countries in the Arab Mediterranean seems rather out of sync with the political dynamics that have been characterizing EU-GCC relations for a long time. The multi-faceted divergences of interests that exist not only on the level of EU-GCC relations, but that can also be identified in the EU's General Affairs Council and occasionally between the latter, the European Commission, and the European Parliament just add to this.

Third, while Gulf holdings have expanded their shares in selected Arab Mediterranean industries, they have been repeatedly exposed to criticism by local competitors and small and medium-sized enterprises for their all too often aggressive market penetration and their rather intransparent business practices. As the EU through the ENP engages in attempts to foster sector-specific democratic governance promotion and as such aims at inducing greater accountability, transparency, and public participation, and given that the issue of direct and indirect state subsidies proved to be a major stumbling block in the context of the EU-GCC free trade negotiations for many years, a more structured EU-GCC cooperation in the economic and thus labor market field in the Arab Mediterranean is difficult to envisage.

Fourth, closely linked to the critique of such business practices is a growing skepticism in Arab Mediterranean societies towards the deepening links of domestic regimes and corporations with Gulf holdings. For example, in Egypt, social discontent about Qatar's increasingly prominent role as investor and donor of foreign aid to the country has been considerably on the rise in recent months, culminating in the public mocking of Qatar and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood in Bassem Youssef's popular satire television show, "Al Barnameg."[58] The Tunisian-Qatari rapprochement ignited similar controversy. On the occasion of a recent ceremony, Tunisian President Marzouki praised Qatar and Qatari UN envoy Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri for having been instrumental in the recovery of $28.8 million, illicitly hidden by former President Ben Ali. Reportedly, Marzouki declared that "as a Tunisian and an Arab, people who insult this country [...] should feel ashamed before taking responsibility for their deeds in front of the law."[59]

Almost immediately after these comments, thousands of Tunisians and several social online networks engaged in criticizing massively the Tunisian president for praising Qatar, pointing to the nature of the country's political system and the state of political and civil liberties. The significant drop in Al Jazeera's 2012 viewer figures in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya seems to substantiate this trend.[60] In view of the continuous emancipation of Arab Mediterranean societies from their rulers and the emergence of powerful civil societies, such displays of publicly voiced critique are likely to grow, thus gradually limiting the room for maneuver of democratically accountable regimes' in the Arab Mediterranean to engage in, or to deepen relations with assertive, autocratic regimes from the Gulf and, in fact, elsewhere. Needless to say, this development would, in turn, impact considerably on the perspectives of any attempt of other external actors such as the EU to initiate joint cooperation initiatives with Gulf countries.

Lastly, the prospects of ad hoc, as well as systematic EU-GCC joint initiatives in the Arab Mediterranean have to be seriously questioned in view of the unresolved crisis of the Eurozone and, in fact, of the EU itself. Already in its fourth year, the crisis has been dominating the intra-EU discourse generating an ambience which leaves rather little space, if any, for new and potentially costly EU foreign policy initiatives. This goes hand in hand with a massive rise of Euroscepticism across the EU since 2007, as stated by a recent Eurobarometer study surveying the six biggest EU member states, i.e., Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy and Poland, and the emergence of anti-Euro/anti-EU movements and parties.[61] Given that the polls' findings clearly indicate that trust in the EU has plummeted to a historical low, this "European fatigue", as Commission President Barroso put it in late April 2013,[62] raises serious questions about the EU's (democratic) legitimacy which unavoidably have repercussions on the future and the public acceptance

58. See "Bassem Youssef's 'Qatari' Homeland Song Goes Viral," *Ahram Online,* April 6, 2013.
59. See Tristan Dreisbach, "Marzouki Asks Tunisians to Respect Qatar; Many Loudly Disobey," *Tunisia Live,* April 12, 2013.
60. See "Printemps arabe: la baisse d'audience d'Al Jazeera en chiffres," *Lakome,* February 27, 2013.
61. See Standard Eurobarometer 78, 2012.
62. See Ian Traynor, "Crisis for Europe as Trust Hits Record Low," *The Guardian,* April 24, 2013.

of EU foreign policy in the southern neighborhood and beyond. Arguably, if the current trend towards a re-emergence of nationalism and anti-European sentiments continues, these repercussions do have the potential to outweigh a possible further cross-pillar communitarization and are bound to preclude new or even counteract existing neighborhood-related actions.

Conclusions

More than two years after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, signs of synergetic cooperation between the EU, the GCC, and individual GCC countries in the southern Mediterranean are missing. This can be attributed to a number of factors. First, it is the result of the absence of strategic foreign policy approaches towards the Maghreb and the Mashreq (Spencer and Kinnimont, 2013: 50) by all of them. The EU was quick to present its revised ENP, focusing on the so-called 3Ms – money, markets and mobility – shortly after the fall of Tunisian President Ben Ali and Egyptian President Mubarak. The GCC countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, as well as – to be more precise – individual Gulf corporations and/or businessmen, did not hesitate to engage themselves primarily via financial assistance and the upholding, and in parts increase, of targeted FDI flows in response to popular uprisings and regime change in parts of the southern Mediterranean. This was complemented by the GCC's collective offer of membership to Morocco and Jordan in May 2011.

As far as the EU is concerned, the revised ENP turned out to be based on the same instruments and mechanisms – i.e., financial assistance, regulatory convergence, trade and visa liberalization, and political conditionality – as its predecessor and the much criticized EMP, and thereby just reiterated past patterns which had already proved to be unsuccessful. In contrast, the few GCC countries that have been engaging themselves since early 2011, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, did not adopt any framework-oriented policy at all, but rather concentrated on a few, but carefully selected actions that promise to generate revenue in both economic and political terms. Yet, what marks the responses of the EU and the GCC countries is the fact that their actions were undertaken in an ad hoc fashion, that they occurred in parallel, and that no attempt was made by any of the actors to seek coordination with one another's actions in order to generate potential synergies.

The absence of such coordination efforts can, in turn, be explained by the comparatively underdeveloped relationship between both the EU and the GCC and the EU and individual GCC countries, and a mutual disinterest in one another. Hence, the lack of strategic understanding in Brussels of the growing political and economic importance of the GCC countries in regional affairs, in conjunction with key differences between the EU and Gulf regimes as regards the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law abroad, is the second explanatory factor why synergetic cooperation in the Arab Mediterranean has not yet occurred and is rather unlikely to occur in the near future. For the EU, turning to Gulf regimes in order to ensure that the revised ENP is accompanying and, ideally, complementing other potentially relevant activities of other external actors has been hitherto ruled out per se. This is not only because decision-makers in Brussels have found it difficult to justify such efforts in view of the authoritarian nature of GCC countries' political systems, but also, and equally important, because the benefit of coordination of activities or the advantages of initiation of joint activities and programs in politically non-sensitive sectors with the GCC or individual GCC countries are still being underestimated.

Apart from growing skepticism in Arab Mediterranean societies towards the deepening links of domestic regimes and corporations with Gulf holdings and their business practices, perceived as aggressive and intransparent, and often considered to be underpinned by a hidden political agenda, the third major factor that explains why the prospects for coordinated foreign policy actions and/or joint activities in the Arab Mediterranean are dim, is that both the EU and Gulf regimes are increasingly absorbed by domestic developments. In the case of the EU, the unresolved Eurozone crisis, in conjunction with growing anti-EU sentiments in small and big EU member states, constrain EU policy action in and beyond the neighborhood, limiting the EU's room for maneuver to initiate, or participate in, potentially costly initiatives or projects considerably. As far as Gulf regimes are concerned, the majority of which is generally better prepared for external shocks than most EU economies, not least as a consequence of the accumulation of impressive fiscal surpluses and wide-ranging privatization (Kuwait) and liberalization (UAE, Qatar, Oman) programs, they are increasingly worried about ensuring political stability at home. While their engagement in the Maghreb and Mashreq is to a considerable extent a function of such concerns, recent developments just prove this point. For instance, like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the UAE is currently investing heavily in military hardware which can be used to quell domestic discontent and it is actively engaged in doubling the number of foreign soldiers serving in the country as mercenaries.[63] Another example is the announcement by the Secretary-General of the GCC in December 2012 that GCC members had agreed on the creation of a unified military.[64] Undoubtedly, this announcement has an external dimension as it picks up on the emerging US

63. See "Bogotá Alarmed by Exodus of Colombian Soldiers to UAE," *Financial Times,* June 3, 2013
64. See "Gulf Leaders Agree on Unified Military Command at Bahrain Summit," *Al Arabiya,* December 25, 2013.

power projection in the Asia Pacific and thus potentially away from the Gulf. Yet, the decision to set up a joint security framework, even if it is only in the long run, does also send "a wider signal that the GCC will seek security-oriented solutions to political discontent inside its borders."[65] In this vein, it is noteworthy that a Qatari court issued a life sentence for well-known Qatari poet Mohammed Al-Ajami in late 2012 on the grounds of alleged incitement against the regime and that the GCC decided only recently to grant its members greater powers to detain persons wanted in one of the GCC countries.[66] Such steps go hand in hand with the organization's decision in June 2013 to adopt restrictive measures against (alleged) Hizbollah loyalists' stay permits and their remittances.[67] Although the announcement of these measures is a direct response to Hizbollah' involvement in the bombing of the Syrian town of Quseir in June 2013, it institutionalizes on the GCC level the tradition of past practices as UAE authorities have been deporting Lebanese nationals working in the Gulf without any legal justification for years.

In spite of these factors and the considerable distinctions on the discursive level, as is reflected in the revised ENP's strong emphasis on the need to create "deep" and "healthy" democracies in the neighborhood, constraining potential coordination between the EU and Gulf countries' actions in the Arab Mediterranean, it cannot be denied that intersections of interests between EU and Gulf leaders do, in fact, exist. Apart from the fact that, ironically, the general patterns of behavior that Gulf regimes have been displaying vis-à-vis Arab Mediterranean countries resemble to some extent those of the EU, the congruence of interests concerns mainly regional security and stability and fears of an uncontrolled spillover of the negative fallouts of failed or failing processes of transition. Yet, less sensitive sectors and issue-areas can be identified where coordination of foreign policy and external economic action is conducive. In the field of security these are control of weapons of mass destruction and mediation in regional conflicts. In the field of financial, economic, development, and social sector-related assistance these are complementing European expertise with Gulf capital resources, supporting Arab Mediterranean partners in negotiations with multilateral financial institutions, renewable energies, water management and desalination, transportation infrastructure, aviation, healthcare and elder care.

One of the many reasons why hitherto the ENP has generated only very few, if any, tangible results is its disregard for the principle of joint ownership and a widespread

65. Fatima Ayub, "A Gulf Union to Bolster Regional Security?" *Al Arabiya,* May 7, 2013.
66. Ayub, "A Gulf Union to Bolster Regional Security." See also "Qatar 'Anti-regime' Poet Ibn al-Dhib Gets Life Sentence," *The Australian,* December 1, 2012.
67. See "GCC Announces Adopting Measures against Hizbullah Members," *naharnet,* June 10/6/2013.

notion among societies in the Maghreb and Mashreq that what was on offer was rather a European diktat than truly partnership-based incentives for reform. The instrument of bilateral task forces between the EU, individual Arab Mediterranean partner countries, and relevant stakeholders from international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector, inaugurated in late 2011 through the first-ever session of the EU-Tunisia task force, was created not least in view of this development. As it is supposed to ensure effective coordination of the multi-faceted support from the various actors engaged in sectors such as investment, tourism, labor market, small and medium-sized enterprises, and civil society in the EU's southern neighborhood, it is imperative to expand task forces and include on a case-by-case basis individual actors from the Gulf. Such an opening-up would transform this EU-initiated instrument into a true multi-actor platform and consultation forum and help all interested parties to learn about planned activities and programs of one another thus preventing duplication of measures and, ideally, rendering them more effective. Also, such a coordination and possibly multilateralization of efforts is likely to have soothing effects on Arab Mediterranean societies which have become increasingly wary about any form of external influence. Such an expansion is dependent not only on the EU's willingness, but also on the EU member states' governments and Gulf regimes' ability to identify, or initiate rather, a common narrative of cooperation that goes beyond the focus on exclusively bilateral cooperation and the mutual finger-pointing for the failure to conclude an EU-GCC free trade agreement. In particular, at a time when the US is gradually projecting its power elsewhere and seemingly losing interest in the region, the EU, its member states' governments, and Gulf regimes need to adjust or possibly even change their discourse, preceded by some rather tough decisions as to where the "limits of pragmatism" (Alcaro 2013: 31) shall end in the future.

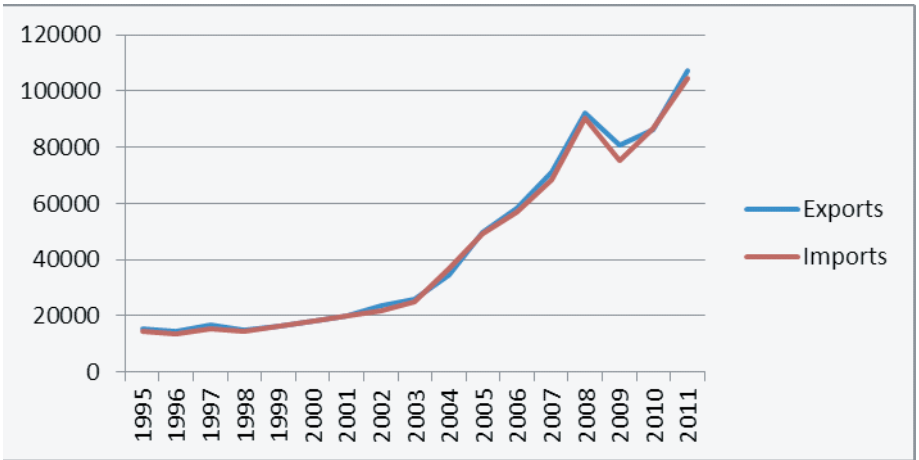
Appendix

Table A1: GCC's merchandise exports and imports to/from Arab Mediterranean countries in 2011 (in million US$)

	Saudi Arabia		United Arab Emirates		Kuwait		Qatar		Bahrain		Oman	
	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.	Exp.	Imp.
Morocco	2,949.5	42.4	286.2	94.5	32.8	3.9	140.5	11.4	132.8	1.9	18.1	0.4
Algeria	445.6	23.4	331.5	11.9	75.0	0.7	30.1	1.4	123.0	0.3	41.6	0.8
Tunisia	174.8	38.9	121.4	77.9	81.5	3.0	14.9	8.8	24.1	18.6	4.3	1.7
Libya	33.9	14.5	182.9	312.0	0.6	0.1	1.5	0.1	17.5	0.1	70.0	0.1
Egypt	2,518.2	2,119.1	822.0	851.3	2,893.3	290.4	125.9	265.8	109.7	36.8	100.5	117.5
West Bank and Gaza	..	..	5.3	..	..	..	0.1	2.9	0.7	0.1	..	0.1
Jordan	4,158.8	710.9	656.7	246.5	137.4	160.9	30.7	68.7	272.1	32.4	72.0	39.0
Lebanon	517.7	318.8	523.8	515.8	470.5	95.1	31.9	92.2	18.5	20.0	12.9	13.6
Syria	3,252.6	1,130.0	1,372.5	606.6	471.3	752.9	15.3	47.2	55.0	32.0	33.9	22.8

Source: UNCTAD, UNCTADstat

Figure A1: Evolution of intra-regional trade within the Arab League (in million US$)



Source: UNCTAD, UNCTADstat

Table A2: FDI announcements from the GCC countries to the Arab Mediterranean countries (in million EUR)

	Saudi Arabia		United Arab Emirates		Kuwait		Qatar		Bahrain	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Morocco	-	618.5	107.8	136.2	62.1	34.4	39.7	6.2	-	-
Algeria	-	-	1900.0	58.0	31.9	12.3	-	2187.0	-	-
Tunisia	-	-	-	3.2	0.1	-	132.4	453.8	-	-
Libya	-	-	-	-	-	-	672.4	43.0	-	-
Egypt	150.4	58.0	-	1,806.8	671.0	8.3	-	1939.2	-	90.4
Jordan	1,354.0	157.0	315.3	-	-	162.3	-	-	-	51.1
Lebanon	18.0	77.0	26.2	88.7	-	-	-	2.2	-	-
Syria	-	-	-	-	91.1	-	-	-	-	-

Source: ANIMA-MIPO Observatory

Table A3: FDI announcements from the GCC countries to the Arab Mediterranean countries (in number of projects detected)

	Saudi Arabia		United Arab Emirates		Kuwait		Qatar		Bahrain	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Morocco	-	1	9	6	2	3	1	2	-	-
Algeria	-	-	2	3	2	1	-	2	-	-
Tunisia	1	1	2	3	1	-	2	3	-	-
Libya	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	1	-	-
Egypt	2	2	1	12	4	2	-	5	-	2
Jordan	4	2	3	1	-	2	-	1	-	1
Lebanon	1	1	5	4	-	1	-	4	-	-
Syria	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Source: ANIMA-MIPO Observatory

Table A4: Net amounts of FDI to 11 Southern Mediterranean countries (including Turkey and Israel) by country of origin (in million EUR)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
United Arab Emirates	216	1,011	2,872	8,766	7,537	3,076	2,210	1,186	513	27,387
Saudi Arabia	288	950	2,356	3,861	2,637	636	1,747	530	1,235	14,240
Kuwait	1,003	161	1,610	4,292	2,747	2,181	665	522	340	13,522
Qatar	-	-	219	844	1,510	2,357	724	1,437	546	7,638
Bahrain	-	-	61	1,518	408	128	945	380	29	3,469
Oman	-	-	-	-	-	373	-	-	-	373
Total	1,507	2,122	7,118	19,281	14,839	8,751	6,291	4,055	2,663	66,629

Source: ANIMA-MIPO Observatory

Table A5: Migrants originating in Arab Mediterranean countries by region of residence (most recent data available in 2011)

	European Union	Gulf States	Total
Morocco	2,390,174	46,544	2,575,358
Algeria	1,475,662	19,595	1,578,010
Tunisia	516,440	15,985	578,168
Libya	43,646	2,035	63,556
Egypt	199,153	1,132,091	1,843,335
West Bank and Gaza	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Jordan	25,745	168,668	323,651
Lebanon	153,196	52,543	509,405
Syria	109,913	120,524	421,413
Total	4,913,929	1,557,985	7,892,896

Source: ANIMA-MIPO Observatory

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