The Mediterranean in the EU's 2016 Global Strategy: Connecting the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa

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Since 2007, the EU has developed a continental, and thus pan-African, approach, based on an Africa-EU Strategic Partnership[1] that also covers the African Mediterranean. The June 2016 EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)[2] has also directly linked the Mediterranean to the Middle East and Africa, following the "Neighbours of the EU's Neighbours" approach.[3] It is therefore time to assess the potential implications of these progressive, strategic reorientations, as 2017 will also be remembered as the year Morocco returned to the African family through the African Union (AU).

The June 2016 EUGS and the Mediterranean: The EU's "Surrounding Regions," the "Arc of Crisis" and the "Resilience" Concept

This article concentrates on the parts of the EUGS directly linked to the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa, but one should keep in mind that there are many other specific thematic chapters of interest for the region, such as the one on "A More Effective Migration Policy" or another entitled: "An Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises."
"State and Societal Resilience to our East and South" is the EU's second external action priority (point 3.2) identified in the EUGS, after the "The Security of Our Union" (point 3.1). What is interesting here, is the broad geographical coverage: the EU's eastern and southern "surrounding regions" and the use of the "resilience" concept. To the east, reference is first made to the need for the EU to "invest in the resilience of states and societies (…) stretching into Central Asia, and south down to Central Africa". The "neighbours of the EU's neighbours" or "the EU's broader neighbourhood" approach is thus clearly taken into consideration as a priority, with the arc of crisis remaining in the background.[4] Then, the concept of "resilience" is defined as being: the "ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises." Therefore, the EU will, with its partners, "promote resilience in its surrounding regions," since a "resilient state" is a "secure state, and security is key for prosperity and democracy." According to the EUGS, resilience encompasses "all individuals and the whole of society," and a "resilient society featuring democracy, trust in institutions, and sustainable development lies at the heart of a resilient state." Thus, resilience is the new keyword in the area, and might be considered as a more realpolitik approach based on the stabilization of the EU's neighbours, compared with the promotion of the (too) ambitious economic, legal, institutional and political reforms, including "deep democracy" criteria, promoted until recently under the ENP. The arc of crisis is clearly in the background and EU's interest in the stability of its neighbours is

[1] The Africa EU Strategic Partnership, 2007, www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/eas2007_joint_strategy_en.pdf
[2] A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, June 2016, www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf
[3] Ewan Lannon, "The 'neighbours of the EU's neighbours,' the 'EU's broader neighbourhood' and the 'arc of crisis and strategic challenges' from the Sahel to Central Asia", in Sieglinde Gstohl & Erwan Lannon, *The Neighbours of the European Union's Neighbours - Diplomatic and Geopolitical Dimensions beyond the European Neighbourhood Policy*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014, pp. 1-25.
[4] Ibid.

the first priority given the current development of transnational threats, especially terrorism.

Then, the enlargement policy of the EU is mentioned with references again to the "challenges of migration, energy security, terrorism and organized crime" that are "shared between the EU, the Western Balkans and Turkey." Resilience is therefore also valid within the pre-accession framework, whereas, as stressed in the EUGS, EU policy towards the candidate countries will continue to be based on a "clear, strict and fair accession process." In fact, with the Juncker Commission, the new DG NEAR (Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations) was created to reflect the so-called enlargement fatigue, whereas the activation of Article 50 TEU for BREXIT has launched an unprecedented process of narrowing the EU. The re-establishment of the death penalty in Turkey, regularly mentioned by President Erdogan, would also stop this country's accession process.

In the subsequent part of the EUGS entitled: "Our Neighbours," state and societal resilience is again identified as being the "strategic priority in the neighbourhood." Reference is made in this regard to Tunisia and Georgia, therefore considered as the current ENP frontrunners and as "prosperous, peaceful and stable democracies" that could "reverberate across their respective regions." The incentives are, however, the usual ones: Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs), the creation of a still undefined "economic area with countries implementing DCFTAs," the extension of "Trans-European Networks and the Energy Community," and also "enhanced mobility, cultural and educational exchanges, research cooperation and civil society platforms." Last but not least is the "full participation in EU programmes and agencies." What is more innovative is the reference to a "strategic dialogue with a view to paving the way for these countries' further involvement in CSDP." It is interesting to note that Morocco or Ukraine, that were previously considered as the ENP frontrunners, are not mentioned in this part. Surprisingly there are only two references to Ukraine in the whole EUGS linked of course to Russia's "violation of international law and the destabilization of Ukraine," and to "Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea." Morocco and Egypt are not mentioned at all in the EUGS, which is worth noting.

The EUGS is also focusing on the idea of developing a "multifaceted approach to resilience in its surrounding regions" and "pursuing tailor-made policies to support inclusive and accountable governance, critical for the fight against terrorism, corruption and organized crime, and for the protection of human rights." Differentiation between the EU's neighbours will be increased and a multi-layered (bilateral, multilateral, state and non-state actors) approach will be developed, as the EU will support "different paths to resilience" in its broader neighbourhood. The risk here is to go too far with differentiation, which can lead to discrimination and promote a double-standard approach. Another clear trend is to better associate the EU Member States to the EU actions in certain specific areas. In this regard the EU will adopt a "joined-up approach to its humanitarian, development, migration, trade, investment, infrastructure, education, health and research policies" and improve "horizontal coherence between the EU and its Member States." The development-security nexus approach has already been adopted in the Sahel strategy and to some extent in the Horn of Africa and will now be extended. However, clear evaluations, good practices and lessons must be drawn from these experiences.

Connecting the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa: towards a More Geopolitical Approach *Vis à Vis* the EU's Broader Neighbourhood "Cooperative Regional Orders"?

A specific section (3.4) on "Cooperative Regional Orders" has been introduced in the EUGS. This is where the linkage between the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa is made under the theme: "A Peaceful and Prosperous Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa." The first link between the "Mediterranean, Middle East and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa" is that they "are in turmoil." Therefore, "solving conflicts and promoting development and human rights in the south is essential to addressing the threat of terrorism, the challenges of demography, migration and climate change." A quite vague reference to "the opportunity of shared prosperity" is then made at the end of the section. The fact that the strategy is security-oriented is normal in the sense that the EUGS is a product of the High Representative, in charge of CFSP/CSDP issues, but one should also

think about the perception such an approach may have in the abovementioned regions.

At the level of the institutional actors, the EU will reinforce its "support for and cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa and the Middle East, as well as functional cooperative formats in the region." The institutional actors of interest for this article, and which were explicitly mentioned by the EUGS, are: the Arab League, the Union for the Mediterranean, the African Union, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African Community and the G5 Sahel. However, the strategy is based on "flexibility in helping to bridge divides and support regional players in delivering concrete results." Moreover, the EU's "bilateral and multilateral policies and frameworks" will be used as well as "partnering" with "civil societies in the region." This functional and flexible approach, relying also on civil societies, will not be easy to implement given the complexity of the interrelationships among and between the different institutional and civil society actors. A lot of pragmatism will therefore be required and informality should be privileged, at least at the start of the process.

Among the five lines of action identified in this part, the first one is the "Maghreb and the Middle East" where the European Union will "support functional multilateral cooperation." What is striking is how the document reflects the "US'-MENA" approach to the region. It is neither the "Euro-Mediterranean" nor the ENP that are referred to. The general objective is to "back practical cooperation" and to do so "including the Union for the Mediterranean." A number of sectors are identified: "border security, trafficking, counterterrorism, non-proliferation, water and food security, energy and climate, infrastructure and disaster management." Dialogue and negotiation is also envisaged regarding regional conflicts (Syria, Libya and Palestinian- Israeli). At this level, it is of course the Quartet and the Arab League that are mentioned as key partners.

The second line of action is related to "sectoral cooperation with Turkey;" reinforcing the feeling that the "strict and fair accession conditionality" mentioned in the EUGS highlights a clear "negotiation fatigue" with respect to Turkey. In other words, Turkish stabilization and the role of this country as an actor in the externalization of the EU's border controls are now more important than its democratization process, according to the Copenhagen Political Criteria. The migration crisis and the adoption of the EU-Turkey statement on 18 March 2016 on the migration issue, just two months before the publication of the EUGS, have certainly played a role in this respect.

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The third line of action is the "Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and individual Gulf countries." Iran's "nuclear deal and its implementation" is also mentioned as well as the "dialogue with Iran and GCC countries on regional conflicts, human rights and counterterrorism." In other words, it seems that the EU is trying to profile itself as a potential mediator regarding the conflict in Yemen, for example, where the humanitarian situation is worsening every day.

The fourth line of action is more innovative as it is about "interconnections between North and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East." The idea to support cooperation across sub-regions derives again from the Neighbours of the EU's Neighbours approach. A second point is, however, a bit more difficult to understand. It is the idea of fostering "triangular relationships across the Red Sea between Europe, the Horn and the Gulf to face shared security challenges and economic opportunities." This might be linked to the fact that Yemen, which is not a GCC member, is increasingly linked to the other fragile states of the Horn of Africa (Sudan and Somalia) as massive refugee flows are connecting the zone and many transnational destabilizing factors, such as terrorism and human trafficking, have to be taken into consideration. In addition, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia are all Red Sea riparian, so this might well be another bridge across the EU's traditional, geographical administrative silos.

While it is good news that the "cross-border dynamics in North and West Africa, the Sahel and Lake Chad regions" will be systematically addressed

through "closer links with the African Union, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) and the G5 Sahel," no clear methodology has yet been identified. The dialogue should thus produce recommendations soon for new innovative instruments to work at cross-border and transnational levels. For the time being, the Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) track of the ENP has generated poor results because of the reluctance of Russia to be an actor in the Eastern Partnership and northern dimension, but also because the EU instruments were too EU-inspired (EU structural funds). In other words, new specific instruments of cooperation created on the basis of partners' requirements still have to be designed.

The last line of action is "African peace and development," which implies an intensification of the "cooperation with and support for the African Union, as well as ECOWAS, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa, and the East African Community." In this respect, the progressive creation of a network of free trade areas, in the form of (regional/interim) Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) is mentioned. It will be important, in the coming years, to connect the EPA network to the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements and to other FTAs concluded recently by the EU in Asia (notably with ASEAN members). However, the emphasis is clearly and logically placed on the trade/development-security nexus. The first priority of the EU-African partnership is to "support peace and security efforts" in Africa and to assist African organizations in working on "conflict prevention, counterterrorism, organized crime, migration and border management." This includes working at the diplomatic, CSDP and trade/development levels and reinforcing the sub-regional strategies (including Sahel, Horn of Africa, Great Lakes and Gulf of Guinea). But now an interesting novelty to note is that Morocco is to be taken into consideration in implementing the Africa EU Strategic Partnership, and this is of particular interest to the Mediterranean at large.

Conclusion

One can conclude that the 2016 EUGS is, for the time being, a diplomatic success, as its endorsement by, at that time, 28 Member States was not a foregone conclusion. Although the result of numerous compromises, the Strategy goes beyond a simple threat list and is much more detailed compared to the 2003 European Security Strategy and its 2008 update. There are, for instance, more developments in methodology and the general approach. It is, therefore, a real medium-term "Strategy" but not yet an EU Security/Defence "Doctrine." Moreover, the fact that, for the time being, there is no real supplementary financial means is of course a major issue. We are currently in the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework, meaning that it would be very difficult to mobilize supplementary financial resources before the next three years, and one should not forget the impact of BREXIT at the financial level, regarding the EU's internal and external policies.

While in 2011, in the aftermath of the so-called "Arab Spring," the key words for the ENP were: "deep and sustainable democracy" and the "more for more" approach, in 2017, stabilization, resilience, pragmatism and the "EU's interests first," characterize the new approach. The resilience concept might be well received by partners confronted with unprecedented security challenges. For instance, Tunisia will certainly benefit from an increase in Security Sector Reform assistance. But the consequences of developing a more flexible approach in terms of relations with authoritarian regimes should be evaluated very seriously.

What is striking is that the Mediterranean has been mentioned in the EUGS, but at the same time almost replaced by "North Africa or Maghreb and the Middle East," thus coming closer to the MENA-US concept. It is, however, clear that the Mediterranean is increasingly fragmented given the recent crisis and wars. Could we witness the end of the (EEC) EU Mediterranean policies developed since 1972 with the "Global Mediterranean Policy," followed by the renewed Mediterranean Policy" (1992) and the "Euro-Mediterranean Partnership" (1995)? Today, the ENP and the Union for the Mediterranean are the two main frameworks for cooperation, but at the strategic level, the Mediterranean is included in a broader African/Asian Neighbourhood. Of course, the ENP has already changed the framework for cooperation while the Union for the Mediterranean includes 43 members. However, it is clear that we are entering a new phase in Euro-Mediterranean relationships.