

# EU External policy-making: 'Realistically' Dealing with Authoritarianism? The case of Morocco.

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## Introduction

The European Union's (EU's) limited foreign policy activity has been linked to the 'soft' issues of international politics, such as negotiating international trade agreements, promoting international human rights and supporting democratization. In the early 1980s, for example, the Community exercised an indirect positive influence on regime transformation in Southern Europe by acting as a 'magnet for democracy'.<sup>1</sup>

However, the role of the EU has recently changed and it has become a more proactive entity with a more coherent and extensive range of foreign policy objectives and tools, including a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Over the last decade, it has therefore become a vocal actor in international affairs as a result of the transformations of the global security environment. This new role is based on a conceptualization of security which assumes that international stability and security can only be achieved through the promotion of norms which have shaped the EU itself: legally binding treaties, multilateral institutions, democratic governance and economic interpenetration. EU policies subsequently embrace these fundamental normative principles.

Since the mid-90s, an important target area in terms of foreign and security policy is the Mediterranean basin whose policy pillar has been the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). Three aspects guide this initiative: the first is a *political and security partnership* which emphasises the rule of law, respect for human rights and pluralism; the second is an *economic and financial partnership*,<sup>2</sup> which seeks 'sustainable and balanced economic and social development with a view to achieving the objective of creating an area of shared prosperity';<sup>3</sup> and the third is *social, cultural and human affairs partnerships*, which rejects the notion of the clash of civilizations in favour of a dialogue between cultures. The very core of this initiative sees the promotion of western liberal democratic values, including accountable electoral procedures, respect for human rights, and a free market economy. Together, this

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<sup>1</sup> See L. Whitehead, 'Democracy by Convergence: Southern Europe' in L. Whitehead (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Democratization* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> For a current evaluation of it see J. Brach, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: The Role and Impact of the Economic and Financial Dimension' (2007) 10/4 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 555-579. But see also D. Geradin and N. Petit, 'Competition Policy and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership' (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 153-180.

<sup>3</sup> Barcelona Declaration, 1995.

should lead to stability, which is profitable to the EU and the countries on the southern Mediterranean bank. In this context, 'security' is inevitably linked with 'democracy'.

In light of international events, it is now apparent that 'security in the Mediterranean has attained a higher profile'.<sup>4</sup> However, ten years after its launch, several academics and policy-makers lament the results achieved through the Barcelona process, which has not been successful in achieving its core objectives.<sup>5</sup> Some have even recently claimed that the 'Barcelona process has been classified as a diplomatic rather than substantive success'.<sup>6</sup> This is particularly the case for the issues of democracy, human rights and rule of law, which have made scant progress in Arab partner countries on the Southern Bank of the Mediterranean. Security for the EU was the central objective of EMP, but it was to be achieved through norms based policies rather than through policy tools in tune with the tenets of Realism. Although issues of securitization in the region are explored elsewhere in the context of IR theories,<sup>7</sup> the purpose of this paper is to employ and apply a realist perspective to a specific case study.

Reasons offered for the absence of significant successes in EMP include: the divisions between Member States that impede clear policy formulation; the weakness of the institutional set-up; and the ability of target countries to devise survival strategies intended to preserve the current elites in power. All these explanations assume that the EU is genuinely interested in promoting democratic governance and its actions in the region fail because of *realpolitik* factors that 'get in the way'. In this respect, many display an attitude of faith towards the conflation of democracy and security that the EU declares to uphold. Recently, Grugel argued that 'the EU's commitment to supporting and extending liberal democracy is well established',<sup>8</sup> but this research is based on the assumption that the previous claim is not without controversy.

This research proposes, instead, to forward an alternative framework through which the EU's activities in the region can be studied.<sup>9</sup> The research considers the EU not as the wholly normative actor that many claim it to be. Rather, it considers the EU as an international actor that makes rationalist assumptions about both its material interests and its normative ones. As such, we introduce a degree of Realism to the theoretical understanding of the EU. While this might not be a novelty in EU studies

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<sup>4</sup> See S. Biscop, *Euro-Mediterranean Security: A Search for Partnership* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See R. Youngs, 'European Approaches to Security in the Mediterranean' (2003) 57/3 *Middle East Journal*, pp. 414-431.

<sup>6</sup> See A. Echague and R. Youngs, 'Democracy and Human Rights in the Barcelona Process: Conclusions of a Workshop at FRIDE, Madrid, 14-16 January, 2005' (2005) 10/2 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 233-237 at p. 234.

<sup>7</sup> See H. Malmvig, 'Security through Intercultural Dialogue?' (2005) 10/3 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 349-364.

<sup>8</sup> See J. Grugel, 'Democratization and Ideational Diffusion: Europe, Mercosur and Social Citizenship' (2007) 45/1 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 43-68 at p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> See also B. Hettne and F. Söderbaum, 'Civilian Power or Soft Imperialism? The EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism' (2005) 10/4 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 535-552.

regarding EU's military operations abroad,<sup>10</sup> we test the validity of such an outlook by considering the empirical evidence emerging from EU-Moroccan case and its consequences for the pro-democracy stances of the Union. In the context of such a theoretical perspective, the Barcelona process might not be a failure, but may be the means through which the EU and its Member States have maintained stability in the region while increasing material benefits. Due to the extensive and contradictory objectives of the Barcelona process, one may hypothesize that the assessment of the policy depends on the theoretical approach adopted for understanding the EU. If one espouses the predominant normative view that the EU has of itself, it is true that the EMP did not achieve development, democratization and therefore security. However, adopting a different theoretical perspective leads to a different assessment. While there is no reason why norms such democracy, human rights and rule of law cannot be the basis for stability and security, the specific measures put in place through EMP seem to undermine such norms. This might be intentional because the outcome of the export of norms might be detrimental to EU material and strategic interests in the region. A different interpretation of security, with realist undertones, therefore emerges. On their part, partner countries exploit such contradictions and privilege political stability, read regime survival, over all norms.<sup>11</sup>

This paper first builds on Youngs's work.<sup>12</sup> He postulates that the EU might be conceived of as a rationalist actor pursuing both normative and interest-based outcomes not only because Member States have an important role in the EU's institutional structure, but also because the formally independent institutions must operate in a 'realist' international environment, where exclusively normative actors overlook the constraints derived from participating in a system where other actors do not operate normatively. The second part considers how the EU operates in one particular target country: the Kingdom of Morocco. Morocco is a solid case because of its close relationship with, and high dependence on, the EU. The perceived lack of success of the Barcelona process in this moderately authoritarian country is thus striking because it is precisely in these 'liberalised autocracies'<sup>13</sup> where one would expect to see considerable changes after 10 years of EU engagement.

### **EMP: the Normative Power of the EU?**

After the Cold War, the EU's common external policy responded to new and expanded security challenges. Amidst political and strategic uncertainties that the international system presented, 'one of the most prominent themes of Europe's transformed security situation during this period was the value attached to democracy promotion and human rights'.<sup>14</sup> This promotion of democracy and rule of law through economic development was perceived as more genuine than that undertaken by other countries. For instance, although the USA accorded a high priority to human rights

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<sup>10</sup> See C. Gegout, 'Causes and Consequences of the EU's Military Intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): a Realist Explanation' (2005) 10/3 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 427-443.

<sup>11</sup> See also F. Attinà, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal Views' (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 181-199.

<sup>12</sup> See R. Youngs, 'Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity' (2004) 42/2 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 415-435.

<sup>13</sup> See D. Brumberg, 'The Trap of Liberalised Autocracy' (2002) 13/4 *The Journal of Democracy*, pp. 56-68.

<sup>14</sup> See G. Rye Olsen, 'The EU: An Ad Hoc Policy with a Low Priority' in P. Schraeder (ed.) *Exporting Democracy; Rhetoric Vs. Reality* (Lynne Rienner, London, 2002) at p. 132.

and democracy-promotion since Carter and Reagan,<sup>15</sup> the basis upon which they were built was controversial.<sup>16</sup> The main problem the USA faced was the contradiction that emerged between pursuing a normative policy of democracy-promotion with a realist foreign policy characterized by a narrow concept of security and short-term interests, which almost always won. This was particularly evident in the Middle East, where a range of authoritarian regimes still continues to receive strong backing from Washington because they guarantee regional stability, access to resources and peace to Israel.<sup>17</sup> What is true for the USA is also true for other, unilaterally acting, European countries. Their democracy-promotion strategies often compete with the requirement of pursuing material interests and are therefore undermined and emptied of their significance.<sup>18</sup>

It is not perceived that the EU suffers from difficulties of reconciling normative and material interests because, as an international actor, it is considered to be (and perceives itself as being) wholly normative. From this vantage, the EU has a unique institutional structure, an approach to international affairs rooted in multilateralism and an alternative approach to politics wherein it moved away from 'power politics' and drew upon international law, norms, rules, and cooperation. Subsequently, this new 'normative power' now defines the EU.<sup>19</sup> As such, the EU 'forces' change on other actors through ideational impact, with the belief that 'good' behaviour affects other actors in the system through osmosis. Lightfoot and Burchell<sup>20</sup> suggest that it is precisely because the EU has been constructed on a normative basis that it operates as a normative power. However, in order to extend these constitutive norms to the international system, the EU has to be perceived as acting above reproach. Regarding security within this normative structure, the concept reflects a security that is the product of ideas and is thus equated with the expansion of democracy, rule of law and economic development.

Contrary to the USA's perceived actions in the Middle East and North Africa, the EU is said to operate solely considering notions of economic development and democratization through civil society promotion, rather than self-interested alliances with unsavoury authoritarian regimes. This means that policy instruments through which the EU engages attempt to bring target regimes, over time, in line with the EU's values. Because of its history of expansion through democracy and rule of law, it was inevitable that the EU would export its own model of integration to achieve, through economic development, democratic change in other global regions. The outcome of this strategy is the self-interested achievement of perpetual 'Kantian' security. Thus, when the EU 'does' security, it relies on a 'cooperative approach' with the target countries it operates in, looking for change through osmosis.

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<sup>15</sup> See S. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oklahoma University Press, Norman, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> See W. Blum, *Rogue State. A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Common Courage Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> See M. Hudson, 'The United States and the Middle East' in L. Fawcett (ed.) *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> See F. Cavatorta, 'Geopolitical challenges to the success of democracy in North Africa: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco' (2001) 8/4 *Democratization*, pp. 175-194.

<sup>19</sup> See I. Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?' (2002) 40/2 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 235-258.

<sup>20</sup> S. Lightfoot and J. Burchell 'The EU and the World Summit on Sustainable development: Normative Power Europe in Action?' (2005) 43/1 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 75-95.

The Mediterranean basin, in political, social and economic turmoil since the mid-80s, represented a priority area for implementing the security policies of the EU. Through the Barcelona process, the EU attempted to export its own model in the mid-90s without imposing it. Hollis stated that 'the focus is on dialogue and the EU undertakes to assist with indigenously-generated reform.'<sup>21</sup> According to Biscop the EMP sought 'to do away with the idea of the Mediterranean as a frontier and to make it once again a crossroads of ideas'.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, over ten years after its launch the results of EMP have been deemed unsatisfactory in terms of exporting norms in order to achieve greater security. As such, several authors deem the whole process a failure. Yet, why has this occurred? A number of distinct explanations have been suggested. For example, the first focuses on the survival strategies of the partner countries, which were able to defuse democratic pressures while hijacking the benefits of economic reforms. According to Hollis, some Europeans contend that 'Arab elites have proved adaptive at maintaining their relatively privileged positions [...] and governments have resisted European efforts to support civil society, democracy and human rights.'<sup>23</sup> Another explanation concentrates on the weakness of EU strategies due to the strength of Member States in foreign policy formulation. Thus, what undermines EMP is the same type of diverging Member States' interests pursued during the 2003 Iraq war.<sup>24</sup> A third explanation concentrates on the failure of the Middle East Peace process, whose repercussions impede lasting security arrangements and domestic change in Arab countries.<sup>25</sup> Finally, there are constitutional explanations for the ineffectiveness of the EU area whereby the structure of the decision-making process is too complex and the institutional participants too diverse.<sup>26</sup> If we add that Member States' interests have to be incorporated, the result is a rather incoherent strategy that has not been successfully implemented.<sup>27</sup>

While the dissatisfaction that exists with EMP among scholars and external observers is due to the fact that they correctly point to major inconsistencies within the policy, such dissatisfaction does not theoretically question the EU as a normative power as blame rests primarily with the Member States or the partner countries operating as wholly self-interested actors. Irrespective of their significant differences, all these explanations share a common premise: they assume that the EU *per se* has a genuine interest in promoting economic development and democracy in order to achieve security and stability at its borders by virtue of its ideational power. Any failure rests with individual states.

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<sup>21</sup> See R. Hollis, 'Europe and the Middle East' in L. Fawcett (ed.) *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: OUP, 2005) at p. 321.

<sup>22</sup> See S. Biscop, *Euro-Mediterranean Security: A Search for Partnership* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003) at p. viii.

<sup>23</sup> R. Hollis, 'Europe and the Middle East' in L. Fawcett (ed.) *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: OUP, 2005) at p. 320.

<sup>24</sup> See R.S. Chari and F. Cavatorta, 'The Iraq War: Killing Dreams of a Unified EU?' (2003) 3/1 *European Political Science*, pp. 25-29.

<sup>25</sup> See S. Biscop, *Euro-Mediterranean Security: A Search for Partnership* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> See E. Philippart, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: a Critical evaluation of an Ambitious Scheme' (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 201-220.

<sup>27</sup> See also E. Philippart, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A Critical Evaluation of an Ambitious Scheme' (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 201-220.

However, if we interpret EMP as not being exclusively normative, what seems to be a failed policy in need of revisions may full well represent a successful policy to achieve regional 'realist' stability in a volatile region. Volpi recently highlighted this and stated that within a realist framework, 'the assessment of the EU would be that stable regimes running their national economy efficiently in the Middle East and North Africa provide the best means of obtaining a well-policed zone of regional security and prosperity'.<sup>28</sup>

Drawing on the realist tradition, it is therefore useful to look at the EU's external activities through different lenses beyond normative ones. As Donnelly states, 'political realism is a tradition of analysis that stresses the imperatives states face to pursue a power politics of the national interest'.<sup>29</sup> With its emphasis on the role of the state in selfishly pursuing its national interest and gain through 'amoral' power politics, realism *prima facie* seems to be far removed from how the EU perceives itself. Further, it may initially seem difficult to reconcile the primacy of statism in realist thinking with the EU, which is, after all not a state, but a political system. However, through the adoption of Waltzian structural realism,<sup>30</sup> an analysis of the EU based on realist categories is possible. It is noteworthy, for example, that in his theory of international politics Waltz referred to 'units' operating in an anarchic system and therefore subject to constraints of survival as a function of their capabilities. If interpreted through these categories, the EU becomes one of the many units in an anarchic system with a certain degree of power (which does not have to necessarily be only military) that attempt to maximize interests and defend privileged positions. Some EU policy scholars argue that 'existing EU institutions shape and constrain intergovernmental policy-making',<sup>31</sup> while others emphasise that 'the EU should be understood as a system of multi-level governance'.<sup>32</sup> This latter approach sees the Commission occupying a significant position in multi-level governance, because it has the knowledge and expertise to influence Member States with respect to EMP. EU institutions can play the role of a unit at international level.

Additionally, one can hypothesize that the EU bureaucracy dealing with questions of foreign and security policy may be influenced by international relations' concepts that are not normative at all. In this respect, the EU, while having normative characteristics, could also display significant rationalist/realist features. Youngs argues that 'greater emphasis and precision are needed to understand the factors that suggest strategic calculation within the broader parameters of value-informed policies'.<sup>33</sup> Youngs suggested that three criteria be used to evaluate the degree of realism behind EU external policies: strategies employed, degree of instrumental reasoning behind the use of norms and the nature of the policy-making process. Utilising these criteria he evaluates human rights policies implemented by the

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<sup>28</sup> See F. Volpi, 'Regional Community Building and the Transformation of International Relations: the Case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership' (2004) 9/2 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 145-164 at p. 151.

<sup>29</sup> See J. Donnelly, 'Realism in Scott Burchill' in A. Linklater *et al.* (eds.), *Theories of International Relations* (Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2005) at p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> See K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1979).

<sup>31</sup> See Pierson in M. Pollack, 'International Relations Theory and European Integration' (2001) 39/2 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 221-244 at p. 226.

<sup>32</sup> See Marks *et al.* in M. Pollack, 'International Relations Theory and European Integration' (2001) 39/2 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 221-244 at p. 227

<sup>33</sup> See R. Youngs, 'Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU's External Identity' (2004) 42/2 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 415-435 at p. 421.

Commission and demonstrates that the EU is not only about norms, but also about material interests that are justified through norms. Thus, Hyde-Price emphasized the importance of ‘the systemic determinants of EU foreign and security policy’.<sup>34</sup> By simply being part of the international system wherein the principle of anarchy is still dominant, the EU narrowly conceives what is desirable in terms of changes it wants to promote. Discussing US democracy promotion strategies Gause recognizes that further democratization in the Middle East would ‘most likely generate Islamist governments less inclined to cooperate with the United States on important policy goals’.<sup>35</sup> The same strategic imperative also applies to the EU because some material interests need to be defended and promoted in order to improve on its position: Islamist governments would challenge that. It follows that the emphasis on the causal mechanism ‘development/democracy/security’ simply represents intentional rhetoric designed to convey a different message from the one conveyed by other actors. It is not a policy framework the EU may truly act upon. Vasconcelos argues that at the launch of EMP ‘it was implicitly understood that the key security problem was political Islam’<sup>36</sup> and this is what is at the core of EU thinking still, as the political developments in Palestine demonstrate.

With this realist framework in mind, it is possible to hypothesize that, irrespective of their degree of authoritarianism, regime stability in the target countries is the real priority because these regimes can guarantee no upset in the international *status quo*, which would threaten EU interests in the area. For example, economic aid from Europe, rather than benefiting political opponents of authoritarian regimes, would be channelled to governments. The result is that international legitimacy would be given to such regimes, not political opponents. It follows from this that the strategies implemented through the Euro-Mediterranean partnership may be achieving their desired results if one postulates that the EU is an international actor desiring regional stability within a realist concept of security, which maximizes benefits in place of norms. In this context, the EU perceives the promotion of real economic and democratic changes as representing a short-term destabilization of the area and therefore a threat.

Political and security issues were the EU’s priority in the EMP and it is still unprepared to deal with the consequences of following up on its normative declarations. Accordingly, the adversarial nature of the main opposition groups in the Arab members of the Partnership represents a stumbling block in the relationship, undermining the EU’s pro-democracy initiatives. The low priority for democratic change is reflected in the type of policy instruments that are utilized, privileging dialogue with the partner regimes, which have a low degree of domestic legitimacy, rather than engagement with movements that truly represent the view of large sectors of society, irrespective of how unappealing these views might be. While the EU can claim being a norm-exporting actor while simultaneously obtaining material benefits and strengthening its security, the strains remain obvious.

Thus, once one marginalizes the normative aspect, the impact on security of the policies pursued through EMP emerges. The following section analyses EU policies

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<sup>34</sup> See A. Hyde-Price, ‘Normative power Europe: a realist critique’ (2006) 13/2 *Journal of European Public Policy*, pp. 217-234 at p. 217.

<sup>35</sup> See G. Gause, ‘Can Democracy Stop Terrorism’ (2005) 84/5 *Foreign Affairs*, pp 62-76 at p. 62.

<sup>36</sup> See A. Vasconcelos, ‘Democratic Security Ten Years On’, Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on Security and Defence in the Mediterranean, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September 2005, Barcelona, Spain at p. 1.

in Morocco in this context. If the assumption that the EU is partially interest-driven were correct, one would find evidence that what the EU *does* in partner countries strengthens, not weakens, the regime. Democracy-promotion is conventionally based on support for the opposition in its demands for reforms and on denying legitimacy of the current authoritarian ruler. This does not entail a radical confrontational approach, but does entail that a certain 'distance' be maintained *vis-à-vis* the ruling elite. If however the hypothesis were correct, the EU would consider the current ruler of Morocco as a true partner in the process of democratization while aid given is passed through official channels. In other words, one would find evidence of the following: a) EU policy-makers have a clear understanding of what constitutes a security threat, i.e. political Islam; b) accordingly, the privileged interlocutors become the authoritarian government, while 'secular' opposition parties remain sidelined; c) in order to strengthen the incumbents, EU funding and aid is given mostly through 'official' governmental channels and; d) hard security concerns take precedence over other forms of interaction.

If such evidence is found one could argue that the EU, far from being the victim of Member States, is independently pursuing a policy that is framed through traditional conceptualizations of security, relying on authoritarian states to achieve its goals. This helps also explain the misplaced focus on economic liberalization as a foundation for democratic reforms, in the knowledge that such a causal mechanism is at best tenuous, if not counterproductive.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, EU policies externally re-enforce authoritarian domestic dynamics by choosing not to challenge the regime or support the opposition. Simultaneously, the EU obtains its most preferred outcome while claiming it promotes democracy. Unsurprisingly, 'for Arab civil society, this has often been perceived as a cynical pact between Europe and the Arab regimes to consolidate the political status quo'.<sup>38</sup>

To conclude, while a realist interpretation of EMP is restricted and does not capture the full complexities of the policy,<sup>39</sup> a rationalist perspective of what the EU does through the Barcelona process avoids the trap of reconciling the dichotomy between stated objectives and policies implemented to achieve them. In addition it would explain the puzzle as to 'why democratic norms are successfully introduced, whilst in other cases only a superficial or mimetic process of change takes place'.<sup>40</sup>

Such rationalism is particularly evident in changed perceptions in global security after 9/11, but also in the launch of the European Security Strategy (ESS) 2003 and the wider European Neighbourhood policy. The manner in which the ESS identifies and proposes to deal with the key security threats makes Arab partners in EMP the legitimate interlocutors, therefore defeating the stated assumption that the only viable type of security can be achieved through democratizing the periphery of Europe. Specific references to 'bad governance' are not made to any of the partners, but, rather, to countries such as Somalia and Liberia. Similarly, the European Neighbourhood Policy is unmistakably framed in terms of interests. There is for

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<sup>37</sup> See D. Cameron and C. Wise, 'The Political Impact of NAFTA on Mexico: Reflections on the Political Economy of Democratization' (2004) 37/2 *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, pp. 301-323.

<sup>38</sup> See R. Dannreuther, 'Is There Room for Europe?' <[www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net)>, 14 May 2004.

<sup>39</sup> See F. Attinà, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal View' (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 181-199.

<sup>40</sup> See Flockart in J. Grugel, 'Democratization and Ideational Diffusion: Europe, Mercosur and Social Citizenship' (2007) 45/1 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 43-68 at p. 44.



instance close cooperation with neighbours to enable the EU to provide security and welfare to its citizens as well as the effective control of border.<sup>41</sup>

### **The EU and Morocco: security through stable authoritarianism**

Ten years of engagement with the Arab partners have not altered the dilemma between the risks of democratization and the relative safety of regime stability in the area, central to understanding the Partnership. At its heart, there always was 'political Islam'. Even before EMP was launched, it was argued that 'threats to European security (would) arise not from malevolent state power but rather from a complete or partial breakdown of state authority on the other side of the Mediterranean'.<sup>42</sup> Paying heed to this, European institutions saw the advances made by Islamist movements as destabilizing and dangerous for the Mediterranean basin, claiming that opposition groups in power would have resulted in nuclear weapons, a safe haven for terrorists, and mass migration. These fears were augmented by a new brand of transnational terrorism and political violence produced by radical Islamist groups from the Maghreb, a threat to Arab partners' domestic stability. It did not much matter that mainstream Islamist parties vigorously condemned the use of violence.

The inevitable consequence for any European initiative to obtain security ultimately rested in an unsavoury alliance with autocratic and 'illegitimate' rulers in partner countries, meaning that security through democracy could not be achieved. Given that 'the possibility of a direct attack on the Union as a whole or on anyone of its Member States [could] be practically ruled out',<sup>43</sup> other security objectives, such as avoiding domestic instability on the southern bank, controlling mass migration, ensuring non-proliferation and conducting a 'war on terrorism,' could be achieved only through cooperating with authoritarian regimes. This overarching policy framework negatively impacted on the strategy of achieving security through goals of economic development and democracy. If the EU were truly attempting to promote a concept of security based on these goals, one would see a form of economic cooperation unbeneficial to the current governing elites, the use of conditionality when a partner country 'misbehaves', a positive engagement with opposition parties and a freeze on cooperative military and police agreements. However, the opposite is the case. The active policies regarding the promotion of economic and political reforms have, since the beginning of the Partnership, taken place within a well defined security framework: real democratic legitimacy, which should theoretically guide peaceful relations among states according to the EU's values, would not be bestowed upon Islamist movements of any sort. As Holden stated, 'the latent and actual political crises, economic stagnation and rapid population growth rendered it necessary for the EU to take a leadership role in the region if it wanted to avoid instability (and migration) spreading northwards'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, very real security concerns

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<sup>41</sup> See R. Del Sarto and T. Schumacher, 'From EMP to ENP: What's at Stake with the European Neighbourhood Policy Towards the Southern Mediterranean' (2005) 10/1 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 17-38.

<sup>42</sup> See E. Mortimer, 'Europe and the Mediterranean: the Security Dimension' in P. Ludlow (ed.) *Europe and the Mediterranean* (Macmillan, London, 1994) at p. 109.

<sup>43</sup> See Algieri in S. Biscop, *Euro-Mediterranean Security: A Search for Partnership* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> See P. Holden, 'Partnership Lost? The EU's Mediterranean Aid Programmes' (2005) 10/1 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 19-37 at p. 22.

guided the policy since its inception, leading to a hierarchy of objectives.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the EMP can be better understood as achieving the narrow security objective of regime stability by supporting authoritarianism. Achieving stability is imperative because it fosters the continuation of the international status quo, which is obtained through mandates that strengthen the incumbents in the Arab partner countries who are the privileged interlocutors with whom trade negotiation (which benefits European business) takes place. Such incumbents subsequently capitalize on their gate-keeping position to extract resources from the EU, which allow for preservation of power.<sup>46</sup>

Security for the EU means that ‘no country adjoining the EU territory [can be] regarded as a military threat today’.<sup>47</sup> As such, the EU has focused on what can be considered soft security issues such as terrorism, migration, illegal trafficking or organized crime. The necessity to deal with these issues, which are bundled with the larger problem of political Islam, makes the Partnership security oriented. If one considers that the EU has hegemonic tendencies<sup>48</sup> in its pursuit of material economic benefits, the Partnership seems to be a realist enterprise rather than a genuine creation of an area of peace, security and stability. Normative assumptions would highlight the employment of instruments to promote economic development and democratization, while realism would see the EU as largely promoting its own economic interests and abandoning moral stances about democratic rule.

Morocco highlights all the apparent shortcomings of the partnership, but also indicates how successful the EMP has been in achieving short-term security through authoritarianism. In order to understand the relationship between Morocco and the EU one must start with an analysis of the nature of Morocco, which, after ten years of engagement with the EU, remains authoritarian, poor and more ‘Islamicised’ than ever before.<sup>49</sup> In terms of democratic governance, holding elections does not *per se* guarantee that effective and popularly sanctioned policy-making has ensued, particularly in the presence of severe restrictions on the only Islamist movement (the PJD) that takes part to these elections.<sup>50</sup> The Moroccan constitutionalist Bendorou recently confirmed that ‘all power is really in the hands of the King’<sup>51</sup> and while certain liberalising measures have been implemented, the levers of power are still exclusively in the hands of the King and his unelected advisors.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, elections exclude one of the leading opposition movements (the Justice and Spirituality Group led by Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine), while the legal Islamist formation exercises self-restraint and self-censorship on several issues. Turning to human rights, Morocco has much left to be desired: Amnesty International stated in 2004 ‘the sharp rise in reported cases of torture or ill-treatment in the context of *counter-terrorism*’. NGOs

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<sup>45</sup> See D. Schmid, ‘The Use of Conditionality in Support of Political, Economic and Social Rights: unveiling the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership’s True Hierarchy of Objectives?’ (2004) 9/3 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 396-421.

<sup>46</sup> See B. Ghalioun, ‘The persistence of Arab authoritarianism’ (2004) 15/4 *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>47</sup> See R. Aliboni, ‘The Geopolitical Implications of the European Neighbourhood Policy’ (2005) 10/1 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 1-16 at p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> See F. Attinà, ‘The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal View’ (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 181-199.

<sup>49</sup> See N. Beau and C. Graciet, *Quand le Maroc Sera Islamiste* (La Découverte, Paris, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> See M. Willis, ‘Morocco’s Islamists and the Legislative Elections of 2002: The Strange Case of the Party That Did Not want to Win’ (2004) 9/1 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 53-81.

<sup>51</sup> See *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* 2005, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> See J.P. Tuquoï, *Majesté, je dois beaucoup à votre père* (Albin Michel, Paris, 2006).

aside, even one of Morocco's closest allies, the USA, criticized Morocco's human rights record.<sup>53</sup> Somewhat ironically, the EU has highlighted 'positive developments', emphasising new legislation aimed at improving individual liberties. In 2001, the EU believed that 'significant progress in terms of individual freedoms and fundamental rights' was made. While this might have been true following the changes introduced by the late King Hassan II in the late 1990s,<sup>54</sup> successive reports failed to fully account for the human rights' deterioration since 9/11 and after the Casablanca bombings of 2003. The evidence suggests that Morocco does not satisfy the criteria of good governance and respect for fundamental human rights and many proponents of a normative Europe question why the EU remains silent on the issues such as thousands of Moroccan Islamists being imprisoned, tortured and sent to jail after being convicted in kangaroo-courts reminiscent of those held in the 1970s by Hassan II. Given that the EU is the stronger actor in the relationship, it would be expected that its normative values were more forcefully pursued. However, the EU seems to care little about the absence of democracy and human rights abuses: the EU marginalizes these issues in favour of other policy areas that satisfy the EU's *realpolitik* concerns.<sup>55</sup>

This policy of security through authoritarianism rests on strengthening the Moroccan regime through two interconnected policy pillars: economic aid/reforms and military/police arrangements, a discussion to which we now turn.

#### *Economic reforms: strengthening the regime's grip*

Despite intentions for the three aspects of the Barcelona process to be integrated, each independently developed,<sup>56</sup> with the economic aspect being privileged. The rationale behind integrating southern Mediterranean economies was that EU trade would reduce poverty, thereby mitigating the Islamist message's appeal. Simultaneously, the EU would help introducing liberal reforms, particularly regarding the protection and enhancement of human rights. In turn, these reforms would undermine the Islamist discourse surrounding the lack of democracy and legitimacy of incumbents. However, such thinking was fundamentally flawed because the EU, not seeking fundamental regime change, relied on only one interlocutor: the incumbent regime. Thus, liberalization was pursued with some coherence because it strengthened the current ruling elites around the King, enabling the thwarting of domestic challenges. To the detriment of the other normative goals, '[...] daily management of the Partnership is [...] focused on the advancement of the Euro-Mediterranean Free trade Area (EMFTA) project, which continues to proceed at quite a steady pace'.<sup>57</sup> Ample evidence demonstrates how economic liberalization has been successfully hijacked by the ruling elites.<sup>58</sup> Far from triggering democratic openness,

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<sup>53</sup> See *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> See M. Willis, 'After Hassan: A New Monarch in Morocco' (1999) 4/2 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 115-128.

<sup>55</sup> See S. Amin and A. El Kenz, *Europe and the Arab World* (Zed Books, London, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> See E. Philippart, 'The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: a Critical evaluation of an Ambitious Scheme' (2003) 8/2 *European Foreign Affairs Review*, pp. 201-220.

<sup>57</sup> See D. Schmid, 'The Use of Conditionality in Support of Political, Economic and Social Rights: unveiling the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's True Hierarchy of Objectives?' (2004) 9/3 *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 396-421 at p. 396.

<sup>58</sup> See B. Dillman, 'Facing the Market in North Africa' (2001) 55/2 *Middle East Journal*, pp. 198-215.

it has led to the creation of semi-democracies<sup>59</sup> where opposition Islamists have exposed growing inequalities that the European driven economic order has generated.<sup>60</sup> This has subsequently had a profound impact on the political system, where incumbents and European officials cannot tolerate such views because it would require unsatisfactory change from their vantage.

This is demonstrated by the aids given by the EU to the Moroccan government, turning a blind eye to EMP clauses on universal human rights and democratic governance. For example, through authoritarian government authorities, between 2000-2001

[...] the following programmes were approved: financial sector adjustment (52 million EUR); health sector reform (50 million EUR); justice reform (28 million EUR); rural development in Khenifra (9 million EUR); solid waste management in Essaouira (2 million EUR); water sector adjustment (120 million EUR). Morocco has been the leading recipient among the Mediterranean partners in terms of total funds received from the MEDA programme. [...] (U)nder the MEDA programme Morocco has so far received a total of €1,180.5 million in commitment appropriations: €656 million under MEDA I (1995 - 1999) and €524.5 million under MEDA II (2000 – 2003). (Additionally, the European Investment Bank loaned Morocco) during the period 1995 – 2002, €1,220 million, intended among others for construction and upgrading of highways and rural roads, improvements to sewerage and water management systems, rehabilitation of the railway network and the development of the banking sector'.<sup>61</sup>

Even the threat of suspension of aid and loans may have had positive effects on Morocco's domestic behaviour. But this never took place. This is particularly disconcerting given that the EU itself emphasises the importance of human rights and democracy. This evidence suggests that the EU seems to be interested neither in the gravity of human rights abuses in Morocco, nor in promoting genuine democratic reforms by activating its 'diplomatic' and economic arsenal to obtain concessions.

### Securitizing the relationship

Recent international events have only contributed to the further prominence of security in the EMP. Despite calls for engaging with the Islamist opposition,<sup>62</sup> there is considerable reluctance to do so and the securitization of many issues has increased with the launch of the ESS and the Neighbourhood Policy. While the lack of democracy and the persistence of poverty are central to the security challenges facing

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<sup>59</sup> See D. Brumberg, 'The Trap of Liberalised Autocracy' (2002) 13/4 *The Journal of Democracy*, pp. 56-68.

<sup>60</sup> See A. Yassine, 'Political manifesto', [www.yassine.net/lettres/memorandum.htm](http://www.yassine.net/lettres/memorandum.htm), 22 July 2003.

<sup>61</sup> The issue of widespread corruption is recognised by EU officials as well in their reports. See for instance the Report 'Euro-Med Partnership: Morocco. Strategy Document 2002-2006', December 2001.

<sup>62</sup> See R. Aliboni, 'Promoting Democracy in the EMP. Which Policy Strategy?' [2004] *EuroMesco Report*.

the EU,<sup>63</sup> such as increased mass-migration and transnational terrorism, the policies adopted to counter such threats also fail because the incumbents are the only interlocutors. As such, short-term interests are privileged over the long-term ones of democratization. The continued desire to build links with security and police services on the Arab side testify to the EU's unwillingness to stray from its 1995 path. While the recent clashes between terrorists and security forces in Morocco should not lead to underestimate the threat, the very policies of the EU and the Moroccan regime seem to feed militant radicalism, particularly in the very poor slums surrounding Moroccan cities.

If truly a normative actor, one would expect the EU to be reluctant to coordinate security policies with discredited Moroccan institutional entities. Yet, in terms of territorial disputes and war on terror, Morocco and the EU have cooperated fully, which has satisfied mutual priorities. On the territorial front, the EU neither takes an interest in the issue of Western Sahara, with Spain even recognizing this region's products as being Moroccan. While 'relations between Spain and Morocco are negatively influenced by the claims of the former on the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla',<sup>64</sup> such minor disagreements are overshadowed by the cooperation since the Casablanca and Madrid attacks. Further, the EU has financially supported the Kingdom for 'dealing' with illegal immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Morocco ranks highly among the countries receiving military hardware from EU Member States. This, despite the existence of an EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports which requires governments to export only to states with solid democratic credentials which is not the case of Morocco: spending over 4% of its GDP on defence, in 2003 it received 13 different categories of armaments under 124 export licenses. EU countries profiting from such sales have been France, Germany, and Italy. It is difficult to reconcile the objective of economic development and democracy with the sale of weapons to states known for their occupation of Western Sahara. On closer inspection, such weaponry is instrumental in upgrading the Moroccan armed forces in the Western Sahara, and in carrying out soft security 'duties' such as preventing illegal aliens from reaching Europe.

Moreover, much rhetoric surrounds the new special relationship on counter-terrorism. In a recent speech in 2004 Gijs De Vries, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, argued in favour of closer links between Europe and Arab partners on the southern Mediterranean bank by way of cooperation with intelligence services. This is despite the fact that such security services are notoriously brutal.

#### *The EU: the new realist on the block?*

Why has the EU behaved as it has? One popular explanation for the lack of more activism regarding democracy promotion and human rights defence is that it takes time for the EU's 'normative values' to influence partner countries. The argument is that the EU, as a normative actor, is not forceful in promoting its values because this might lead to a 'backlash'. Thus, the EU prefers to keep the partner 'engaged' over a long period in order for the 'osmosis' of norms to occur. However, this explanation is weak for two reasons. First, the EU has been engaged with Morocco for more ten years through EMP during which time the human rights situation seems to have worsened when compared to the late 1990s. Further, elections in 2002 were less

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<sup>63</sup> See ESS 2003.

<sup>64</sup> See S. Biscop, *Euro-Mediterranean Security: A Search for Partnership* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003) at p. 2.

'democratic' than in 1997, a year after the Association Agreement had been signed. The absence of EU action against Morocco during this time may have implicitly signalled that rights and democracy concerns are of minute importance.

A second explanation considers the weak institutional structure of the Euro-Med Partnership, particularly the divisions between Member States. While such institutional difficulties may be compelling in other policy areas, it is not convincing regarding EU-Morocco relations. This is because the EU has autonomy in external trade relations and can leverage this to obtain concessions from Morocco on human rights matters. The EU's inability to do so signals its unwillingness to act.

A third explanation is that countries such as China and North Korea witness more severe human rights abuses and weaker democratic governance than in Morocco; therefore, Morocco should be treated differently. This sentiment is seen in official EU documents, which expound Morocco's efforts despite evidence (above) pointing to the opposite.<sup>65</sup> This 'relatively nice dictators explanation' argues that the EU refrains from lecturing to Morocco because the King is making some effort to bring about change. However, this explanation fails on two grounds. First, the core of normative values is that all abuses should be treated and dealt with similarly. Philosophically, abuses of human rights are equal and should be dealt with in an equal manner. Secondly, the EU operates according to a different logic in similar contexts. For example, it lectures to states such as Cuba, the Ukraine and Turkey about human rights abuses, but it remains unclear why Morocco is different.

With the above in mind, traditional power politics realist explanations seem to be more convincing in explaining the EU's attitudes and policies towards Morocco. A combination of an 'economic explanation' with a 'geo-strategic' one provide a cogent framework for understanding the EU policy-making *vis-à-vis* Morocco. The economic explanation suggests that the EU has material reasons to marginalize issues of democracy and human rights. The main thrust of the EMP is increasing economic ties between Europe and countries on the southern bank of the Mediterranean. The benefits of this market, with which full liberalization is to occur by 2010, include increased energy resources and a significant overall market potential for European goods. Unsurprisingly, since the launch of the EMP, the EU has increased trade, investment and exports to Morocco, where the trade deficit is in the EU's favour.

Because it is a rational actor, which pays more attention to material benefits over normative ones, the EU does not upset favourable trade benefits, something confirmed by EU officials involved with democracy-promotion strategies.<sup>66</sup> While the EU may emphasize the role of an independent and active civil society to foster democracy and thus co-finances projects aimed at increasing the level of civil society activism among youth (such as Euro-Med Youth), the programmes have touched only 20,000 people (all partner countries included). This indicates a rather low-level priority compared to more prominent economic links.

Coupled with 'economic interests' is the 'realist' belief that stability is more important than democracy when dealing with the Mediterranean. In terms of political reforms in Morocco, the EU's ideal outcome would be a democratization process that elects a secular leader who wants to continue a similar political and economic relationship to which the current government subscribes. This would entail the emergence of a very strong, liberal opposition that is able to marginalize the King politically and to outmanoeuvre the popular Islamic movements, whose democratic

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<sup>65</sup> Personal Interview with EU senior official, Dublin, March 2005.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Commission official, Brussels, March 2005.

credentials are unproven. Yet, this outcome is quite unlikely. The largest opposition party at the moment is the Islamic Party of Justice and Development. Additionally, the most popular civil society movement is an even more radical Islamic formation led by Sheikh Yassine,<sup>67</sup> who demands democratic accountability in the context of a significant transformation of society. Secular opposition movements remain weak and considered negatively by vast sectors of society. In such conditions, the EU cannot attain the outcome it favours and compromises by dealing with a stable and friendly authoritarian regime. Not doing so may result in bitterly fought elections that will potentially result in leaders of a new Islamist party coming to power that questions and opposes EU policy preferences. The risk of such a party gaining power through democratic means is not worth it if stability of the region falls.<sup>68</sup> As stability is the name of the game, this demonstrates that the EU is acting rationally rather than normatively. Otherwise, democracy would be promoted irrespective of the consequences for the EU's interests.

### **Conclusion**

This study contributed to a better understanding of EU external activities by suggesting that this should be examined not only by framing the EU as a wholly normative actor, but also by taking into account the rationalist traits that are the consequence of operating as a unit in an anarchic international system. The study does not suggest that a realist conception of European foreign policy can fully capture the entire essence of EU external policy-making. However, the evidence presented can be interpreted as informing the validity of at least looking at EU external policies through different theoretical lenses. In particular, it seeks to challenge the assumption that the EU is always committed to supporting democracy abroad. The findings for Morocco, which could be generalized for the entire Middle East, indicate the opposite. It is probably true to assert that the EU is very much a normative entity, but the values it rests on represent only the outer framework of policies that have a very substantial degree of realism and rationalism, where the normative values clash with the imperatives of security, interests and short-term gains. The EU interactions with Morocco are premised on the assumption that the stability of the authoritarian monarchy should not be threatened. This stability is necessary to promote economic reforms that are favourable to the European Union and to defend wider strategic interests linked to the rise of extremist and potentially anti-Western actors, namely Islamists. By building its external relations with Morocco on the unquestioned leading role of the monarchy, the European Union is prevented from actively pursuing the moral imperatives of democracy and human rights that its normative role requires. This occurs because EU policy-makers operate in a 'realist' environment which they have to take into account.

Thus, the perceived failures of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are only evident if one takes the theoretical vantage point that envisages the EU and its actions as informed only by values. If one accepts, instead, that the EU may have within its internal structure contradictions that are derived from the interaction between the realist and the ideational, one could offer a slightly more positive judgement of the results achieved through the Partnership and a more coherent understanding of the policies implemented.

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<sup>67</sup> See M. Zeghal, *Les Islamistes Marocains* (La Découverte, Paris, 2005).

<sup>68</sup> Interview with leading member of the European Parliament, Brussels, June 2001.

In a structural international anarchic system, the continuation of the status quo is of fundamental importance to the privileged actors at the top of the power ladder. The EU, as a powerful unit in the system, is constrained by such objectives and can be seen as operating towards achieving that goal irrespective of its ideational constitution. What presently guarantees the continuation of the status quo is the survival of the authoritarian regimes targeted through the Partnership. In this respect, therefore, security has been achieved and material interests have been promoted. Morocco does not represent a threat to the EU as long as the King remains in command and as long as Islamists are kept out of power even through un-democratic means. At the same time, the Moroccan economy has been opened up to trade with increased benefits for European businesses and for a small minority of Moroccan economic actors linked to the regime. Critics would correctly point to the facts that the threat of terrorism has increased, that illegal migration has continued and that a clash of civilizations at the level of ideas is currently under way. However, these might not be, in the thinking of realists, unbearable costs to bear when compared to what an Islamist take-over might have represented or might represent in the near future for Morocco. In the event of the arrival to policy-making power of the Justice and Charity Group, problems would likely be much greater as Moroccan Islamists would challenge the international political and economic status quo.

The case of Morocco indicates that stability and security (irrespective how softly interpreted) are 'core norms' for the EU and the marginalization of other core norms such as democracy and human rights is a political sacrifice worth paying if the benefits outweigh the costs. This is a traditional realist conceptualization of policy-making and seems to confirm the validity of the critique of 'normative' Europe that Hyde-Price recently postulated. The EU is to a certain extent forced to wear normative clothes and it periodically issues statements about the necessity for Morocco to further democratise and for the authorities to respect human rights, but all this quite quickly fades in the background when more pressing interests come to the fore. In addition, it should be emphasised that such a realist interpretation is not due only to the overbearing influence of Member States within EU policy-making. While it is beyond doubt that some Member States utilize external EU policies to promote and defend their narrow national interests, it should also be highlighted that the Commission and other EU institutions enjoy a wide degree of latitude in making certain decisions due to their expertise, presence on the territory and the divisions among Member States. While the Commission is far from being the rational and unitary actor that realists see as central in the international system, it enjoys a rather important role to play as the process of integration deepens and skills and competencies are transferred to the supranational level. In short, the EU can be conceived as unit in the system. The empirical nature of the paper provides more solid arguments for those who are interested in looking at the practical application of the theoretical assumptions that scholars of EMP have been debating for some time.

If and when the EU will truly become a single actor in world politics, one may argue that it will likely subscribe to the largely 'realist' tendencies that permeate and characterize the international system. The case of the EMP and Morocco demonstrates that the EU may, in fact, behave as 'ruthlessly' as nation states do.