

The Foreign Policies of the European Union and the United States in North Africa

Diverging or Converging
Dynamics?

Edited by
Francesco Cavatorta and
Vincent Durac



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The war in Iraq seemed to bring to a head underlying differences between the United States and the vast majority of European countries regarding the best means to maintain international peace and stability. The unilateralism of the United States as opposed to the multilateralism of the European Union is seen as a very significant source of potential rivalry between the two actors.

This volume examines in detail whether the policies of the United States and the EU are truly diverging with respect to the most pressing issues facing North Africa, or whether, in fact, they are converging in terms of objectives to be achieved and strategies for their implementation. Through a number of papers that include both comparative and case specific studies, this book enables a better understanding of the differences and similarities in EU and US foreign policies and security strategies for the region, a clearer analysis of their respective democracy promotion policies, and a more effective examination of their respective approach to the 'Islamist question' in light of the continued success of such movements.

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Francesco Cavatorta is Lecturer in International Relations and Middle East Politics at the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University.

Vincent Durac is Lecturer in Politics of Development and Middle East Politics at the School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin.

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Abstracts

Diverging or converging dynamics? EU and US policies in North Africa – an introduction

Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac

According to a number of scholars of international relations, the transatlantic relationship is going through a very significant and possibly irreversible crisis. It is claimed that the different reactions of the United States and the European Union to both September 11th and the war in Iraq were the catalyst for a rift that had been deepening for some time, leading to competition between the two actors. The literature on the foreign policy of the US and the EU in the Middle East and North Africa also points to this rift in order to explain the seemingly contradictory policies that the two actors implement in the region, with the US being more forceful in its attempts to export democracy and in supporting Israel while the EU adopts a less confrontational attitude and is perceived to be more friendly to the Palestinians. This article, which introduces a special issue on the nature of US and EU foreign policies in North Africa, argues on the contrary that the transatlantic rift does not really exist. While there are certainly differences in discourse and policies, both the EU and the US share the same concerns and have similar strategic objectives in the region, leading the two actors towards cooperation and division of labour rather than confrontation.

Security, power or profit? The economic diplomacy of the US and the EU in North Africa

Patrick Holden

The United States and the European Union have an extensive set of economic instruments to help reform the economic institutions of North African countries. These are allegedly motivated by security concerns. In theory a more liberal and integrated economic framework will allow for greater development, cohesion and stability. This is based on a general consensus that economic stagnation is a major cause of extremism in the region. The economic dimension of US diplomacy involves an essentially bilateral push for free trade agreements and several aid instruments. EU policies have a similar thrust but its deeper interdependence with North Africa leads to a more holistic approach. These different emphases relate to the complex dynamics of competition and cooperation evident in US–EU relations more generally. Although an alliance, the US–EU partnership involves competition for structural power in the global political economy. Does the element of competition significantly affect the overall unity of their approach to the region? Empirical study bears out the hypothesis of competition for structural power but there are striking commonalities in their globalising and liberalising agendas. There are also substantial similarities in another sense; self-interest considerations distort the reform and development project. In relation to the broader strategic role of both actors it is concluded that the limited element of competition does not amount to geo-political rivalry at this stage. All of this implies that neither actor is likely to have a transformative impact on the institutions of the region. Their main focus is in limited commercial reforms which regime elites will be able to control and manipulate.

The Algerian crisis in European and US foreign policies: a hindsight analysis

Hakim Darbouche and Yahia H. Zoubir

Algeria's process of political liberalisation in the late 1980s failed to produce genuine transition to democracy. Instead, the country experienced a dreadful decade-long crisis, which besides affecting its societal development, had wider domestic and international repercussions. Despite the attention it drew, deep understanding of the drama failed to prevail. The reactions the crisis induced in Europe and the United States were informed by different strategic and normative considerations. The purpose of this article is to compare these transatlantic responses in order to shed light on their underlying dynamics and to attempt to provide enough empirical basis from which to extrapolate in the assessment of broader US and European democracy promotion efforts in the MENA region.

The stability syndrome: US and EU democracy promotion in Tunisia

Brieg Tomos Powel

Despite very public disagreements over Iraq and other areas of the Middle East and North Africa, European Union (EU) and United States (US) strategies in the region offer much scope for cooperation. Both actors have stressed the potential of democracy to prevent conflict. The US's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Partnership Initiative, and the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) all emphasise the need for democratic reform in Middle Eastern states. Tunisia has been included in all of these initiatives, often voluntarily, and has consequently become a subject of their drive for political reform. Yet despite a lack of progress in political reform, the US and the EU seem reluctant to place any great pressure on Tunisia to conform to the demands of the policy initiatives. In fact, by including Tunisia within wider regional frameworks, both the US and the EU have shifted their focus to maintaining stability through the status quo rather than risk the unpredictable outcomes of political reform.

The impact of external actors on the distribution of power in the Middle East: the case of Egypt

Vincent Durac

Both formally and rhetorically, the policy position of the United States and the European Union is to support movement towards democratic political change in the Middle East. This article examines the democracy-promotion policies of both actors in relation to Egypt, with particular reference to the political changes that have taken place in that country since 2005. It concludes that, far from promoting democratic change in Egypt, Western policies have had the apparently paradoxical, and unintended, effect of supporting the entrenchment of an authoritarian political order, and offers an analysis of how and why this is so.

Trade, security and neoliberal politics: whither Arab reform? Evidence from the Moroccan case

Sami Zemni and Koenraad Bogaert

This paper argues that the growing contrast between the processes of radicalisation and democratisation in the age of global market reforms and the 'War on Terror' are not confined to the domestic Moroccan political scene. Political movements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society, governments, international institutions and foreign governments are all

embedded within a growing number of international networks. The central problem of political and economic reform today lays in the ways it is conceptualised and implemented through a free market ideology that transfers power from the state to new ‘hybrid’ governmental arrangements where ‘state’ and ‘market’ seem to become a symbiotic pair. Within the site of the still powerful nation-state therefore the disappearing traditional boundaries of inclusion and exclusion – formerly readily apparent in and logically deriving from national affiliations – are changing and altering. The main argument is that, contrary to dominant discourses, that democracy promotion through market reform does not bring forth overall economic growth and prosperity which will lead eventually to political liberalisation. Instead these reforms are inducing uneven geographical developments that do not trigger incentives for democratic accountability.

Altruism and its limits: the role of civil and political rights for American and French aid towards the Middle East and North Africa

Miquel Pellicer and Eva Wegner

This article studies if and under which circumstances Western support to regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is contingent on concerns for political and civil rights. Using foreign aid as a proxy for support, we compare the role of political and civil rights with the role of different geopolitical and economic factors for aid allocation. We analyse French and US aid flows to 12 MENA countries, covering the period from 1990–2005. We find that, for both countries, strategic concerns are highly relevant for aid allocation; civil and political rights also matter, but only in places of no strategic value. Thus, although French and US foreign aid goes to different countries, the underlying motives are remarkably similar. Finally, to the extent that there is a difference between the two countries, France fares worse than even US military aid regarding the consideration of civil and political liberties.

INTRODUCTION

Diverging or converging dynamics? EU and US policies in North Africa – an introduction

Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac

In a recent article on the state of the transatlantic relationship, Asmus (2003) forcefully argued that the EU–US alliance had finally collapsed and that the two now former partners were headed for confrontation on a number of international issues. While other scholars do not share this extreme view, they agree with Asmus that the rift between the two is indeed very significant (Neuhold 2003) and the current literature on transatlantic studies gives increasing prominence to this issue (Forsberg and Herde 2006). The preoccupation with the state of the Atlantic

Alliance has always been a constant feature in the literature on transatlantic studies, but recent policy differences and misunderstandings ranging from environmental politics (the Kyoto protocol and subsequent negotiations) to hard security matters (Iraq and Iran) to the substance of liberal values (the death penalty) have been interpreted as being qualitatively different from past ones and indicative of a serious and possibly irreparable split. In the past, rifts were short-lived and quickly mended for a number of reasons. First of all, the US was perceived to be a more accommodating actor, ready to listen to its partners and willing to pursue multilateral strategies, while the European Union was internally divided, unable to sustain common positions and therefore more readily influenced by the United States positions. In addition, the common threat of communism and the existence of shared liberal democratic values made the alliance both inevitable and strong. Today, it is argued that the situation is very different. The European Union has acquired much stronger internal coherence in a wide range of fields, but in particular it has strengthened the one policy area where it used to be at its weakest and it now has a Common and Foreign Security Policy (CFSP), which, despite contradictions and problems, is much more effective than in the past. This has been translated in a more assertive international role, which reflects the constitutive values and beliefs of the Union leading to significant differences with some of the positions and interests of the United States. Such differences, realists would argue, are determined by the different positions that the two countries occupy in the international system. At the same time, the United States, particularly with the George W. Bush administration, has become less interested in multilateralism and acts in accordance with its own perceived status as the only remaining superpower. While this trend accelerated after September 11th 2001, it was in evidence before then as a by-product of the end of the Cold War. In addition to all of this, the ending of the global communist threat has weakened the previous bond and, crucially, made the world multi-polar. Accordingly, this systemic change seemingly placed the United States and the European Union as competitors on the new international scene and undermined further the previous political, economic and strategic proximity. The shift of the international system from bi-polar to multi-polar is however not the only explanation for the parting of ways of the United States and Europe. Another powerful explanation for the existence of such a deep rift is said to stem from profound constitutive differences related to the theoretical understanding that both actors have of themselves and of the surrounding international system. The EU perceives itself to be the ultimate good citizen in international politics because of the very manner and values upon which the Union was first set up. The European project is one based on incessant multilateral bargaining and compromising underpinned by democratic norms of decision-making, which make the Union, when operating on the international scene, a normative actor. Coercion never entered the picture in the process of building Europe and it is only through time-consuming negotiations that an increasing number of policy areas came under the control of European institutions. This peaceful process of 'unification' through the sharing of democratic values and through economic integration is at the heart of the Union's belief system. When this is translated into foreign policy-making, the Union conflates its own interests with the interests of all the other countries it comes into contact with and attempts to export its values and norms through a process of multilateral constructive engagement based on positive inducements and conditionality. The nature of the EU is to make other countries behave accordingly to the norms that are at the heart of the EU because these are universal and 'good' (Manners 2002). It is a process of osmosis where coercion does not feature. It follows that the EU does not perceive itself as a confrontational actor and aims at expanding the area of democratic peace through peaceful means even if this takes a long time and requires overcoming significant setbacks. The basic idea at the heart of the European Union is that the

same process of integration that characterised the birth of the EU itself can be repeated *ad infinitum* across the world because it is centred on universal norms such as democracy and human rights. In sum, the EU embodies the very concept of 'soft power' (Nye 2004) that the United States can no longer employ. This self-perception and the projection of this perception in international relations are very different from the one the United States have. While the US also conflates its security with the security of humankind and promotes universal values, it faces the problem of being, contrary to the EU, a national community and therefore subject to accusations of promoting its own narrow national interest in the name of universality. In addition, the United States is a much more forceful actor, ready to wage war when it sees it fit and much more ideological than its European counterpart. The EU obviously shies away from active conflicts due to the inability of its institutions to make a decision over such an important matter because, contrary to the US, it does not have 'national unity', but the role of norms in determining the non-confrontational nature of the EU should not be underestimated. The US process of nation-building and later the role of leading the 'free world' created a different set of norms and values from the ones the EU was built on and where political 'realism' was much more present. For those who believe that the Atlantic Alliance is indeed finished it is therefore not difficult to explain such occurrence by pitting the 'liberal realism' of the United States against the 'liberal normative constructivism' of the European Union.

In this respect the war against Iraq has simply been interpreted as the catalyst of an existing trend, which has led Europe away from the United States in international politics. While it is true that the European Union was unable to reach a common position on Iraq with different countries choosing opposing courses of action undermining the CFSP in the process (Chari and Cavatorta 2003), it is also worth highlighting that it did not support the United States either. More significantly, for the vast majority of European citizens, the decision to go to war was largely believed to be another demonstration of US imperialism, which would damage international peace and stability rather than strengthening them. This is also true in some of the European countries, namely Spain and Italy, whose leaders decided to join the United States and who were later dismissed from office partly because of that decision. Among policy-makers this has not gone unnoticed and the war on Iraq accelerated the European process of solidifying the common foreign policy in order not to arrive at the next international crisis in such a divided manner. Given the profound differences on Iraq between the EU and the US, it is not surprising that those claiming the existence of the rift increasingly point to the Middle East and North Africa as the region where the constitutive differences of the US and the EU lead to clashes of interests and policy divergences. This can be seen 'with the US adopting a very forceful pro-democracy promotion attitude, coupled with a strong support for Israel and for military intervention if necessary, while the European Union, both rhetorically and through some concrete measures, adopts a more pro-Palestinian stance and a softer approach to democracy promotion' (Durac and Cavatorta 2009). Even on democracy assistance in the region, there are significant differences between the EU and the US, as Huber (2008) highlights in her study.

The existence of such a deep rift between the two actors is, however, not unanimously accepted and there are in fact strong doubts not only about its depth, but about its existence too. The basic claim is that the current rift can be repaired very quickly because there are both strategic coherence and shared values between the US and the EU. While there might be differences on the two sides of the Atlantic on how to tackle a specific problem such as the Iranian nuclear programme, these differences never spill over into open confrontation and competition. In addition, while it is true that the European Union increased its level of internal

coherence on foreign policy matters, the Union's institutions remain largely marginal when it comes to deal with significant international crises and member states usually take over. On its part, the United States acts no differently today than in past decades and the extreme unilateralism of the Bush administration has diminished over time and is likely to be severely toned down with a new administration in place in 2009. It should also be recognised that the collapse of communism did not really trigger a significant amount of competition between the EU and the US, as the two actors did not have a falling out on how to best manage the transition from the Cold War to a new world order. If anything their ties have been considerably strengthened because in the face of a range of new threats they have often acted together to counter them, as the war against Iraq in 1991 demonstrates. Furthermore, globalisation has solidified the level of economic, cultural and military integration between the US and the EU, which have benefited from operating together to open markets in the developing world and creating new rules for international trade that are beneficial to both actors. The creation and strengthening of multilateral institutions where their shared interests are promoted are testimony to the fact that the two actors have still very much in common and their destiny is tied together. The Middle East and North Africa therefore do not represent an example where the diverging conceptions of international relations the EU and the US have battle it out for supremacy. It follows that Iraq did not represent the point of no return for the US–EU relationship, but simply a temporary tactical divergence. Irrespective of what the US 'surge' might achieve, the Iraq adventure has proven to be a failure for the Bush administration and we are now witnessing a return to multilateralism and consultation with the EU partners on how to best proceed to achieve regional peace and stability. The rift is therefore not serious because both actors largely share the same theoretical assumptions about the nature of international relations and behave therefore accordingly. What both actors want is to remain the dominant forces on the international system and although they might espouse diverging tactics at certain moments in time, their strategic concerns largely coincide and they therefore very often work together to achieve their most preferred outcomes by combining their respective strengths (Musu and Wallace 2003). Converging dynamics then characterise the relationship because each actor brings a different but complementing set of resources and capacities.

In the case of the European Union, there is for instance an increasing amount of work (Youngs 2004, Hyde-Price 2006) highlighting how the perception and self-perception of the EU as a normative actor is misplaced. Far from being a uniquely 'good and moral citizen' selflessly promoting democracy and human rights, the EU is also realist actor, which utilises its best assets, namely reputation and money, to achieve very concrete *realpolitik* interests such as conquering new markets, strengthening its own internal security, preserving its borders and marginalising in the process issues of democratic governance and respect for civil liberties. This is an accusation often made against the United States, but a more in depth analysis reveals that the EU behaves in a similar manner, although it is better equipped to project a largely positive image of itself. In many respects therefore there is a very significant degree of convergence in the policies and strategies of the EU and the US at the global level. Both actors fear the rise of China as a global power, are weary of the rise of India, are not impressed by the South American 'new left' and share similar preoccupations about nuclear proliferation, terrorism, migration and access to energy resources. When it comes to the Middle East and North Africa, there is a shared reluctance and therefore a strategic agreement on the necessity of avoiding radical Islamists getting into power even to the detriment of the democratic process (Cavatorta 2001, Ghalioun 2004). There is also the imperative of securing access to energy resources and to expand markets through free trade agreements that only authoritarian rulers

can guarantee as the example of Morocco, which signed free trade agreements with both the US and the EU, emphasises. Finally, there is the shared objective of maintaining Israel as the primary regional power. No one denies that there are tactical differences between the EU and the US on how to best promote and defend these strategic goals, but such differences can be hardly seen as the evidence for the existence of a deep rift when in fact strategic concerns are so similar.

Thus, there are two conflicting views on the nature and the current state of the transatlantic relationship leading to important questions about the theories of international relations' abilities to account for the foreign policies of the two most relevant actors on the international scene. Does a rift really exist between the EU and the US? If so, which theory best explains it? If not, how can one account for it when, seemingly, systemic rearrangements in the distribution of power would indicate that a split is inevitable? These questions are even more significant when the impact of these foreign and security policies is examined in the context of the most unstable regions in the world: the Middle East and North Africa (Hinnebusch 2003).

This collection is based on a novel comparison of the foreign and security policies of the United States and the EU in North Africa. While there are a number of works outlining how each actor deals with the most pressing regional issues (Gillespie and Youngs 2002, Junemann 2004, Cook 2005, Dalacoura 2005) and how each partner perceives the other's policies in the region (Perthes 2004), there is very little work done to compare how the two actors operate. More specifically, this collection aims to clarify two issues related to this topic. First of all, it seeks to highlight whether the foreign policy dynamics of the United States and the European Union in the region are converging or diverging. Building on the theoretical debate summed up above, it is necessary to compare whether the strategies and the policies implemented in the MENA confirm or disprove the existence of a fundamental rift between the EU and the US. These broad theoretical analyses need to find substantiation in the empirical analysis and the findings can then be used to answer a number of important theoretical questions. If evidence of divergence does indeed emerge, how is this relevant to our understanding of international relations? Would such evidence confirm the currently held assumption about the liberal and normative traits of the European Union's foreign policy and therefore automatically lead to assume that the rift with the US is irreparable? If, on the contrary, evidence of convergence emerges, how would this affect the theoretical understanding of the European Union in light of the realism that the US displays? Would one then be able to question the very idea of the EU as a good international citizen? Finally, would one have to assume that the United States is the narrow minded ideological actor that many make it out to be, always looking out for its own interests to the detriment of values and norms?

The second issue, which this collection deals with, is the relationship or lack of thereof between the two international actors and Islamists. There is very little doubt that the existence and appeal of radical political Islam has been and continues to be the most serious element of preoccupation for the international community. The success of the Arab-Israeli peace agreement, the different democratisation processes, economic development and access to natural resources are all believed to hinge on the absence of Islamists from power. There are two inter-connected reasons for this. First of all, it is widely held that Islamists are inherently undemocratic and therefore any success they might have would result in countries becoming significantly more authoritarian than they are now (Zakaria 2004). Secondly, Islamists, irrespective of their democratic or un-democratic nature, are believed to be inimical to the West and therefore it is assumed that once in power they would implement policies that would negatively affect western interests in the region. Thus, Islamists are central to the foreign policies of the United