European policy on the Middle East: Making a difference?

Friday, 1 February – 5pm
Investcorp Auditorium, St Antony’s College

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Chair: Eugene Rogan (St Antony’s College)

Jointly organised with the European Studies Centre (ESC)

Since the Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2011 and the European Union pledged to reinforce its foreign policy cooperation, it has struggled to articulate and implement a policy on the Middle East which effectively protects and furthers its interests in the region. It responded swiftly but not very successfully to the Arab Spring; it played a supporting role in the fight against Islamic terrorism, and championed the Iran nuclear deal; but otherwise became a bystander in the growing conflicts in the region; it tried hard to maintain stability and add some momentum in the Israel-Palestine peace process; but it became increasingly obsessed after 2015 with the challenge of migration from and through the region. The paper assesses why it has struggled to formulate a policy, what it has managed to achieve nonetheless, how national and European policies have interacted, why it is increasingly important for the EU to have a coherent policy on the region, and makes proposals for what that policy should be and how it could be made effective.

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