



Working Papers

No. 4, June 2017

AMERICAN DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SINCE 2001:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE EU

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This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020  
Programme for Research and Innovation under grant agreement no 693055.

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## AMERICAN DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SINCE 2001: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE EU

Sally Khalifa Isaac and Haidi Esmat Kares<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines US construction, representation and practices in the Mediterranean since 2001 with the aim of drawing comparative conclusions on degrees of convergence and divergence between US and EU roles in the Mediterranean space. The paper adopts a critical constructivism approach and extensive discourse analysis in assessing both actors' perceptions and practices in the fields of security, democracy and economic development; and whether such practices denote complementarity or rivalry. While the analysis demonstrates an obvious divergence in the priorities that the US and the EU assign to various Mediterranean sub-regions and affairs, it equally denotes a remarkable similarity and complementarity in both actors' approaches to rising security threats, democracy and governance efforts, and economic development projects in the Mediterranean. Particularly, it highlights the consistency in both actors' practices in the securitization of weapons of mass destruction and energy issues as well as the politicization of democracy promotion and economic development in the Mediterranean for the sake of stabilization.

### INTRODUCTION

The United States has been steadily rising as an important actor in the Mediterranean since the post-WWII reconfiguration of the world order, as a result of the transformation in its interventionist and internationalist foreign and security policy that paralleled its rise as a superpower (Zoppo 1982). In fact, the US political, diplomatic and military engagement in the Middle East, North Africa, Southern Europe and the Balkans has increased to such an extent that the Mediterranean has even been described as essentially "an American lake" (Buchanan 2014: i).

The importance of the Mediterranean however has witnessed shifts in US conception and strategy, particularly after the end of the Cold War and the consolidation of the European integration experience. The demise of the Soviet threat and the expansion of the EU's role in its "neighbourhood" had their repercussions on US perception and action in the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, the growing role of the EU in the Mediterranean was not met by an American withdrawal from the Mediterranean Sea itself nor from the various lands it connects. This fact poses questions regarding the compatibility of US and EU perceptions, priorities and

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<sup>1</sup> Sally Khalifa Isaac is Associate Professor of Political Science (International Relations), Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University. Haidi Esmat Kares is Assistant Lecturer in Political Science, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University.

actions in the Mediterranean in recent years, and whether such roles represent patterns of complementarity or rivalry.

To explore these questions, this paper examines US conception and practices in the Mediterranean since 2001 in comparison with those of the EU. By adopting a critical constructivist approach and extensive discourse analysis of US documents,<sup>2</sup> the paper enquires into US alternative discourses to construct the Mediterranean; US policy practices in the Mediterranean in the fields of security, democracy and economic development; and how such US discourses and practices can be compared to those of the EU (Ehteshami and Mohammadi 2016).

Accordingly, the paper is divided into two parts. The first tackles US conception of and interests in the Mediterranean since 2001, which brings into focus how the USA clearly distinguishes between the importance it accords the Sea itself in terms of "pre-positioning" and "communication", and the weight given to the various Mediterranean sub-regions. These range in importance from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to the Aegean, the Adriatic (Western Balkans), and Southern Europe. The second part provides a comparative analysis of US and EU approaches, practices and actions in the fields of security, promotion of democracy, and support for the Mediterranean's economic development.

## 1. US CONCEPTION OF AND INTERESTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SINCE 2001

Among other consequences of 9/11, the events served to renew American interest in the Mediterranean. As before, the US conception of the Mediterranean space continued to derive its impetus mainly from European and Middle Eastern security, indicating that the US perception of the Mediterranean was maintained through a security lens. Additionally, the USA has continued to attach a high importance to the Mediterranean Sea itself, in its function as a main strategic route to important Mediterranean sub-regions. These include not only the Aegean and the Adriatic, but also the Black Sea, the Middle East and the Gulf. In this respect, the US mapping of the Mediterranean distinguishes between the Mediterranean Sea and the various sub-regions it connects. Thus, as noted by Lesser (2015: 5), the US approach to the Mediterranean "has rarely if ever been accompanied by a strong sense of the Mediterranean as a coherent strategic space, and area of U.S. interest per se". This fragmented vision of the Mediterranean resembles that of the EU, which also perceives the Mediterranean as a conflictive space composed of distinctive sub-regions.

### 1.1 THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA: A STRATEGIC "PRE-POSITIONING" FOR RAPID MILITARY ENGAGEMENT

US military projection in the Mediterranean has long been perceived as a cornerstone in American worldwide military deployment and naval strategy. As stated by one task force

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<sup>2</sup> The authors examined over 1,200 US (and EU) public documents. Most of the US documents examined are accessible in the George W. Bush White House archive, the Barack Obama White House Archive, the Department of State documents from 2001 to 2016, and other official data sets from the USAID, the USAID Greenbook and the OECD.

within the US Sixth Fleet, "this pre-positions U.S. military cargo at sea. Should a military or humanitarian crisis arise in theater, the squadron can deliver its cargo ashore, enabling a faster U.S. response" (US Sixth Fleet website). Together with military contributions from European allies and NATO, the USA perceives its permanent military deployment as providing "forward presence in the Mediterranean for security cooperation, maritime security, and crisis response missions" (US Navy 2015: 16).

Three important facts underscore the high strategic importance that the USA attributes to the Mediterranean Sea as a "pre-positioning" point. *First*, US Naval Forces Europe-Africa (US Sixth Fleet) and other military presence in the Mediterranean has been steadily growing, more so than any other indigenous navy in the Mediterranean (Miskel 2000: 147). *Second*, the US Sixth Fleet is the only entity in American policy/military structure that has a "Mediterranean mandate" (Lesser 2015: 6), since the northern part of the Mediterranean has been usually dealt with under "European and Eurasian affairs" and the southern shore under "Near Eastern affairs". *Third*, the US military presence in the Mediterranean is a permanent one, which as Miskel (2000: 149) describes, is maintained for its merits in "crisis management and peacetime engagement". This point highlights how the USA perceives its pre-positioning in the Mediterranean in its function to engage both in the Mediterranean and in other surrounding areas. This differs from European forces/naval policy in the Mediterranean, which emphasizes the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for "European citizens", European "maritime zones" and "cross-border" issues (Council of the European Union 2014b).

US perception of the Mediterranean Sea itself as a strategic location for military pre-positioning has long sustained the idea of the USA as a Mediterranean power and signified its practical readiness to engage, whether in the Mediterranean or in nearby regions/lands. Perhaps this is one key difference between US and European approaches to security in the Mediterranean, especially hard/material security. Additionally, in terms of security priorities, since 2001 – and even before – the USA has been practically stressing the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean, which derives its importance from its southern proximity to the Middle East and the Gulf and from its northern proximity to the Aegean and the Black Sea. This contrasts with European focus on the entire Mediterranean area, where issues of terrorism, energy dependence, state fragility, near conflicts, and organized crime – especially cross-border trafficking in drugs, women, illegal migrants and weapons – all encroach on European security by virtue of "Neighbourhood" (Council of the European Union 2003). The following subsections on the US conception of various "lands" on the Mediterranean further highlight US conception of and priorities in the Mediterranean as well as America's special emphasis on the Eastern Mediterranean.

## 1.2 NORTHERN ALLIES: WESTERN EUROPE, THE ADRIATIC AND THE AEGEAN SEA

On the northern flank of the Mediterranean, Washington sees its allies, with whom it shares the "transatlantic alliance" and the process of "Euro-Atlantic integration". However, among those allies, the USA differentiates between southern Europe, the Adriatic/Western Balkans, and the Eastern Mediterranean/Aegean Sea area.

In the Adriatic, and ever since the Cold War years, the USA has worked on bolstering close relations with Yugoslavia for geostrategic reasons related to the East–West confrontation. The same perceptions were shared by Europeans, since Yugoslavia has been long dealt with as

one of the littoral states on the Mediterranean. By 2001, US interest in the Adriatic/Balkans area was renewed for geostrategic reasons related to Washington's war on terrorism. This is because, according to Lesser (2005: 12-13), an enhanced US engagement in MENA necessitated "a reasonably predictable environment for access and cooperation". Such environment was perceived in cooperation with Washington's partners in the Adriatic, and also in the Black Sea and the Gulf. Therefore, and in line with Washington's support for NATO's open door policy, the Bush administration welcomed in 2002 the creation of the Adriatic Charter with Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, which was officially signed in May 2003 and then expanded in 2008 to include Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina. US interest in the Western Balkan/Adriatic area remained functional, in terms of their support to the NATO mission in Afghanistan and in the framework of the US-led Coalition in Iraq.

In the Eastern Mediterranean/Aegean Sea area, the US emphasis has been continually on the "geostrategic" importance of its "allies": Turkey, Greece and Cyprus.

With regard to Greece, the United States has gradually constructed an image of that country that denotes its immense importance in terms of geostrategic position, energy route and economic stabilizer in the less-developed Balkans. In terms of geostrategic importance, Washington notes that Greece "occupies a strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean on the southern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)" (US Department of State 2016a). Such a location enhances the importance of Greece in US and NATO military strategy since Greek ports are important in maintaining logistic lines of communication (Norton 2001). As for energy, Washington stresses Greece's "central position between energy producers in the Caspian and energy markets in Western Europe" (Burns 2007). It has repeatedly highlighted Greece's "growing role in European energy security" (Kerry 2015), which was prominent before 2010 in US endorsement of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline and the Greece-Bulgaria Interconnector, and after 2010 in the huge East Mediterranean gas discoveries. As a potential stabilizer in the Balkans, the US perceives "Greece's leadership" in economic development, which, according to Nicholas Burns, Under-Secretary for Political Affairs (2007), has "helped promote rapidly growing economies, create jobs and infrastructure, and bring a sense of stability to the region".

Similarly, both George W. Bush and Barack Obama depicted Turkey as a "critical ally" (Obama 2009b). This was on several fronts. First, as it has always been since the early 1950s, Turkey is a NATO member of high geostrategic importance, and "serves as NATO's vital eastern anchor, controlling [...] the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, which link the Black Sea with the Mediterranean" (US Department of State 2016b). This geostrategic importance was emphasized in US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which benefited from the "blanket overflight clearance" and "extensive logistic support" Turkey has provided to US troops there. Through this "critical lifeline", the US shipped 74 percent of its cargo to Iraq (Fried 2007). Second, the US emphasizes Turkey's importance in "Europe's energy security" through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the South Caucasus gas pipelines, which according to Washington "can change Eurasia's strategic map" by offering "Europe" gas supplies that "will allow diversification away from a deepening European reliance on Gazprom" (Fried 2007). Third, Turkey has been steadily perceived as "an important part of Europe" (Obama 2009b), which explains how it is that Turkey has been dealt with in the US Department of State under the Bureau for "European and Eurasian Affairs". Besides, and in recognition of its East Mediterranean and Middle East importance, Washington notes how Turkey "is a key partner for U.S. policy in the surrounding region" as it "borders Iran, Iraq, and Syria" (US Department of State 2016b). Further, Turkey is

perceived as an important US ally for its "strategic partnership with Israel" (Bryza 2008a). This partnership has been regarded as essential to US policy in the Middle East since, according to Matthew Bryza (2008a), former Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, it brings together "the Middle East's only two democracies [...] to pursue their common security and economic interests".

The immense geostrategic importance that the US attributes to both Greece and Turkey has thus been further stressed since the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent Afghanistan and Iraq wars and until the international coalition to fight the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq. The Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea, however, have long represented conflictive sub-regions in the Mediterranean due to outstanding Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot disputes as well as the less significant Turkish-Israeli clash. This situation has pushed continuous US efforts to promote Greek-Turkish consensus and also to seek "reconciliation" between Turkey and Israel as a "very important development that will help advance the cause of peace and stability in the region" (Kerry 2013a). Another new factor for the increasing importance of the Eastern Mediterranean since 2011 has been huge gas discoveries, which worked to further enhance the geopolitical importance of the Eastern Mediterranean seabed and more broadly of US allies in the Aegean Sea and the Middle East. In this respect, US and European interests converge, especially in promoting regional stability and cooperation among conflictive countries as well as in lessening European dependence on Russian gas (Johnson et al. 2015).

### 1.3 THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: "VITAL INTERESTS" AND "DEEP ENGAGEMENT"

The USA sees the Eastern/Southern Mediterranean flank as one of the most important sub-regions on the Mediterranean. This perception has gradually developed since the 1950s with Washington's stress on its "vital interests" in the Middle East. Such vital interests have historically revolved around securing access to oil and ensuring Israel's security (Markakis 2016: 16), which further highlights how US focus in the Mediterranean has inclined towards its Eastern rim.

This is why the USA sees Israel as its closest "ally" in this sub-region. As Obama (2009c) put it, "America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable". Besides, Washington has long constructed a conception of Israel as a sufferer among hostile neighbours – first and foremost Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas, but also a broader range of sceptical Arab countries and hostile sub-state actors. This is evident in how Washington is "committed to Israel's security" (Mitchell 2009) – a commitment that is "rock solid" and "unshakeable" (Obama 2012 and 2011a) – as well as to Israel's "right to defend itself against legitimate threats" (Obama 2009a); in short, it is seen as essential for "America's national security to ensure that we have a safe and secure Israel, one that can defend itself" (Obama 2016b). In fact, not with any other MENA country has the USA repeatedly used such words of commitment and sympathy, including those countries that Washington deems as Arab allies, such as Egypt and Jordan. In US reference to Israel's diversity, it has also stressed the "shared history and shared values" that bolster the US-Israeli bond (Obama 2011a).

Nonetheless, it is interesting to see that the USA rarely mentions the Mediterranean in addressing MENA affairs. For instance, in our review of public speeches of the G. W. Bush administration (28 speeches on the "Middle East Partnership Initiative" from 2002–2006 and 14 speeches on the "Broader MENA" from 2004–2008) the word "Mediterranean" appeared only once. This was in Secretary Powell's definition of the Middle East as "the lands between



the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf" (Powell 2002). This further highlights the US conception of the "Mediterranean Sea" and the various "lands" it connects. As Kerry (2016) later noted, the Mediterranean "remains today a body of water still", in an area that "presents us [...] with a land of instability and a sea of opportunities". This phrase in fact aptly sums up the constructed image of the MENA in US perception since 2001: "a land of instability". It also shows how the USA has placed itself together with Europe on one side vis-à-vis this "land of instability". Since 2001, many elements of MENA instability have been stressed by Washington:

*First, terrorism.* Following 9/11, MENA was portrayed by the G. W. Bush administration as a source of radicalization and terrorism. As noted by Secretary Powell (2002), American victims of 9/11 were killed by "terrorists born and radicalized in the Middle East". G. W. Bush (2003b) also highlighted how Middle Eastern threats encroach on American security by stressing the two threats of "global terror" and "weapons of mass destruction", and how "the bitterness of that region can bring violence and suffering to our own cities". With US engagement in Afghanistan still ongoing, President Obama (2009c) noted also that the USA would "relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security". Terrorism gained a new momentum with the surge of ISIS, which pushed Obama to stress that "the greatest threats" to the USA in MENA comes from groups like ISIS, as "radical groups exploit grievances for their own gain" (Obama 2014b).

*Second, authoritarianism and underdevelopment.* Since 2001, Washington has constructed an image of Arab MENA as a zone of closed societies, authoritarian rule and economic underdevelopment, characteristics that were construed as posing security problems. As Powell (2002) expressed: "too many Middle Easterners are ruled by closed political systems" and "the countries of the Middle East are [...] absent from world markets". Later, when the G. W. Bush administration adopted the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in 2002, Washington assumed a modernizing role in bringing "change", "reform" and "modernity" to the Middle East (Powell 2002). Also, in his Cairo University speech, Obama (2009c) stressed the objectives of "democracy", "religious freedom", "women's rights", and "economic development" in US relations with "Muslim communities around the world". Then, by mid-2011, when the Arab uprisings had become a certain fact in many MENA countries, Obama (2011a) committed that "it will be the policy of the United States to promote reform across the region, and to support transitions to democracy".

*Third, regional conflicts.* The USA has long developed its conception of MENA as an area rife with conflict. Front and centre, the Palestinian–Israeli conflict continued to represent a major concern in the Middle Eastern policy of various US administrations. Yet, other conflicts continued to emerge, which worked to deepen American perception of MENA's instability. During the G. W. Bush administration, the primary focus was on "the war on terrorism, disarming Iraq, and bringing the Arab-Israeli conflict to an end" (Powell 2002). But also unnerving was "the further spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)" (W. Burns 2003) and the hostile policies of Iran, which Washington perceived as the "world's leading sponsor of terror" (Cheney 2005). The destabilizing role of Iran was perceived not only in its ambitions for nuclear weapons, but also in its provision of "financial support, weapons, and training" to Hezbollah; its policies aiming at "the destruction of Israel"; and its support for Syria, which was perceived as "another state sponsor of Hezbollah" (Bush 2006b). Similarly, under Obama, the events of Arab transformation worked to emphasize the "security risks" and "epic struggle" in the MENA region. Such self-representation portrays Washington as an outsider, rather than an active actor, in the region's

conflicts. Among such risks, Secretary Kerry (2014b) enumerated "the security risks of terrorism, aggression, proliferation, organized crime", in an epic struggle extending "from the Sahel to the Maghreb, from Yemen to Syria". In view of such mounting instability, Kerry explained that Washington would "have to be deeply engaged – deeply engaged – in this region in its entirety because it is directly in the interest of our national security and our economy" (Kerry 2014b). At the end of his term in office, Obama (2016a) acknowledged that the Middle East is "rooted in conflicts that date back millennia", with problems that range from the "breakdown of order" to "sectarian conflicts" and the "changing climate", which has been fuelling Middle Eastern "competition for food and water" (Obama 2016c).

## 2. AMERICAN APPROACHES TO SECURITY, DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, COMPARED WITH THOSE OF THE EU

This section analyses US approaches and policy practices in the Mediterranean, and compares them to those of the EU. These approaches are dealt with thematically in three sub-sections: security, democracy and economic development.

### 2.1 SECURITY

The USA has represented itself as a military power, security actor and political stockbroker in the Mediterranean, engaging principally in high politics. These roles have been largely supported by the level of US military deployment in the Mediterranean and its near lands; disbursements of military aid to almost all Mediterranean countries (see Figure 1 and Table 1 in the Annex); as well as its historically demonstrated readiness to engage both politically and militarily in the area's affairs.

#### 2.1.1 AMERICAN APPROACHES TO MEDITERRANEAN SEA SECURITY: DIFFERENT PRIORITIES BUT COMPLEMENTARY ROLES VIS-À-VIS THE EU AND NATO

While there has been a convergence between US and European perceptions on the types of threats and problems posed in the Mediterranean, there has been a clear divergence in US and European priorities there. This is because Europeans have mostly focused on the entire Mediterranean area as Europe's own "neighbourhood", attributing high importance to security, political, economic, social, demographic and even environmental concerns. By contrast, the US focus has been overwhelmingly on the Eastern part of the Mediterranean for the concentration of geopolitical concerns and hard security threats touching on Washington's "vital" and "strategic" interests. This American perception was further expressed by former US Ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns (2003), who stated that "NATO's future, we believe, is east, and is south. It's in the Greater Middle East".

Nonetheless, the relative degree of convergence in US and European perceptions of Mediterranean security, along with the constantly enhanced US military presence in the Mediterranean, has actually contributed to complementarity in US and European security roles. This complementarity has been evident since 2001 in three practical policy examples:



*First, American and European military cooperation in Mediterranean maritime security.* US military presence in the Mediterranean was key in aiding Operation Active Endeavour (OAE), since the operation capitalized on the already-stationed US Sixth Fleet to perform its tasks (Germond 2008: 181). OAE's initial mandate, as a response to the terrorist attacks against the USA, was only the "Eastern Mediterranean" (NATO 2008: 2). Yet by March 2004, the mandate had been expanded to encompass the entire Mediterranean and the Operation became an "information and intelligence-based operation", also helping European members in checking suspected ships (NATO 2008: 3-4). Further, with the launch of the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in 2003, OAE was considered "highly relevant" in checking WMD-related cargos due to its accumulated role in "patrolling" the Mediterranean (NATO 2008: 6). With the termination of OAE in October 2016, NATO members agreed in the 2016 Warsaw Summit to create Operation Sea Guardian, which is supposed "to perform the full range of maritime security tasks" (NATO 2016).

*Second, Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011* is another important example of how US material power in the Mediterranean has been of critical assistance to European allies in an area of their direct concern: "the Southern Neighbourhood". It is no secret that after a few weeks of the Operation, leading European powers faced several technical problems, which necessitated US assistance. In this respect, Washington provided 75 percent of intelligence data necessary for imposing the arms embargo; 75 percent of on-air refuelling and reconnaissance flights throughout the NATO operation; 97 percent of the tomahawk missiles used to hit Libya's air defences at the start of the operation; and 100 military personnel and key targeting assets to assist European countries with aircraft targeting data (Daalder and Stavridis 2012, Westervelt 2011, Isaac 2012). This was why the then NATO Secretary General Rasmussen (2011) declared that "the Libya operation also made visible that some European allies lack critical capabilities, in particular within intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and air-to-air refueling". Indeed, as Ian Lesser commented on European performance in the NATO intervention in Libya, "without critical American assets this would not have been possible" (Westervelt 2011).

*Third, confronting the threat of ISIS and providing a military counterbalance to Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean.* This is another example showing how US material power complements European roles in the provision of hard security necessary to confront the expansion of ISIS as well as the increased Russian military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. In September 2014 Washington initiated and led the international coalition against ISIS (Obama 2014b). Apart from the military effort, it was also the USA which emphasized in December of that year the importance of defeating "the ideology, the funding, the recruitment" of ISIS (Kerry 2014a). These efforts came to coincide with those of the EU, especially when the EU issued in February 2015 its "Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Da'esh Threat" (European Commission and High Representative 2015a, Council of the European Union 2015a), even if such strategy ultimately focused on non-military efforts in encountering the threat. Besides, Washington adopted additional military measures entailing the deployment of further US troops in Iraq and the projection of its USS carriers Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Such measures were also to complement certain European efforts, such as the French decision, for instance, to deploy its aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle three times during 2015–2016. These complementary US and European measures were largely interpreted not only in their function to fight ISIS, but also as counterbalancing measures in view of projected Russian warships in both the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean (Shalal 2016). In addition,

close diplomatic coordination and compatible voting behaviour in the UN are important signs of complementarity in the US–European roles vis-à-vis the stance of other international actors in the Syrian crisis.

Yet, since September 2014, the US focus in fighting ISIS has been to a great extent directed to the areas it has traditionally considered of geostrategic importance in the Mediterranean (i.e., the Eastern Mediterranean, the Levant and to a certain degree Libya) (Chivvis and Fishman 2017). European attention to counterterrorism efforts, by contrast, has extended to encompass nearly the entire southern Mediterranean area. It is worth mentioning here how conflict in West Africa and the Sahel as well as the establishment of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb have constituted crucial concerns for European countries (EEAS 2011, European Commission and High Representative 2015b, Lesser 2015: 2). This is because in Europe, the threat of instability and terrorism was seen as more imminent, since fighting terrorism and organized crime was increasingly linked to uncontrolled influxes of refugees and migrants to Europe's soil. Such image was further strengthened following terrorist attacks in France and Belgium, which worked to further securitize the phenomena of "returnees" and "foreign fighters" as main security challenges enhanced by geographical proximity to conflict areas (Council of the European Union 2014a and 2015b, Council of the European Union CTC 2014a and 2014b).

### 2.1.2 CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN US AND EUROPEAN APPROACHES TO WMD PROLIFERATION

Since 2001, increased transatlantic attention has been dedicated to the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Mediterranean, particularly in the Middle East. While there is a transatlantic consensus on the threat of WMD proliferation and the need for collaborative efforts to encounter it, there have been some elements of divergence in American and European approaches to the threat. The American approach has revolved mainly around the use of military force and US unilateralism, while in the case of the EU there is a greater inclination to multilateralism and political dialogue (Penksa 2005: 23). This is not to negate the fact that practical collaboration between the US and Europe, such as the already mentioned PSI, has been occurring since 2001. Yet, several incidents have marked a divergence in American and European approaches:

*The case of Iraq* provoked a deep disagreement between the USA and the EU over the suitability of the use of military force for preemption, especially given the lack of proof for WMD. This incident demonstrated that the transatlantic partners diverged on prioritizing Middle East threats and on the suitable tools to approach them. In fact, Europeans stressed the priority of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and noted that in Iraq there was no justifiable cause for war (Archick 2005: 6, Penksa 2005: 26–27). The USA however perceived disarming Iraq and the question of WMD as a priority that would help check nuclear ambitions of other countries (such as Libya and Iran) and control the spread of terrorism (Archick 2005: 6–7).

*The case of Syria* also demonstrates the difference in US and European approaches in dealing with the proliferation threat. Washington was loud in condemning Syria's possession of WMD and demonstrated willingness to apply military force in punishing that country. Further, in September 2007, the USA did not object to (or even approved) Israeli airstrikes against Syria's suspected nuclear reactors in Deir el-Zor. In fact, both the White House and the CIA were rapid to confirm that targeted sites were nuclear facilities with a military purpose (White House 2008, Henry 2008). Later, in September 2013, Obama secured a Congress resolution authorizing the use of military force against Syria in response to an alleged use of chemical weapons by

the al-Assad regime against the opposition (US Congress 2013). By contrast, the EU overall policy before 2011 was inclined to construct a political and security dialogue with Syria and to offer economic and political incentives that could incrementally stimulate the Syrian regime to abandon its WMD ambitions (Elleman et al. 2012).

*Dealing with Iran.* While the G. W. Bush administration strongly rebuked Iran's nuclear ambitions and labelled Iran a "rogue state" and part of the "axis of evil" (Bush 2002 and 2004, White House 2006), the EU has largely dealt with Iran as a "partner" of a problematic nature, recognizing it as the "most pluralistic system" in the Gulf area (Perthes 2004: 87). The EU was thus inclined towards "engagement" in dealing with Iran, for instance through initiating the Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 2002, rather than isolating it (Archick 2005: 16, Bergenäs 2010).

Therefore, the US strategy in dealing with Iran has long focused on coercion, sanctions and threats of a military strike. Under Obama, a convergence in American and European approaches to Iran appeared in combining both pressure and engagement. Yet, Iran's behaviour has not been altered by Western policies of confrontation, threatening in 2011 that any military strike against its nuclear sites would be met with "iron fists" (Spillius 2011). US opening to Iran, up to the conclusion of the JCPOA in July 2015, indicates therefore that other factors – along with the preference of world powers to cooperate and compromise – intervened in the process that led to such a deal. Importantly, the election of the Iranian moderate Hassan Rouhani in 2013, Iran's increasing engagement in the Syrian conflict, and renewed conflict between Europe and Russia over the Ukrainian crisis, added to the growing Russian–Iranian rapprochement were all important factors that pushed for a Western opening to Iran (Isaac 2016).

*Ignoring Israel's possession of nuclear capabilities.* Ever since the 1995 UN review conference of the NPT, Israel has ignored the international community's calls to join the NPT as well as regional calls for the Middle East as a nuclear free zone. In 2010, a similar call from the UN was described by Israel as "flawed and hypocritical" without any notable international reproach (Nasr 2010). Even more, Obama (2010) stressed that the US would "strongly oppose efforts to single out Israel, and will oppose actions that jeopardize Israel's national security". In May 2015, it was the USA, Canada and Britain which blocked another UN resolution calling for the Middle East as a nuclear free zone. The following September, the USA, Britain, France and many other IAEA members rejected a draft resolution presented by some Arab states which called upon Israel to bring its nuclear programme under IAEA supervision (DePetris 2015). This means that while the Americans and Europeans securitized the issue of WMD proliferation in several MENA countries, the same issue was de-securitized in relations with Israel.

### 2.1.3 THE PALESTINIAN–ISRAELI CONFLICT: NECESSITATED TRANSATLANTIC COORDINATION

Since 2002, and unlike the case in previous decades, shared venues for coordinating US and European stances on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict have been established. These are mainly "the Quartet" and "the Road Map for the Middle East". The Road Map in particular, which was never implemented, was designed in Germany and other European states then adopted by the USA as an "American Road Map". In fact, these shared venues promised close coordination between US and European roles in the conflict, helping to integrate the various stances of key international and regional actors in forging "a peaceful and just settlement" for the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Such confluence was particularly promising in that the USA has traditionally had a high influence over Israel while the Europeans have enjoyed greater credibility among

the Palestinians (Perthes 2004: 90). In fact, since the launch of the Euro-Arab Dialogue in the mid-1970s, the Arabs have constantly looked for the Europeans to counterbalance the US bias towards Israel and its quasi-monopoly of Middle East diplomacy.

Nonetheless, after more than a decade of these initiatives, the Quartet came under heavy criticism for its failure to achieve what it was intended to do, and its failure to at least monitor the implementation of its decisions (Elgindy 2012). According to Tocci (2011a), the Quartet has demonstrated European inability to influence US initiatives within an international multilateral forum and it was the USA which benefited from the Quartet to promote its unilateral actions. It thus became a reality that since 2002 the EU role in the conflict has been diluted, as the process of seeking consensus and coordination within the Quartet mechanism became ironically "an end in itself" (Hollis 2011: 43). Besides, while the EU continued to be high on rhetoric (such as its bold Council Conclusions of 2009 on the Middle East Peace), Hollis (2011: 43) notes that "the EU has essentially deferred to the United States when it comes to policy implementation". One key element in the relationship was the Hamas victory in Gaza in 2006 and its seizure of the Strip in 2007, which made EU coordination with the USA a must. Meanwhile US bias towards Israel continued, as especially highlighted in Israel's frequent attacks on Gaza, which were repeatedly justified by Washington as Israel's "right to defend itself" (White House 2010, Obama 2012 and 2014c).

US and European coordination thus continues, as EU engagement with the Palestinians in the West Bank has been generally in line with US policy. In fact, after 15 years of the Quartet, the EU now is largely seen as an "ineffectual actor" (Bouris and Brown 2016). The EU continues however to rhetorically condemn the Israeli blockade on Gaza, but in fact through its generous aid to Fatah and its suspension of the EUBAM-Rafah it has indirectly allowed the Israelis to impose a blockade on the Strip. Further, continued Quartet calls for the Israelis and Palestinians to return to the negotiation table (see Middle East Quartet 2016) ignore the power imbalance between these parties, and the advances Israel has been steadily making into the occupied Palestinian territories (Bouris and Brown 2016). EU actions against Israel remain symbolic rather than practically influential, such as its "Interpretative Notice" in November 2015 to label goods imported from Israeli settlements (European Commission 2015). Such decision was met by Israeli suspension of contacts with EU bodies involved with peace efforts with the Palestinians, tempered by confirmation that Israeli ties with almost all European members remain strong (Euractiv 2016). On its side, the Obama administration's rhetorical reference to the Israeli settlements as "counterproductive" and its stress on "the two-states solution" have not been reflected in any practical policy terms.

#### 2.1.4 ENERGY SECURITY: COORDINATION AMONG ALLIES

As indicated earlier, securing access to oil and its "steady flow" (Haass 2002) has been historically regarded as one key element shaping US policy in the Mediterranean. As G. W. Bush (2006a) noted, "America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world".

Yet, US policy during the past two decades has concentrated on lessening American dependence on Middle Eastern oil. G. W. Bush (2006a) described this as "another great goal: to replace more than 75 percent of our oil imports from the Middle East by 2025". Indeed, statistics show that in 2015, 43.1 percent of US imports came from Canada, which replaced

Saudi Arabia as the first oil supplier to the USA (Rapier 2016). Saudi Arabia moved to the second position, accounting for only 14.3 percent of US oil imports in 2015. Then came, in descending percentages, Venezuela, Mexico, Columbia, Iraq, Ecuador, Kuwait, Brazil and Angola (Rapier 2016). This implies that US attention to energy issues in the Mediterranean has been triggered by other motives. These include:

First, securing investment contracts for American oil companies and boosting trade volumes. It is notable here how the G. W. Bush administration signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Algeria in July 2001, whereby US companies emerged as the largest investor in the Algerian oil sector and bilateral trade volume was doubled in one decade (Zoubir 2010: 12). Also, US company Noble Energy is a main investor in East Mediterranean gas discoveries in both Israel and Cyprus (Ratner 2016), while "new opportunities for United States investment in Greece" have been created (Kerry 2015).

Second, securing European access to energy and promoting regional stability. US practices in the Mediterranean during the last decade have been converging with European energy security, since the EU remains largely dependent on energy sources from the Middle East, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. This is demonstrated for instance by US support for the implementation of the Greece–Azerbaijan memorandum of understanding on energy in 2009, through which "Azerbaijan has plenty of gas to realize the Turkey, Greece, Italy pipeline" (Bryza 2008b). Further, the transatlantic Energy Council, established in 2009, introduced a joint forum for coordinating US and European energy policies (Boening 2011: 5). Later, with the boom in East Mediterranean gas discoveries, the Obama administration saw an opportunity to lessen European dependence on Russian energy sources. Besides, such discoveries have important implications for US policy in maintaining regional stability in both the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean (Henderson 2012). This is due to the several forms of both rivalry and cooperation which these discoveries have provoked (Karagiannis 2016).

## 2.2 DEMOCRACY

### 2.2.1 THE PRIORITY OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Both the US and Europe elaborated on democracy promotion initiatives and programmes in MENA, but the EU had started these programmes even before 2001. American democratization initiatives between 2002 and 2006 (MEPI and BMENA) were stimulated by the context of the US war on terrorism and the upsurge in Islamic fundamentalism. As G. W. Bush (2003a) noted in his introduction of America's "new policy" and "forward strategy for freedom" in the Middle East, "as long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export". Therefore, and as many scholars have correctly argued, the G. W. Bush administration dealt with democratization as a mere "counter-terrorism" strategy (Windsor 2003, Youngs and Wittes 2009). Besides, the objective of democracy promotion in MENA appeared to serve Washington's prime goal in the Middle East, which is the security of Israel. G. W. Bush (2005) bluntly noted, "If you're a supporter of Israel, I would strongly urge you to help other countries become democracies. Israel's long-term survival depends upon the spread of democracy in the Middle East". Middle Eastern democratization has thus been regarded as a security issue, and handled as a precondition for US safety and Israeli survival, as "the advance of freedom and peace in the Middle East would [...] increase our own security" (Bush 2003b). This conception omits the fact that many



autocratic regimes in the Middle East, such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, have pursued peaceful relations with Israel and have been frequently praised by Washington for their role in regional stability. This was also clear in various US administrations' reference to these three states before 2011 as "moderate".

While the issue of democracy promotion in MENA has been the subject of some discord between Americans and Europeans as a result of G. W. Bush's experience in Iraq, the US perspective converges to a certain degree with Europe's neo-functional approaches to democratization in the Southern Mediterranean, which have had a security function in providing for a more stable and prosperous "neighbourhood" (Youngs 2003, Youngs and Wittes 2009: 94). This convergence served to trigger transatlantic cooperation in formulation of the 2004 BMENA initiative. Notably, a key similarity in American and European handling of the democratization priority has been "inconsistency" (Dalacoura 2005: 972, Youngs and Wittes 2009: 94). This is because, for the EU as for the USA, democratization has often been in conflict with the priority to secure short-term interests, which were better served through cooperation with undemocratic regimes. The scope of the area in which democracy promotion should be pursued has been a main source of divergence, with the USA attempting to broaden MENA to include countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, reflecting the fact that the Middle East and its eastern flank have been the main target for US democratization efforts.

With the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, the priority to respond positively to political reforms was an equal urgency in both the USA and Europe. This was apparent in both actors' discourses on how the uprisings represented an "opportunity", a special "moment in history", and accordingly the reference to the "legitimate aspirations" of the peoples (Obama 2011a, Ashton 2011a and 2011b). This however did not last long, since the uprisings' security ramifications necessitated a reprioritization of stabilization and security concerns. This was evident in the case of the USA with the increased concern over the ISIS threat and the spread of terrorist organizations and armed conflicts in the Mediterranean. The US role as a security actor, whether through diplomatic or military responses, was thus most evident in cases of traditional strategic importance, primarily the Levant and the Gulf.

The same applies to the Europeans, who suffered from the growing influx of migrants and refugees, especially with the increasing complication of the Syrian conflict. The spread of terrorism activities in European cities and the emergence of many fragile states in the Neighbourhood enhanced Europeans' perception of being surrounded by "a ring of fire" rather than a "ring of friends", as described by former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt (2015). Such spill-over in security concerns presented serious challenges to US democracy assistance programmes in MENA considering the short-term need to coordinate policies with friend regimes in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and others in counter-terrorism efforts (Chivvis and Fishman 2017). Therefore, the repeated stress on the priority of "stabilization" was again in the forefront in relations with the Southern partners, as demonstrated in the latest version of the ENP (European Commission and High Representative 2015c).

### 2.2.2 SELECTIVE DEMOCRATIZATION

Selective democratization has been a main feature of US democratization efforts in the Mediterranean. In Arab MENA, as Perthes (2004: 87) correctly notes, Washington "tends to cite the democratic deficits of governments that oppose Western interests in the region



and threaten them with punitive measures". Such was the case with Iraq, where the goal of democratization was brought into the US discourse to legitimize the invasion (Perlini 2015: 16-17). This tendency to overlook democratization with friend regimes and stress it against hostile ones is in fact confirmed by the director of policy planning at the US Department of State 2001–2003, Richard Haass (2002), who notes that Washington "has avoided scrutinizing the internal workings of countries in the interest of ensuring a steady flow of oil; containing Soviet, Iraqi, and Iranian expansionism; addressing issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict; resisting communism in East Asia; or securing basing rights for [the US] military."

This explains why America's Middle Eastern friend autocracies were repeatedly praised. For instance, G. W. Bush (2006a) referred to Egypt's presidential elections in 2006 by saying that "the great people of Egypt have voted in a multi-party presidential election"; he mentioned that "Saudi Arabia has taken the first steps of reform"; and even in the case of fragmented Iraq he noted that "brutality has not stopped the dramatic progress of a new democracy". Also, the G. W. Bush administration rebuked only hostile regimes for their lack of freedom or democratization. On top of the list Syria was criticized for its "authoritarian rule", and Iran and Hezbollah as "committed enemies" to freedom (Cheney 2005). While the EU was not practicing an exclusionist policy towards problematic partners, such as Syria and Iran, it too failed to criticize its Southern partners for their limited democratization record. Many scholars note for instance how the EU has expanded its ENP agreements, economic partnerships or even aid to autocratic partners in MENA (such as Egypt, Algeria and Morocco) despite their notable repressive practices (Youngs and Wittes 2009: 99-102). Also, how the EU endorsed the more technically framed initiative of the UfM to escape democratization after Islamists have made political gains in democratic processes in Egypt, Gaza and Lebanon, which according to Tocci and Cassarino (2011: 6) indicated an embrace of the "comfortable notion of cooperation with authoritarian (but pro-Western) regimes".

With respect to other Mediterranean sub-areas, the USA has not been giving high attention to democratization in the Adriatic/Western Balkans, Turkey or Israel. Table 2 (see Annex) shows that US allocations for democracy and governance (DG) to these countries during 2001–2015 are significantly modest (or non-existent) compared to those of the EU. While both Washington and Brussels injected assistance funds into the Western Balkans, the EU was more involved, which seems logical due to European expansion dynamics and geographical proximity (Pinna 2013: 187, Bugajski 2013: 113). Apart from funding, Washington was additionally criticized for overlooking undemocratic practices and human rights violations in friend regimes in the Balkans (Western 2004: 237). The same goes for both Turkey and Israel, since no criticism has been expressed with regard to how Kurdish or Arab minorities were treated in these two countries (Perthes 2004). Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that the USA has allocated minor DG funds for both Turkey and Israel, while huge funds were allocated to Israel specifically as military aid. At the same time, Table 1 shows that while the USA allocated more funds to Turkey as economic aid, these funds were quite modest compared to the allocations of the EU in the same period.

This selective democratization did not change much after the Arab uprisings in 2011. To start with, the USA did not immediately side with the uprisings' call for regime change, especially in strategically important countries. For instance, in the first few days of the Egyptian uprising, the then Secretary of State Clinton (Clinton 2011c and 2014: 283) stressed that "the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests

of the Egyptian people". Later, Washington repeatedly stressed the importance of an "orderly transition" (Obama 2011b, Clinton 2011b), which after Mubarak stepped down was in the hands of the military institution. This is because Washington was mostly concerned with the future of the peace treaty with Israel in the aftermath of Mubarak. As Secretary Clinton (2011a) clarified, "we care deeply that what comes next in Egypt respects international agreements, including the peace treaty with Israel". As for the response of the EU, it is interesting to see how the EU was in favour of introducing "reforms" and did not utterly turn to support the Egyptian transition until Obama made his bold announcement that Egypt's transition "must begin now" (Obama 2011b, European Commission 2011).

Another aspect of selective democratization regards how some uprisings (such as those in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria) received high attention in Western discourses on transformation, while other countries (such as Morocco and Algeria) were rapidly commended for the minor reforms they introduced. The US Department of State (2011) praised the "significant achievements" introduced by King Mohamed VI in all "economic, social and political realms". Similar reactions were produced in Europe, especially from France (Mikail 2011), noting also the increasing importance of Algeria and Morocco in terms of energy security after the disruption in gas transfers from Libya in 2011 (Lochner and Dieckhöner 2011). Apart from the Mediterranean, the case of Bahrain in the Gulf provides another notable example of how both the USA and Europe maintained a bizarre silence, which could be explained only by strategic and security apprehensions. This was clear when Obama (2011a) noted that Bahrain is a "longstanding partner, and we are committed to its security", and stressed that Washington "recogniz[es] that Iran has tried to take advantage of the turmoil there".

### 2.2.3 APPROACHES TO DEMOCRATIZATION

Regarding US and European approaches to democratization, many similarities can be mentioned. A notable first one is the deepening gap between strong rhetoric and timid policy practices. This can be seen in both US and EU democracy promotion efforts. Both actors have stressed the principle of "conditionality", for instance, though it has almost never been applied.

A second similarity is that both actors have allocated funds to similar activities under the sectors of democracy, rule of law, and governance (Dalacoura 2005: 966). In such sectors, there is a notable similarity in the type of projects funded by both actors (such as decentralization projects and legal/judicial programmes). Perhaps in the case of the USA, an additional sector was believed important for democratization. This was the International Military Education and Training (IMET), which is listed under "military aid". According to the State Department (2008), IMET not only serves bilateral security cooperation, it has also "proven to provide U.S. access and influence in a critical sector of society that often plays a pivotal role in supporting, or transitioning to, democratic governments".

A third similarity is the modest funding that both the USA and the EU have allocated to DG projects, especially when these allocations are compared to total allocations of economic assistance funds both pre- and post-2011 (see Table 2 in the Annex). It is striking to see for instance that before 2011, the MEPI budget for all political, economic, education and women empowerment activities from 2002–2004 was only 264 million dollars, of which it spent only 103 million dollars (Perlini 2015: 16). This figure appears ridiculously low when compared with the over 806 billion dollars the USA spent in invading Iraq (Perlini 2015: 16–17).

This pattern of aid allocation poses many questions regarding the consistency of both actors' discourses on democratization and transformation, especially post-2011. Table 2 shows that American DG allocations post-2011 experienced a marginal increase compared to DG allocations pre-2011.<sup>3</sup> This marginal increase appears in almost all Arab MENA countries, with Tunisia being the exception. This tendency resembles that of the EU, whose DG allocations post-2011 increased only marginally compared to pre-2011 in almost all Arab MENA countries.<sup>4</sup> However, there is a divergence between US and EU aid when the percentage (rather than absolute figures) of DG is calculated from total economic aid. Table 2 shows that DG percentage of total aid has declined in the case of EU funding to Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and even Turkey. By contrast, DG percentage of total aid has increased slightly in the case of USA funding to Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine and Turkey; while it has decreased in Algeria, Jordan and Lebanon. This implies that greater emphasis was placed on economic projects, and hence stabilization, than on democratic transformation.

A fourth similarity is the top-down approach to democratization that both actors have embraced. Before 2011, Huber (2008: 48-49) notes that the bulk of MEPI funds went to Arab governments. Similarly, the bulk of EU funding, channelled through the ENP Instrument (ENPI) used to go to governments; and funding channelled through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) has been repeatedly criticized for its modest amounts (Ziadeh 2009: 4-5, Van Hüllen 2012: 122-124). As for civil society support, beyond criticism of Western actors' poor conception of what civil society is composed of in Arab countries, several scholars have highlighted how US and EU funding has generally been allocated to quasi-governmental civil society organizations (CSOs) or to political parties of a non-Islamist orientation (Durac 2015, Tocci and Cassarino 2011: 5, Teti 2012: 274, Youngs 2003: 423, Hamid 2010). After 2011, both the USA and the EU elaborated on initiatives to fund and reach various kinds of CSOs. In 2013, Obama stressed making "outreach to civil society a cornerstone of [US] foreign policy", and declared that Washington would invest 500 million dollars "to strengthen the work of CSOs across development sectors and defend CSOs under threat" (White House 2013). In 2014, a presidential memorandum was issued to direct US agencies worldwide to take additional steps to engage CSOs, such as "community groups, non-governmental organizations, labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations" (White House 2014). Yet it is still noted that the bulk of US CSO funding goes to professional and registered NGOs (Stephan et al. 2015: 5). This is justified in part by the numerous technical and political problems US agencies, as the USAID, have had to grapple with (Stephan et al. 2015: 7). With all the rhetoric on the need to revisit this top-down approach to democratization, Figure 2 (see Annex) shows that the bulk of US DG aid allocation in the Mediterranean still goes to governmental institutions.

As for the EU, two mechanisms were introduced to provide for a "deeper" civil society engagement. One is the Civil Society Facility (CSF), which was established in 2008 to sustain both national and multi-beneficiary initiatives, and the second was the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). According to the European Commission (2016), for the period 2011-2012,

3 The period covered before 2011 is 10 years, while the period after 2011 is only 5 years.

4 The EU had already allocated funds for the Southern Mediterranean earlier, as the first ENP plan covered the years from 2007 to end of 2013. Yet, the figures in Table 2 include also additional funding provided under the 2011-introduced SPRING programme.

the CSF has a budget of 40 million euros for both Eastern and Southern partners. The EED, meanwhile, started functioning only in September 2013, while earlier it existed solely as a legal entity (Dennison 2013: 124). The EED is largely dependent on Member State funding, as it received 6 million euros in 2012 as kick-off funding from the European Commission and then secured small donations from some Member States (such as Germany and Spain) (Youngs 2015). Also, the focus of the EED seems to be in the East, as its activities have been directed to Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Tunisia, Egypt and Moldova in descending order (Youngs 2015).

Finally, a notable similarity between US and European approaches to democratization in MENA post-2011 appears in the remarkable opening-up to political Islamist forces, or what is called the "religious turn" by Wolff (2015: 1). On the US side, this tendency was initially introduced a decade earlier by prominent think-tanks (such as the RAND corporation), which emphasized the future necessity for Washington to open channels of communications with what it labelled "moderate Muslims" or "civil democratic Islam" (Benard 2003, Rabasa et al. 2007). This was mainly out of the conviction that Islamists are the "most popular and organized" among all opposition groups in the region (Stacher and Shehata 2007). Thus, the US turn to support and encourage the wide acceptance of Islamists in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings could be best explained from the logic of bandwagoning, whereby the West was conceivably inspired towards possible replications of the "Turkish example" (Bush 2004, Tocci 2011b, Kirişçi 2013). This endorsement of "moderate" Islamists was apparent in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, where also the EU crafted two special "task forces" to support the governments formed by the (ruling) Muslim Brotherhood and the (rising) Ennahdha Party (European Council 2012). This was ironically at the same time as the European Parliament (2013) challenged the Commission by approving a resolution that threatened to withhold direct financial support to Egypt if the Brotherhood government failed to demonstrate progress in democratization and human rights. The point here is that in backing the rise of political Islamists post-2011 (although such forces were not the protagonists for change during the uprisings nor the committed agents for democratization after assuming power), both the US and the EU exhibited a rather narrow pragmatic pursuit of stabilization.

## 2.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Since 2001, the USA has been rhetorically emphasizing the importance of economic development in the Mediterranean. The G. W. Bush administration perceived such development as necessary to the region's peace and stability, which is also similar to European approaches to economic development in the Mediterranean. As highlighted by Powell (2003), "We want peace in the region, but with peace you need economic development or the people will not benefit from that peace".

Notwithstanding this rhetorical attention to economic development, US economic aid to Mediterranean countries is modest compared to its own military aid in the region or to EU economic assistance funds<sup>5</sup> (see Table 1 in the Annex). Besides, Washington's strategic interests have been clearly reflected in its allocation of economic aid. Table 2 demonstrates that 77.4 percent of total US economic aid in the entire Mediterranean has been allocated to

<sup>5</sup> Not including economic assistance funds of Member States, which are even higher than total aid allocated collectively under EU institutions.

countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, in descending order: Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey. The EU has thus a comparative advantage as the number one donor in the Mediterranean's economic development, noting also that EU funds target all parts of the Mediterranean, from the Maghreb to the Mashreq to the Western Balkans. Table 2 shows that top recipients of EU funds are Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey and Serbia.

A further inquiry has to do with the type of economic sectors/projects that the US and EU have funded in the Mediterranean. In the G. W. Bush administration's conception, economic development was perceived possible through boosting trade and investing in human capital through education. This was emphasized in the administration's elaboration on the MEPI, in which Bush expressed that "progress will require increased trade, the engine of economic development", specifying that he expected "the establishment of a U.S.-Middle East free trade area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity" (Bush 2003b). As for education, Powell (2003) asserted that "to get economic development you also need investment in the human capital". Such investment was meant to ensure that "young people are getting the kind of education that gives them the skills they need in a twenty-first century economy" (Powell 2003). This tendency of concentrating on trade and education continued under Obama, who emphasized in Cairo that "education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century, and in too many Muslim communities, there remains underinvestment in these areas" (Obama 2009c). This explains why the sector of "education" has been allocated considerable US funds in the entire Mediterranean area, reaching a total of 1,110.5 million dollars from 2001–2010 and 741.9 million dollars from 2011–2015. The bulk of these education funds (72.4 percent) went only to Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, in descending order (USAID 2017).

As for trade, there is a considerable similarity between EU and US views on how boosting trade could contribute to the economic welfare of the region as well as sustaining its political reform efforts (Al Khouri 2008: 3). Yet, it could be also argued that the US goal to boost its trade in the Mediterranean implies a rather competitive role with the EU, since the Barcelona Process elaborated on an FTA project in the Mediterranean to be realized by 2010, even if later stagnating. However, trade statistics in 2010–2015 do not show an advancement of the USA as a trade partner compared to the EU. In 2010, the EU was the first trade partner to Mediterranean countries, accounting for approximately 40 percent of the region's total trade, while the USA came in the second position with 9.5 percent (Tankosić et al. 2013: 224). In 2012 and 2015, trade statistics continue to exhibit almost the same pattern, as shown in Table 3 (see Annex). This means that US trade leverage in the Mediterranean is far less than that of the EU, even losing in 2015 the second position in Mediterranean trade to China.

Besides trade and education, Washington also stressed the importance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the economic development of the Mediterranean. According to Kerry (2016), "In the Mediterranean [...] if our goal is to reduce poverty, expand the middle class, and help families live a better life for themselves, then the answer is pretty simple: You've got to innovate. And that means doing more to help small businesses get started."

This statement does not reflect a solid US tendency in funding SMEs in the Mediterranean, since the total sum of US funding for SMEs in the entire Mediterranean basin was only 108 million dollars in 2001–2010, and 57.24 million dollars in 2011–2015. This contrasts significantly with the attention EU institutions have been giving to this same area in the Mediterranean's



economic development, since the EU allocated around 387.36 million dollars to SMEs in the Mediterranean basin in 2001–2010, and increased its allocations to this sector to reach 484.31 million dollars in 2011–2015 (OECD 2017).

Finally, it is interesting to see how the percentage of US funds allocated to the four sectors of agriculture, water, energy and industry in the Mediterranean do not represent a significant share in the total economic aid figure.<sup>6</sup> This applies to all parts of the Mediterranean. Table 4 (see Annex) shows that agricultural projects have received considerable US funds only in Morocco, and even there mostly in 2001–2010. This is not the case in other basically agricultural countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia. Likewise, water projects have received considerable US funds in the two cases of Palestine and Jordan only, while the energy sector has received considerable US funds in the case of Egypt, but only before 2011. When comparing US and EU contributions to these four sectors (see Figure 3 in the Annex), it becomes also clear that such sectors combined represent only 8 percent and 21 percent of total US and EU economic aid in 2001–2015 in the Mediterranean, respectively. This poses further questions on the targeted economic development sectors for US and EU aid allocation. An examination of US economic aid allocations in the Mediterranean shows that the USA has been allocating funds to a wide variety of sectors, with no single sector receiving the bulk of aid. These sectors include: trade policy and regulations, banking and financial services, business services, infrastructure projects (such as transportation, storage and communications), humanitarian assistance (particularly in cases of emergency response to refugees and emigrants), disaster prevention and preparedness, health and population, and commodity assistance. Besides, more than 2 percent of US economic assistance funds were spent in administrative costs of donor agencies themselves, which is higher than what the USA has been spending on industry and energy in the Mediterranean as a whole.

## CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis shows that US geopolitical construction of the Mediterranean since 2001 has continued to emphasize the importance of the Sea itself for military pre-positioning and as a crucial line of communication with near areas. These not only include Mediterranean sub-regions, be it North Africa, the Middle East, the Aegean, the Adriatic or even European allies, but also as a step to strategically important areas such as the Gulf, the greater Middle East and the Black Sea. In line with such emphasis, the USA has continued to represent itself as the chief military power, security actor and political stockbroker in the Mediterranean, engaging principally in high politics and hard security issues. These roles have been largely supported by the level of US military deployment in the Mediterranean and its near lands; disbursements of military aid to almost all Mediterranean countries; as well as its demonstrated readiness to engage both politically and militarily in the area's affairs. Such level of deployment, engagement, preparedness and leverage is not matched by any indigenous or external power. In this respect, American conception of the Mediterranean is broader than that of the EU, which principally considers its near neighbourhood and emphasizes its economic and non-military leverage there.

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6 Support funds to SMEs is included under the industry sector.



With profound transatlantic bonds in mind, such diverse representations suggest complementarity in US and EU roles in the Mediterranean, especially when transatlantic venues of coordination in the Mediterranean are taken into consideration and cast against the material and ideational representations of other protagonists from rising world and regional powers. Such profound bonds and general tendency of coordination are expected to continue under the Trump administration, notwithstanding the initial tension that ensued during his first few months in office. Take for instance the examples of the Proliferation Security Initiative and Operation Active Endeavour in 2003; the creation of the Transatlantic Energy Council in 2009; US crucial contribution to Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011; the participation of the US Sixth Fleet in the EU-NAV-FOR Mediterranean in 2015–2016; and complementary American and European roles in confronting the threat of ISIS as well as the military counterbalancing of Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean.

From an American perspective, the EU's neo-functional approaches to the Mediterranean are favourable as they represent the non-military tools necessary for tackling the numerous soft security threats. European economic assistance funds in the Mediterranean therefore complement the reliance of the USA on material power. In the same vein, the heavy US military presence and political leverage in the region generally compensates for European military deficiencies and lack of strong political leverage. This prevailing complementarity is evident notwithstanding US unilateralism and inclination to use military power or coercive actions, which contrasts with European inclination to multilateralism and political dialogue with problematic partners in the Mediterranean and beyond.

Nevertheless, and in terms of policy practices, the analysis demonstrates an obvious divergence in the priorities that the US and the EU assign to various Mediterranean sub-regions and affairs. US interests and practices have targeted the Eastern Mediterranean in specific for its conventional link to strategic and hard security affairs. Even US efforts in democracy promotion and economic development are politicized, since they are concentrated in the Eastern rim and beyond. In contrast with this US swing to the east is the EU's concentration on all the Mediterranean sub-regions, which together constitute its "neighbourhood". Part of this neighbourhood, the Western Balkans, is further dealt with in light of its accession prospects, while other parts are considered in light of their progressively growing political, economic, social, demographic and security interdependence with Europe itself.

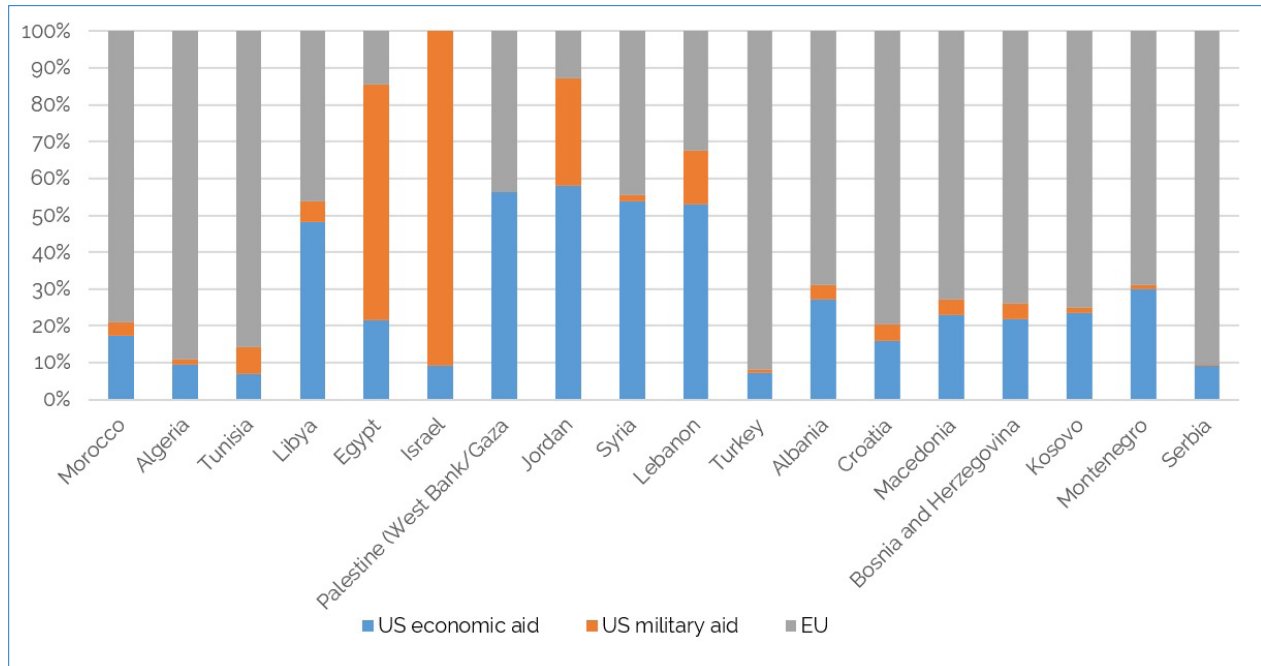
Apart from such divergence in priorities, the analysis finds a remarkable similarity and complementarity in US and EU approaches and policy to rising security threats, democracy and governance efforts, and economic development projects in the Mediterranean. Still, such complementarity in policy practices suggests a traditional comparative advantage for the USA in security issues against a growing advantage for the EU in economic development and governance issues, even if both actors have dealt with democratization and political reform from a security lens. Hence, both actors' policies do not appear conflictive or ineffective in their separate but consistent pursuit of what both have perceived as essentially "shared interests". This is demonstrated in all policy areas, ranging from ensuring security and promoting democracy to sustaining economic development. Such consistency is even evident in the inconsistency shown by both actors: in their securitization of WMD (as while Americans and Europeans securitized the issue of WMD proliferation in several MENA countries, the same issue was de-securitized in relations with Israel); in their securitization of energy issues, particularly

in the Eastern Mediterranean; in their politicization of democracy promotion (which has been highly selective since 2001 and until present times for political and security concerns; and characterized by high rhetoric more than policy practices, modest funding as well as marginal increase in funding post-2011, and an overwhelmingly top-down approach); and finally, both actors appear to have politicized economic development in the Mediterranean for the sake of stabilization.

It is essential to note that both the US and EU have neglected other key policy priorities for the region, notably energy, industry, water, agriculture, and other vital areas for sustainable economic development. Such tendency is expected to strengthen in the years to come, especially under the Trump administration which came to powerfully prioritize the region's security and stabilization in hard/traditional security terms.

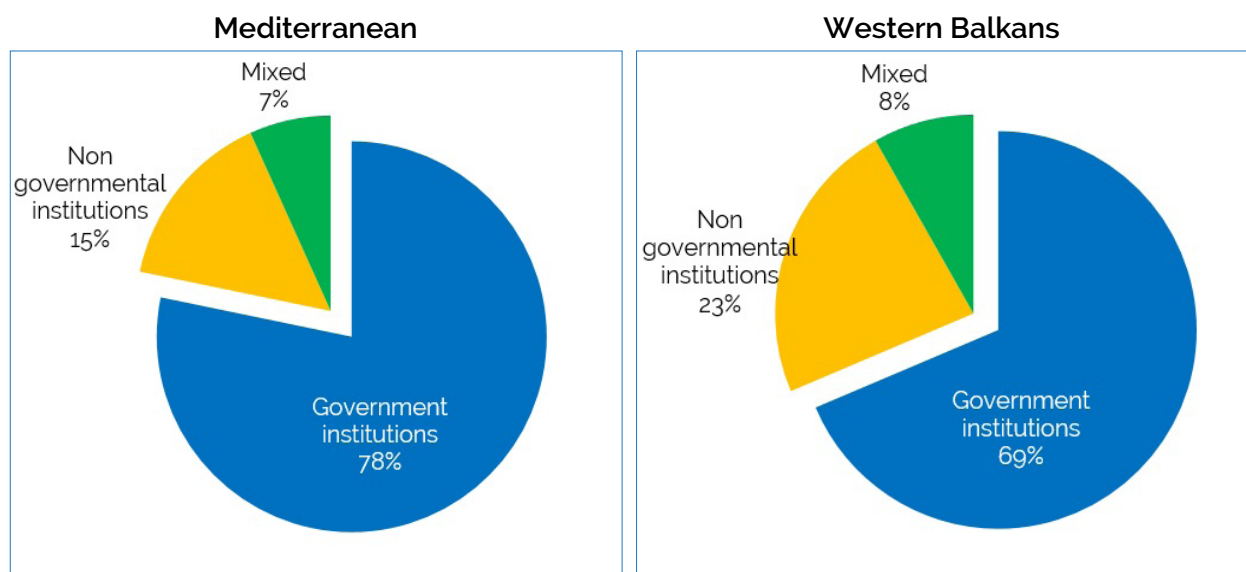
## ANNEX

**Figure 1 | US and EU aid percentages to the Mediterranean and Western Balkans (2001-2015)**



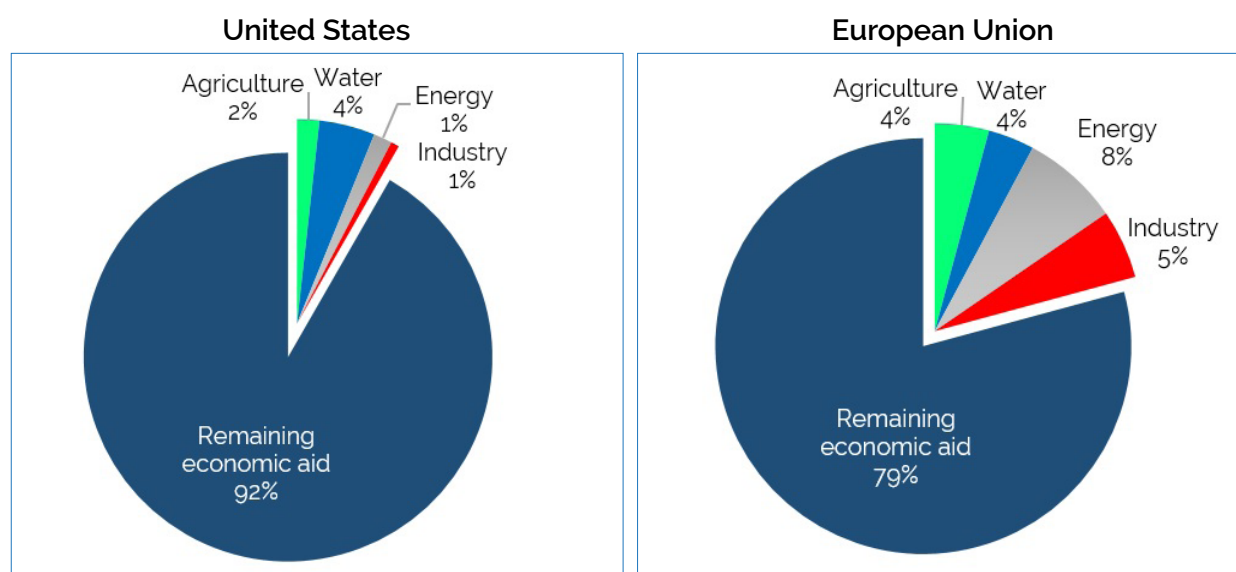
Sources: USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants* (Greenbook), 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2016; OECD, *Query Wizard for International Development Statistics* (QWIDS).

**Figure 2 | US democracy and governance (DG) aid according to receiving institutions (2011–2015)**



Source: USAID, *Foreign Aid Explorer*.

**Figure 3 | US and EU agriculture, water, energy and industry aid commitment to the Mediterranean and Western Balkans (2001–2015)**



Source: USAID, *Foreign Aid Explorer*.

Source: OECD, *QWIDS*.

Note: Figures do not include EU aid to Israel and Croatia (after 2011).

**Table 1 | US and EU aid commitments to the Mediterranean and Western Balkans (2001–2015), in million dollars**

	United States				European Union	
	Economic aid		Military aid			
	2001-2010	2011-2015	2001-2010	2011-2015	2001-2010	2011-2015
<b>Mediterranean</b>						
Morocco	1,010.7	202.6	129.2	129.8	1,979.24	3,532.92
Algeria	60.4	60.1	6.6	8.1	737.4	385.41
Tunisia	4.3	294.9	117.2	200.9	963.88	2,787.28
Libya	73.6	237.8	0.5	35.9	33.58	264.51
Egypt	5,053.6	1,064.6	12,961	5,144.7	1,597.53	2,477.06
Israel	3,768.7	1,10.1	21,686.3	15,356.1	N/A	N/A
Palestine	3,867	2,997.1	---	0.6	3,280.8	2,032.49
Jordan	4,531.3	4,107.3	2,572.9	1,788.2	780.64	1,114.46
Syria	96.9	2,541.2	---	93.7	406.32	1,773.89
Lebanon	1,043.5	1,244	115.6	508.7	669.72	728.15
Turkey	1,312.9	320	204.9	33.3	4,845.51	1,6107.69
<b>Western Balkans</b>						
Albania	428.7	131.8	55.2	21.8	740.58	680.32
Croatia	257	10.5	30.7	46	1,348.74	N/A
Macedonia	431.4	129.9	78.5	26.8	774.17	1,018.88
Bosnia-Herzeg.	598.7	231.1	136.4	27.1	1,121.6	1,684
Kosovo	266.2	294.8	5.51	23.4	533.1	1,254.13
Montenegro	283.3	22.5	2.5	9.2	191.51	508.76
Serbia	726.68	166.2	3.3	14.1	4,265.82	4,420.38

Sources: US data: USAID, *Greenbook*, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2016. EU data (in current prices): OECD, *QWIDS*.

**Table 2 | US and EU democracy and governance (DG) aid commitments to the Mediterranean and Western Balkans (2001–2015), in million dollars**

	United States				European Union			
	DG aid	DG % of total aid	DG aid	DG % of total aid	DG aid	DG % of total aid	DG aid	DG % of total aid
	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15
<b>Mediterranean</b>								
Morocco	58.34	5.77	60.864	30.04	456.38	23.05	306.92	8.69
Algeria	9.34	15.47	7.934	13.2	177.83	24.11	94.03	24.4
Tunisia	2.38	55.33	185.341	62.85	115.4	11.97	152.11	5.46
Libya	1.3	1.76	21.254	8.94	---	0	46.65	17.64
Egypt	294.81	5.83	146.609	13.77	130.76	8.18	130.9	5.28
Israel	5.92	0.16	0.142	0.13	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Palestine	532.63	13.77	619.332	20.66	216.63	6.6	164.17	8.08
Jordan	187.92	4.15	148.709	3.62	196.97	25.23	217.26	19.5
Syria	8.62	8.9	17.51	0.69	91.81	22.59	0	0
Lebanon	333.76	31.98	151.418	12.17	122.16	18.24	111.86	15.36
Turkey	19.05	1.45	12.663	3.96	1,610.33	33.23	1,404.49	8.72
<b>Western Balkans</b>								
Albania	98.44	22.96	60.55	45.94	292.69	39.52	268.75	39.5
Croatia	53.1	20.66	-0.044	-0.42	345.25	25.59	N/A	N/A
Macedonia	113.09	26.22	45.026	34.66	222.3	28.71	171.17	16.8
Bosnia-Herz.	174.99	29.23	114.247	49.44	474.76	42.32	264.82	15.73
Kosovo	94.53	35.51	134.461	45.61	350.02	65.65	909.08	72.49
Montenegro	111.26	39.27	15.779	70.13	59.57	31.1	82.98	16.31
Serbia	375.57	51.68	81.946	49.31	1,385.82	32.48	412.94	9.34

Sources: US aid data: USAID, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants* (Greenbook), 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2016. EU aid data (in current prices): OECD, *Query Wizard for International Development Statistics*.

**Table 3 | Top trade partners of Mediterranean countries, 2012–2015, in million euros**

	Imports				Exports				Total trade			
	Rank	Partner	Value	% World	Rank	Partner	Value	% World	Rank	Partner	Value	% World
2012	1st	EU-28	182,468	41	1st	EU-28	116,702	42.3	1st	EU-28	299,169	41.5
	3rd	USA	30,588	6.9	2nd	USA	30,053	10.9	2nd	USA	60,641	8.4
2015	1st	EU-28	182,881	41	1st	EU-28	124,182	45.4	1st	EU-28	307,063	42.7
	3rd	USA	28,352	6.4	2nd	USA	27,758	10.2	3rd	USA	56,11	7.8

Source: European Commission DG Trade (2013: 10, 2016).

Note: Mediterranean countries includes Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Montenegro, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

**Table 4 |** US agriculture, water, energy and industry aid obligations to the Mediterranean and Western Balkans (2001–2015), in millions dollars

	Agriculture		Water		Energy		Industry		Total economic aid	
	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15	2001-10	2011-15
<b>Mediterranean</b>										
Morocco	427.15	20.478	9.84	0.47	4.005	10.499	80.54	-26.69	1,010.7	202.6
Algeria	---	---	0.46	0.03	0.88	0.867	0.65	---	60.4	60.1
Tunisia	0.22	0.55	---	---	0.074	2.353	---	---	4.3	294.9
Libya	---	---	---	---	38.267	2.4	---	---	73.6	237.8
Egypt	67.4	20.28	56.15	36.45	310.43	5.621	20.70	19.729	5,053.6	1,064.6
Israel	3.75	---	---	---	0.52	1.5	11.69	-0.65	3,768.7	1,10.1
Palestine	19	9.55	331.05	211.411	0.488	0.009	55.03	3.6	3,867	2,997.1
Jordan	2.28	0.62	531.13	410.77	5.311	76.915	0.33	1.62	4,531.3	4,107.3
Syria	---	---	---	---	---	0.006	---	---	96.9	2,541.2
Lebanon	11.35	29.39	20.85	60.87	0.805	5.465	13.55	22.52	1,043.5	1,244
Turkey	0.49	0.023	0.45	---	12.422	18.537	0.84	0.057	1,312.9	320
<b>Western Balkans</b>										
Albania	7.59	-0.002	---	---	11.358	2.076	1.15	---	428.70	131.8
Croatia	1.36	0.005	0.11	---	4.116	3.604	0.49	---	257.00	10.5
Macedonia	1.36	---	0.04	---	2.9	3.448	2.12	6.01	431.40	129.9
Bosnia-Herz.	5.48	8.46	---	---	1.919	0.353	8.54	4.09	598.70	231.1
Kosovo	0.068	1.5	---	2.35	---	8.356	1.9	---	266.20	294.8
Montenegro	0.4	---	0.49	---	0.278	0.768	1.423	---	283.30	22.5
Serbia	23.13	4.77	---	---	16.697	2.94	18.924	-0.4	726.68	166.2

Sources: US agriculture, water, energy and industry aid data: USAID, *Foreign Aid Explorer*; US total economic aid data: USAID, *Greenbook*, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2016.

Notes: (1) Agriculture sector consists of: agriculture, fishing and forestry sector includes various subsectors such as agricultural policy & administrative management, agricultural development, agricultural land resources, agricultural water resources, agricultural extension, agricultural education/training, agricultural research, agricultural financial services, agricultural co-operatives, fishery development, fishery education/training, and fishery research. (2) Water sector consists of: water supply and sanitation. (3) Energy sector consists of 5 subsectors: distribution and efficiency, renewable, non-renewable, nuclear energy electric power plants and heating, cooling and energy distribution. (4) Industry sector includes for example small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) development, cottage industries and handicraft, textiles – leather and substitutes, basic metal industries, and technological research and development.



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# MED RESET

مِد ريسټ



Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)  
Via Angelo Brunetti 9  
I-00186 Roma

Tel. +39-063224360  
Fax +39-063224363

[iai@iai.it](mailto:iai@iai.it) | [www.iai.it](http://www.iai.it)



This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020  
Programme for Research and Innovation under grant agreement no 693055