

EU's Long-Term Stability Strategy for the Middle East

Not only Middle Eastern states, but all other states –particularly the states in this strategic environment– are economically dependent on the region's oil resources. Besides economically guaranteeing the continuous flow of regional oil resources into Europe, the EU's overall strategic political interest is to provide security for itself in the long-term. This could only be realized by pursuing a strategic stability politics with the US; but the EU is trying to do this with the logic of imposing its own "principles" when necessary. Thus, the EU made it clear that the ambitious US initiative called the Greater Middle East project has to be modified multilaterally. This article aims to analyze EU's oil and security interests, with an emphasis on its long-term stability strategy, which the EU tries to realize in close cooperation with the US and consultation with the Middle Eastern countries.

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The NATO Summit meeting in Istanbul on 28-29 June 2004, which is entitled “Projecting Stability,” will be challenged by a rediscovery of the strategic value of a strong NATO-EU partnership on thorny Middle East debates like the so-called Greater Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Mediterranean, and the Israeli-Palestine issue. As Central and Eastern Europe have seemingly become more secure after a turbulent decade in the 1990s, policymakers and strategists began focusing on the longer-term problems of stability and development that are related to more than 20 nations located in an arc reaching from Morocco to Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia and their implications for European security in the 21st Century. The aim is to analyze oil and security interests of the EU states, which are based on two well-known political agenda—one is the historical Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the other is the newly addressed problem of poor governance in the Middle East. These two political agenda will be the hallmarks of devising a long-term stability strategy in this arc by bringing to the table long-standing EU plans like the Barcelona Process and modifying the so-called Greater Middle East project.¹

Firstly, the dependence of all European states on the flow of Middle Eastern oil to the West will be analyzed. Secondly, non-military security strategies of the EU, which tolerates non-democratic political expression in return for oil and stability, began to be seriously questioned after the September 11 terrorist attacks. This will be analyzed with regard to the need for a more pro-active and assertive use of soft-power tools as economics, trade, and politics. Thirdly, the importance of using limited force as a catalyst for achieving economic and political goals on the way to the EU’s long-term security strategy will be evaluated. Fourthly, greater cooperation between institutions like NATO and the EU will be emphasized and the need to fine-tuning the present strategies of the EU and the US in the Middle East will be analyzed. It should be mentioned here that though not all EU members agree about issues raised in this paper, the majority do.

European Dependence on Middle Eastern Oil and Beyond

The overall goal of EU member states with regard to their Middle East strategy has been to prop up the Europeans economic, political and security interests and to defend their policies, which are aimed at securing access to important raw materials (oil and natural gas) in the short-term and promoting regional security in the long-term.

A brief look into the past can teach us a lot about Europe’s dependence on and its vulnerability to Middle Eastern oil. The Arab-Israeli War of October 1973 triggered a reaction from some oil-producing Arab countries that resulted in an oil embargo against a number of Western states. The first impact of this oil embargo was the European Community’s (EC) explicit recognition of the existence of “legitimate Palestinian rights” the following month. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been on the EC’s political agenda ever since. The EC became interested in the resolution of this conflict with the hope of not only bringing stability to the entire region and

¹ Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, “The Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start,” *Policy Brief*, No.29 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2004); Michael Backfisch and Andreas Rinke, “US-Regierung präzisiert Ideen zur Reform des Nahen Ostens,” *Handelsblatt*, 3 May 2004, p.3.

security for itself, but also to improve and maintain the continuous flow of oil and guarantee the safety of oil routes directed to the West.

In view of the fact that the EU is significantly dependent on the global market economy and the global circulation of energy resources, the geographical proximity of the rich oil and natural gas resources of North Africa and the Middle East to Europe will most likely be the most important factor in shaping the geo-strategic political, economic, and security policies of the EU in the near future. The region's geo-strategic importance to the EU can be demonstrated with the following figures: 66 percent of the world's proven oil reserves are in the Persian Gulf and well over 70 percent are in the Middle East. 25 percent of these oil reserves are in Saudi Arabia alone. Therefore, Middle East countries are the principal oil suppliers of increasing Western demand. The US Energy Information Agency estimated that while Persian Gulf producers accounted for more than 45 percent of the worldwide trade in 2002, it would increase gradually to almost 60 percent in 2020.²

Though not as large as its dependence on Persian Gulf oil, the EU has also become increasingly dependent on another alternative energy: North African gas. It is predicted that towards the year 2010 gas will be the fuel of choice as new pipelines are developed. At the present time, most North African gas reaches Europe through two routes, the Trans-Med line that is connected to Italy, and the new Trans-Maghreb pipeline that connects Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, and Germany to Algeria. Europe imports 25 percent of its gas from North Africa, with higher levels of dependence in southern Europe. Spain and Portugal already relies on Algeria for roughly 40 percent of each country's supply.³

Energy is a case where the EU is clearly dependent on North African and Middle Eastern resources. However, there have been significant changes in international relations since September 11 in the world in general and in the policies of the EU towards the Middle East in particular. The war on terrorism, resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the outcome of Iraq will directly influence global energy security. Presently the EU demands democratization of state institutions, liberalization of economic and financial systems, and development of civil society before attaining long-term security and stability in the Middle East. The EU prefers to work with the existing regimes and aims at gradual reform in the Middle Eastern states by means of non-military security strategies rather than making a commitment to forceful strategies that could antagonize the energy rich regimes whose cooperation it seeks. In order to accomplish these goals, the EU authorities have, since the 1970s, pursued an economic interdependence strategy to such a degree that no state in the region would risk good relations with a larger Community.⁴

Non-military Security Strategies of the EU in the Middle East

² Energy Information Agency, *Annual Energy Outlook, 2002*, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/aeo/results.html#report>.

³ Ian Lesser, Jarrold Green, F. Stephen Larrabee and Michele Zanini, *The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiatives. Evolution and Next Steps* (Santa Monica: RAND Publication, 2000), pp.10-11.

⁴ Roy H. Ginsberg, *Foreign Policy Actions of the European Community. The Politics of Scale* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Adamantine Press Ltd., 1989), pp.117-128.

Many of the roles that Europe can play in the Middle East are not military. The non-military security strategies of the EU rest on the rejection of force and extend into negotiation, diplomacy, investment, trade, aid, international law, human rights, and rule of law through engagement and appeasement—methods which are known as “critical dialogue.” As a depiction of this, for all the talk of an “axis of evil,” European countries have refused to comply with US sanction laws like the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 in order to put these and similar rogue states in full economic isolation, arguing that a “critical dialogue” would be more effective in bringing about political changes in these states desired on both sides of the Atlantic.

Steady progress in spheres of democratization, civil society, and liberalization of economics requires major capital investment, political stability, or at least enough stability to allow the oil and gas sectors to operate. Whether response to political instability, which has been considered a non-traditional security challenge, are humanitarian concerns (asylum, poverty, illegal labor, immigration) or security concerns (asymmetric threats like terrorism, biological or chemical attacks), September 11 brought the ill-fated connection between poverty and terrorism to a somewhat different level: a conciliatory tie has appeared between humanitarian aid and development which stems from the anti-terrorist connection.⁵ This means that the EU must play a critical role in terms of trade policy, development aid, and energy investment to such a degree that the EU’s role would be greater than its proportion of dependence on Middle Eastern energy imports.

In light of these non-military security strategies, the EU should take on the following responsibilities for a long-term stability strategy in the region in order to safeguard the flow of oil to the West and provide security for itself: The EU must use the Quartet, which includes the US, EU, Russia, and the UN, in order to push for a comprehensive settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-state solution. Therefore, the EU should fully support the Quartet’s Roadmap and clearly express what it could do to both parties by exercising non-military security strategies after a settlement: a closer partnership with Israel and more assistance for the Palestinians. Although many European initiatives have caused considerable controversy, some well articulated economic and political strategies of the EU, like contributing to the development of a democratic political infrastructure in the hope of strengthening the peace process, proved their effectiveness.⁶ There is no doubt that neither stability nor security in the Middle East can be achieved until the Israeli-Palestinian issue is solved. In fact, without active partnership between the four Quartet members in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, no one member can sustain a long-term stability strategy for the entire Middle East region.

The EU should spend more money on promoting democracy, good governance, and the rule of law. Although the Middle East apparently lacks the domestic conditions that could set the stage for democratic change, the EU should apply the strategy of linking trade privileges and financial assistance to clear progress in recipient countries on promoting democracy through political, social, and economic reforms. The EU’s Barcelona Process (also known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership), which was

⁵ Jessica T. Mathews, “September 11, One Year Later: A World of Change,” *Policy Brief*, No. 18, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2002), p.9.

⁶ Rosemary Hollis, “Europe and the Middle East: power by stealth?,” *International Affairs*, Vol.73, No.1, (January 1997), pp.15-30.

launched in Barcelona in late 1995, and the Measures d'Accompagnement (MEDA) program represents the widest scope of cooperation, including free trade agreements, meetings for pro-democratic institutional, legal, and constitutional changes, security discussions, rural development programs, as well as cultural and civil society dialogues. In addition to this, a new EU initiative (action plans) was launched for the Mediterranean countries under the European Neighborhood Policy in the beginning of 2004.⁷ The Mediterranean basin draws the European, North African, and the Middle Eastern regions together geographically. Thus, there is a clear need to bridge the existing political, economic, and social gap between the West and the Islamic world for the elimination of the fundamental problem of terrorism. No country is better positioned to fill the existing gap between the West and the Islamic world and enable the EU to counterbalance the US in developing such common non-military strategies than Turkey, an EU candidate country with a predominantly Muslim population which shares a long border with Middle Eastern states.

Although roles Europe can play in the Middle East are mostly non-military, still without a credible military force with peacekeeping and crisis management capacity, the EU will hardly be able to realize its economic (oil), political (democratization), and security (threat prevention) strategies in the region.

Dual Strategy of the EU: Use of limited force is needed in order to survive politically

No matter how successful Europe is in dealing with humanitarian and security problems through non-military security strategies in the Middle East, an effective military role—with credible military capabilities—for the EU in the region is still needed if it is to be more assertive in achieving European political goals and gaining confidence. Moreover, considering the physical proximity and abundant energy resources of the region as a whole, the EU has more than a major political and economic interest in defending and promoting the region.

Europe is highly vulnerable to regional problems like potential terrorist attacks or medium range ballistic missiles attacks from rogue states. Failed or failing states are principal operational centers for terrorist groups or Islamic extremists. Therefore, the European military struggle against terrorism would be just as important as its non-military tools.⁸ The EU has a greater tendency to use economic strength and places less value on military might, but European officials have begun to realize that operating in a “jungle” sometimes requires applying “the laws of the jungle.” Despite the relevance of a military aspect, in practice, the high-politics and other hard-power related issues in the Middle East will, it seems, remain a largely US (or NATO) concern for the foreseeable future.⁹ These issues will be discussed during NATO’s Summit in Istanbul on 28-29 June 2004 under a specific agenda related to the NATO

⁷ Annette Jünemann, “Die EU und der Barcelona-Prozess – Bewertung und Perspektiven,” *Integration*, Vol.24, No.1, (Januar 2001), pp.42-57; Ahto Lobjakas, “Middle East: Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process at Heart of US-EU Regional Co-operation,” *Radio Free Europe* (3 March 2004). Available at: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/03/>

⁸ Anatol Lieven, “Fighting Terrorism: Lessons from the Cold War,” *Policy Brief*, No.7 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2001).

⁹ Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger, “Powell: Irak-Einsatz der Nato wäre ein wichtiges politisches Signal,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 30 April 2004, pp.1,2,16.

Response Force and a counter-terrorism package. At the moment all that Europe can do is to strictly control its own exports of weapons and increase its diplomatic efforts to persuade key nations like Russia, Ukraine, and China not to contribute to the production of weapons of mass destruction by rogue states.

European leaders talk of the EU's essential role in the world. However, if they want to be taken seriously in the foreign and security policy matters, they must show a robust political determination to develop the necessary military capabilities as a supplement to their economic and financial might. With the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, there has been a significant commitment among some key European nations (the French and Germans) to transforming the EU into another superpower, not only economically and politically, but also militarily.¹⁰ The hegemonic power—the US—needs a partner in the world and, for that reason, the Europeans must be militarily capable of controlling some conflict-ridden regions so as not to leave the field open to one-sided politics originating from the Pentagon.¹¹ The major European expectation is that the EU be a significant global power in every domain, which will ultimately contribute to the formation of a “truly multipolar” world in the 21st Century.

Until a robust European Security and Defense Policy backed by real military capabilities is developed, the EU will not be able to achieve a power projection force capable of fighting a major contingency in the Middle East until the year 2010¹² because it is currently falling inferior to the technological superiority of US military capabilities. It is true that Europeans are periodically engaging in military missions in and around Europe, so long as the missions are mostly limited to peacekeeping, crisis prevention, protection and management as in the recent Afghan conflict. However, the EU's key military roles in the Middle East will most likely be assisting individual friendly states in dealing with internal and low-level conflicts, helping in peacemaking and nation-building exercises, and assisting the US in the formation of various coalitions where the US would find regional alliances with Middle Eastern states more beneficiary in dealing with the region's problems.¹³ As a matter of fact, a dramatic shift in the EU's foreign and security policy from non-military to military related issues remains improbable in the foreseeable future.

NATO's center of gravity is shifting from Central and Eastern Europe toward the Middle East, Mediterranean, and North Africa. The EU can only increase its military role in the Middle East by agreeing to authorize NATO action on a wider geographic scale. Most NATO members would probably rule out NATO's involvement in a complicated Middle Eastern crisis, but some (southern European states) would consider North Africa to be within NATO's new expanded scope. As a pivotal country at a strategic location with Middle Eastern borders, Turkey could contribute to shaping NATO's North African and Middle Eastern strategy.¹⁴ Turkey could play a

¹⁰ Siret Hürsoy, *The New Security Concept and German-French Approaches to the European 'Pillar of Defense,' 1990-2000*, (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2002).

¹¹ For similar views, see interview with Michael Walzer in “Da hilft nur extremer Druck von außen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagzeitung*, No.28, 13 July 2003, p.6.

¹² For various reasons and for predictions regarding this particular year see Hürsoy (2002), pp.88-158, 416.

¹³ Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Role of Europe in the Middle East: An American Perspective,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Prepared for the IISS/CEPS European Security Form, 11 March 2002.

¹⁴ Ian Lesser, Jarrold Green, Larrabee, F. Stephen Larrabee and Michele Zanini (2000), pp.20-23.

more active role in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, Mediterranean Dialogue, as well as in a revised Mediterranean Dialogue, which is being called the Partnership Action Plan (PAP) and may be regarded as the cornerstone of a new NATO-Middle East initiative. As PfP countries in Eastern Europe were drawn into democratization and cooperation with NATO, PAP are able promote to regional security and democratization with the participation of southern Mediterranean states, as well as other willing Middle Eastern countries. Turkey is culturally (Muslim population) and geographically (half-way between the West and the Middle East) in a unique location for facilitating a security link between these countries and NATO, as well as bringing them economically and politically closer to the Western world.

As the EU completed the integration of a united Germany and the states of the former Warsaw Pact into the West, it is now time to pull Turkey out from its ambivalent situation by seriously considering its membership in the EU as well as its real partnership in the long-term stability strategy of the EU in the Middle Eastern region. It is not just that Turkey wants to be a member of the EU, but the EU needs Turkey if it wants to realize its long-term stability strategy in the Middle East, the Mediterranean and North Africa. Turkey could provide the EU greater clout in developing a more autonomous European military role in the Middle East after gaining full membership status.

However, the EU is still in the process of developing a comprehensive common foreign and security policy with a military branch of its own to back up its political and economic policies. European Council meetings at Cologne, Helsinki and Nice established, in a step-by-step fashion, an autonomous European crisis reaction force deployable by 2003. According to a package of defense measures, called the "2010 Headline Goal," the EU's military capabilities would be created in six years and include nine rapid-reaction battle groups which could be sent to international trouble spots beginning in 2007. These forces would be used in low-intensity conflict areas to help stabilize regions in conflict or to protect humanitarian operations. It can be assumed, therefore, that in the future the EU might be granted to a political role in the Middle East comparable to its economic power. Nevertheless, the EU is still unable to support its political preferences with credible military might in high-intensity conflict areas independent of the US.

Present Strategies of the EU and the US in the Middle East Must be Fine-Tuned

Both the EU and the US have major and long-standing interests in the Middle East. In areas of oil and security, these interests have been similar, or even identical. The Transatlantic Declaration of 1990 and the agreement in 1995 on a New Transatlantic Agenda and the Joint EU-US Action Plan in particular provided both sides of the Atlantic with new ground for consultation and cooperation. The most important aim of these documents was to strengthen ties between the EU and the US in the field of foreign and security policy, thereby promoting peace and stability, democracy and development in the world.¹⁵ Yet, these transatlantic consultations suffer from the substantial damage in transatlantic partnership.

¹⁵ Marianne van Leeuwen, *EU and US-security relations and the New Transatlantic Agenda* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael Institute Publication, January 1999), p.3.

In the beginning of the 21st Century (particularly after the events of September 11) EU and US policymakers reached a stalemate. The diverging policies have arisen between the transatlantic partners on the choice and the use of foreign and security policy instruments to safeguard or pursue their interests. While the Europeans prefer multilateral collective action with effective diplomatic negotiations and trade initiatives, the US choice is military force as a legitimate and effective instrument of foreign policy that can even be applied unilaterally.

Hence, the Istanbul Summit of NATO on 28-29 June 2004 will be a historic meeting between the EU and the US for at least four reasons: (1) NATO's military transformation, including the NATO Response Force, new airlift and sealift capabilities, and a counter-terrorist package will be discussed; (2) NATO's strategic partnership with the EU will be revised and the EU will gain its own distinct role as a security actor; (3) NATO's partnership will be expanded and strengthened with partner countries from the Balkans, to the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Mediterranean countries; (4) Further expansion of NATO's presence in Afghanistan, operations like Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea, and the complete transfer of overseeing security in the Balkans to the EU Rapid Reaction forces will be examined.

Against this background, the primary answer to the question of what role the EU should play in the Middle East is that it should play a pragmatic one in which closer cooperation between different groups of states in different institutions could be encouraged. On the other side, US policymakers should pay more attention to the growing hostility among the European elites against US hegemony and unilateralism, the link they form between Arab nationalism and radical Islamist terrorism, and the impossibility of using superior military power against non-governmental terrorist groups whose weapons are psychological.¹⁶ The most viable solution to Middle East problems is to be found in a long-term stability strategy: balancing stick (military force) and carrot (non-military) strategies.

The Quartet could be the best strategic formation in dealing with current and future Middle East problems. It might also act as a platform for facilitating NATO-EU-Russia security cooperation in the region. The Quartet has projected a uniform message to the conflicting parties in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by combining the might of America with the economic resources of Europe, as well as bringing Russian and American interests closer to each other to ensure that Arabs and Israelis can not play one power against the other. The joint NATO-EU-Russia peacekeeping mission may eventually involve securing an Israeli-Palestinian peace process and monitoring the birth of the Palestinian state.

With the removal of the immediate need to check Soviet power, the US became more willing to use force globally and tended to do this unilaterally. With this being the case, the US would project power globally, while Europeans should assume larger responsibilities for European stability with their Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in selected regions outside the European continent until they increase their power and move closer to US military capabilities. However, a more integrated EU, which relies on its own military capabilities, might not always share US assessments

¹⁶ Lieven (2001), pp.6-7.

of international risks—as in the definition of the meaning of terrorism or consideration of the rapid changes that a pro-democratic campaign in the Middle East would cause—or fall blindly in behind US global strategic policies without a word of criticism.¹⁷ For example, the US's so-called Greater Middle East project is aiming to bring the US, the EU, and the Middle East together around a set of commitments to help transform the entire region politically, economically, and socially, but this project fails to establish a basis for genuine partnership between the US and the EU and does little to address the real problems of the Arab world. Therefore, Europeans must develop coherent political, economic, and security strategies for the Middle Eastern region as a whole, if they do not want to play the role of financing US-designed political and military strategies in a post-Pentagon Middle East scenario. Developing such a coherent strategy will require serious consultation between EU and US officials in order to fine-tune their strategic interests in the Middle East.

Conclusions

If the EU is to play a proper role in the Middle East, it will have to play a moderate and principled role between the US—widely viewed by many Arabs as the supporter of Israel—and the Arab world. The EU seems to be in a better position to provide advice to Middle Eastern countries during their democratization process socially, politically, and economically. Nevertheless, no single party alone, neither the EU nor the US with their vast economic and military power respectively, can meet the challenges in the Middle East on their own. Because it will require the reexamination and readaptation of the foundations of purposes and policies, a change for cooperation and collaboration is a particularly difficult process for institutions. Success of the EU's Middle East politics in the 21st Century must be based on the coordination of separate operational programs of the EU-US partnership (Barcelona Process, European Neighborhood Policy, MEDA, Mediterranean Dialogue, PAP), as well as on political consultation with the peoples and governments of the region to promote more democratic politics and more liberal economies. It is a process that can in fact only be achieved willingly by Arabs and Muslims themselves by finding a successful legitimate model rather than by coercion from outside powers.

¹⁷ Marina Ottaway, Thomas Carothers, Amy Hawthorne and Daniel Brumberg, “Democratic Mirage in the Middle East,” *Policy Brief*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, No.20, October 2002).