The Political Economy of Governance in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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The European 'Security Community' as an export commodity: EU security policy and crisis resolution in the Middle East and North Africa.

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Abstract

The European Union has been built on security community foundations, and since 1945 peaceful relations have progressively been institutionalised within the Community’s borders. The logical next step for the EU is to ‘export’ the institutions and practices of the security community to try to bring peace and stability to the European near abroad. This ambitious policy programme has created high expectations among EU officials, member governments, commentators and the EU’s international partners. But these expectations have been let down by events on the ground, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. This paper argues that policy based on an assumption that the EU can export its own security governance model to a region with very different problems is poorly conceived. The paper discusses EU security policy with regard to three ‘hard security’ crises in the MENA: the long running dispute over the final status of Western Sahara, Iran’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons, and the 2006 summer war in Lebanon and its aftermath. Together these crises illustrate the inadequacies of the EU security community model for resolving specific conflicts and the difficulties faced by EU policymakers in designing an alternative grand strategy. Nevertheless, the EU has been active in all three cases, and its ongoing activities provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses and character of the EU as an international security actor.

1. Introduction

A ‘security community’ is a group of international actors – normally nation-states – who solve their differences without resort to violence. The European Union has been built on security community foundations, and since 1945 peaceful relations have progressively been institutionalised within the Community’s borders. The logical next step for the EU is to ‘export’ the institutions and practices of the security community to try to bring peace and stability to the European near abroad.[1] EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana has stated that ‘The Union wishes to project to the outside world the stability that it has patiently constructed within… based on values, norms and capabilities shared by the 25.’[2] Crisis management is both a core objective of CFSP and a major stumbling block to the realisation of a security environment where peace is maintained by multilateral dialogue and cooperation. This paper seeks to address the question of whether the European security community concept is useful or appropriate model for solving current security problems in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), a multidimensional EU-led effort to encourage peace, stability and prosperity in neighbouring countries, aims to encourage Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) to adopt European standards, practices and governance models in many areas of public life.[3] While the EMP’s economic initiatives have had a degree of success, the security situation in the Middle East and North Africa has clearly worsened since the 1995 Barcelona Declaration. The EMP was designed as a step by step process, intended to achieve incremental progress over an extended period, and not as an endgame with specific objectives. Nevertheless it is clear that EU-initiated efforts to base regional security on a community model reliant on rules, multilateral institutions and ‘shared values’ have been undermined by intractable security crises in the MENA.

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[1] Exactly what constitutes ‘European’ foreign and security policy has been debated at length by analysts (see Stetter 2004, Smith 2003). Following the useful definition proposed by Christopher Hill, the understanding of this paper is that European foreign and security policy means the output of all three EU pillars and not only the CFSP and ESDP. Hill also reminds us that this activity does not produce a single, unified foreign policy and that policy outcomes do not always represent coherent or effective strategic choices (2004, p. 145). EU foreign and security policy remains firmly intergovernmental and there are limits to the extent to which member states share policy objectives. Nevertheless, EU member states are working with Brussels to develop a common foreign policy even if they do not always agree about specifics. As Hill observes, Brussels serves as a ‘centripetal force,’ bringing the policy objectives of EU member states closer together. This conception is helpful when one considers the actual policies that emerge from this bureaucratic process, especially in the area of security and crisis resolution.

[2] See Javier Solana (2005) ‘Introduction’ in Gnesotto, Nicole (ed.) *EU Security and Defence Policy: The First Five Years 1999 – 2004* Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies p. 10.

[3] See www.ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/intro/index.htm.

George Orwell once wrote: ‘in judging a man like Ghandi one seems instinctively to apply high standards.’[4] Judgements of the EU and its Mediterranean policies seem similarly affected. When the Barcelona Declaration was signed in 1995 hopes were high that the EMP would bring the EU and its southern neighbours closer together. A decade on much of the extensive scholarship on the EMP expresses disappointment at the partnership’s lack of success. Some commentators criticise the EU’s tendency of dealing with third countries in the MENA region in such a way that relationships are characterised more by dominance than by genuine ‘partnership,’ as envisaged in the Barcelona Declaration (Philippart 2003, p. 215). Others criticise the EU for failing to engage adequately with civil society or with failing to make allowances for the complex impacts of economic reform in developing societies (Youngs 2006, p. 30). Criticism of the EU on these grounds can be seen to stem from a genuine feeling amongst most Europe-based commentators that the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was fundamentally a good idea that has been executed poorly. The EU itself is mostly viewed as a force for good in the world, above the petty power-seeking and corruption that blights the foreign policy of even the world’s most enlightened governments.

As long ago as 1993 Christopher Hill warned against expecting too much of the European Union as an international actor in the security field. Hill argued that the community’s capabilities had been overestimated, leading to what he termed a ‘capability-expectations gap’ among not only internal supporters of Europe, but also among the EU’s international partners (Hill 1993, p. 306). Furthermore, as Hill argues elsewhere, there has been a tendency to judge the EU's capacity to resolve conflicts outside Europe by the measure of European successes as conflict prevention within Europe (Hill 2001, p. 316).

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[4] George Orwell ‘Reflections on Ghandi,’ *Partisan Review* January 1949.

The argument of this paper is that while the assumption that the EU can export its own security governance model to a region with very different problems is flawed, the intergovernmental structure of EU foreign policymaking precludes alternative grand strategies. The paper discusses the European role in three 'hard security' crises in the MENA region: the long-standing conflict over the status of Western Sahara, the rise of Iran as a traditional regional power, and the 2006 summer war between Israel and Hezbollah and its aftermath. Together these events have illustrated the painful truth that security in the MENA remains threatened by seemingly intractable tensions and frequent wars. It follows that the European Union's ability to act in crisis situations is more limited than many expect. Nevertheless, the EU has been active at various levels in all three of the crises dealt with in this paper, and the outcome of this activity can tell us a lot about the Union's capabilities and shortcomings as an international security actor.

The next section of this paper outlines the security community concept and its role in shaping EU foreign and security policy. Section 3 discusses the appropriateness of the European security community model for regional security governance in the Middle East and North Africa. Section 4 discusses the EU's role in hard security crises in Western Sahara, Iran and Lebanon. Section 5 concludes, and considers some of the opportunities and constraints facing EU policymakers.

2. The security community: a model for European security

According to Karl Deutsch, a security community brings to its members peace based on 'the real assurance that members of the community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in another way'[5] The basic principles of security communities are firstly that their members talk their way out of crises instead of resorting to violence, and secondly that this practice is reinforced by institutionalisation of the management of military and defence resources, which are only deployed in pursuit of security policies accepted as legitimate by the community's members (Cornish and Edwards 2001, p. 587). Security communities blend material and normative aspects, and have two defining elements: firstly a 'strategic culture', meaning the institutions and practices which develop habits and structure the evolution of policy, and secondly a sense of 'we-ness' among members, fostered by shared interests, worldviews and mutual loyalty (Adler and Crawford 2004, p. 14).

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[5] Deutsche, Karl et al (1957) *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press)

Constructivist scholars have seized upon the security community model as a means of illustrating their arguments about 'normative power' and the influences shared identities have on international security and politics. In so doing, they have kept Deutsch's ideas alive, conceptualising the security community as a normative prohibition on war among a particular group of countries. For these scholars the security community concept reminds us of the power of transnational ideas in international community building, holding out the possibility that international anarchy can be overcome (Adler and Barnett 1998, pp. 12 – 13). Two alternate views dominate the constructivist literature on regional institution building. On one hand, some commentators argue that cultural and institutional similarities are necessary building blocks for community based international conflict management models. On the other, cultural differences serve to compound divergent state interests, placing barriers in the way of multilateral crisis resolution efforts (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002). The role of culture is both complex and controversial, and it is not the intention of this paper to discuss this in detail. As Attina (2004) observes, regional security partnerships need not be based on ideals but on the development of a preference for dialogue among the governments of an area. Once the decision has been made to eschew violence, governments 'acquire a habit of negotiation when dealing with the solution of mutual conflicts' (p. 8). In any case such extensive scholarly debate reflects the fact that the seductive notion that states can overcome differences through dialogue, institution-building and common understanding has influenced security policy making in Europe and elsewhere, especially since the end of the Cold War (Morgan 2003, p. 50).

It follows that security communities pursue policy objectives that reflect the pluralism and consent upon which they are founded. Some scholars argue that security communities are more likely to be formed by democratic states whose citizens expect peaceful security policy to be ‘comprehensive,’ ‘indivisible’ and ‘cooperative’ (Adler and Crawford 2004, p. 10; see also Wagner 2003, p. 698). This means that security communities tend to pursue non-traditional ‘soft’ security objectives – such as controlling terrorism, environmental degradation, transnational organized crime and migration – as well as traditional military-political or ‘hard’ elements that threaten the physical security of a nation’s territory and the political security of the state. But the persistence of traditional international security crises that undermine efforts to develop international cooperation is a constant reminder that security policy incapable of dealing with hard security problems will inevitably struggle to make progress in other areas.

Deutsch envisaged two kinds of security community. ‘Amalgamated’ security communities occur when previously independent units merge into a larger entity and pool their resources, including sovereignty. ‘Pluralistic’ security communities are those in which actors do not attempt to balance or defend against each other, although they retain their legal independence (Adler and Barnett 1998 p. 6). Pure examples of security communities do not exist in the real world. The United Nations system, which has had some success in crisis resolution and in achieving international agreements on arms control, was built on the premise that some kind of security community is desirable at the global level. The ASEAN Regional Forum is more explicitly pluralistic as it relies on a principle of non-intervention for much of its strength. NATO, which inspired Deutsch’s work, is a formal alliance between democratic nation-states dominated by the USA. In 1957 Deutsch observed that European countries and the United States were developing North Atlantic security relations along pluralistic security community lines – quite an assertion at the time of writing, as much of Europe was still recovering from the Second World War. In recent years – especially since the 1998 Anglo-French St. Malo declaration on European defence and the subsequent development of the European Security and Defence Policy – the intra-European project has become one of deliberate amalgamation of selected defence and security resources and competencies.

The EU is perhaps the world's most comprehensive example of a security community that is beginning to show some signs of amalgamation through the common institutions of the ESDP.[6] EU and/or NATO membership commits European countries to expressing a sense of shared identity and solidarity. NATO remains the pre-eminent institutional actor in the European security community, and the protection offered by Article V of the Washington Treaty is the biggest attraction to potential members (Webber et al 2004, p. 9). For the EU, the so-called 'Petersberg Tasks' give substance to a European strategic culture by outlining in general terms the legitimate uses for common EU defence resources.[7] In the December 2003 European Security Strategy, Javier Solana stressed the need for the EU to further 'develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and where necessary robust intervention.'[8] The language of the security community model is reiterated in the Barcelona Declaration, which calls upon its signatories to 'settle their disputes by peaceful means,' while supporting 'processes aimed at stability, security, prosperity and regional and sub-regional cooperation.'[9]

EU foreign policy is path dependent – it is based on the techniques the EU used for enlargement (Kelley 2006). As Albioni and Qartarneh (2005) observe, 'EU security strategy is fundamentally predicated on its *Acquis Communautaire*' (p. 7). EU policymakers, inspired by the success of the EU integration process, have come to believe that the governance models that worked in Europe will also work elsewhere, and there is strong support for the CFSP among European voters (see table 1). But the European security community model and its underpinning strategic culture have not come about as the natural outcomes of some universal law of nature. They are the product of negotiations among international actors in the context of a unique set of historical, political and economic circumstances.

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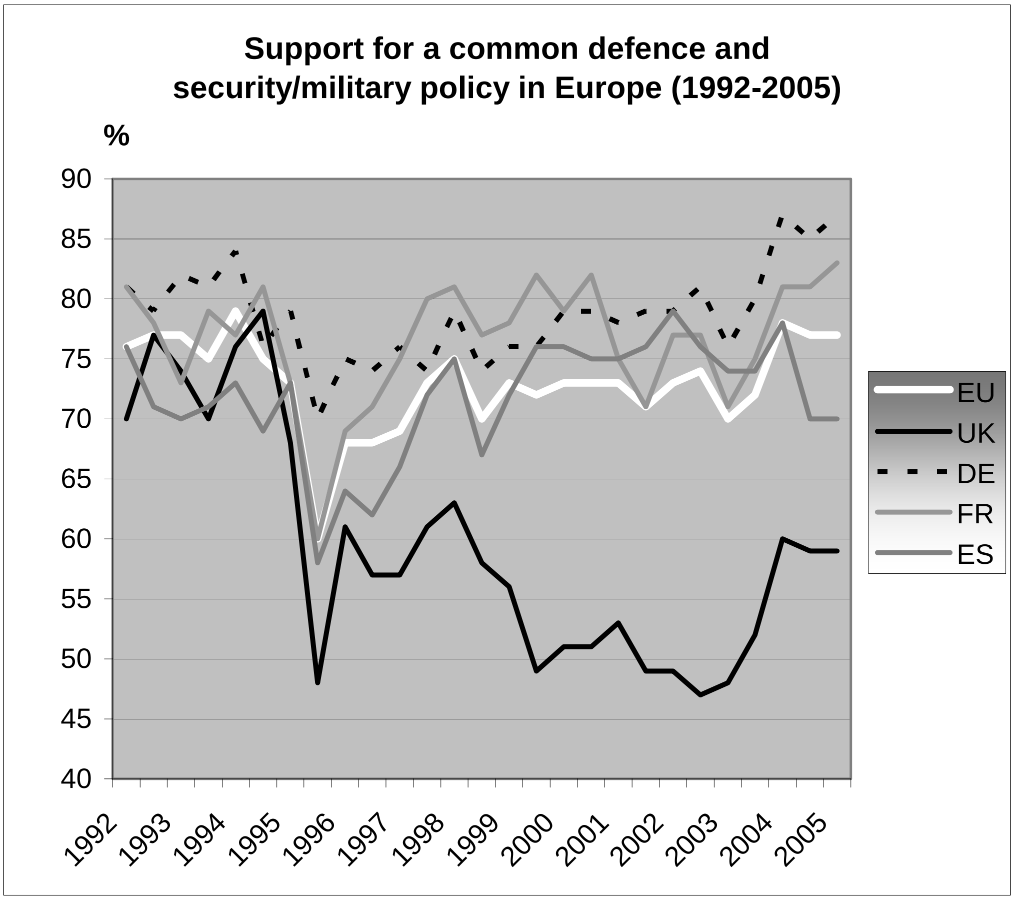
[6] See Missiroli, Antonio 'ESDP Bodies' at http://www.iss-eu.org/esdp/08-bodies.pdf (accessed 12 September 2006).
[7] See Ortega, Martin 'Petersberg Tasks, and missions for the EU military forces' at http://www.iss-eu.org/esdp/04-mo.pdf (accessed 12 September 2006).
[8] Council of the European Union (2003) A secure Europe in a better world: European Security Strategy, p. 17.
[9] Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference 27 – 28 November 1995.

Table 1



Source: Eurobarometer.

The widespread carnage wrought by two world wars in the 20th century finally brought realisation – both morally and materially – that Europeans must find better ways of resolving their differences than waging war on one another. In the decades following the Second World War, the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe meant that the escalation of future violent conflict threatened the very survival of European civilization. Furthermore, the bipolar Cold War standoff and the constant threat posed by the Soviet Union created a geopolitical imperative for collective security in Western Europe and the institutionalisation of the transatlantic security community. Since the end of the Cold War the European security community model has been extended to Central and Eastern

European countries through the enlargement of both NATO and the EU. At every stage this multilateral process has been underwritten by American power.

While there has been significant progress in the development of a security community infrastructure to manage conflicts within Europe, the same cannot be said for European foreign policy. The EU can only intervene in foreign conflicts when the European Council reaches a unanimous decision. Divergent and sometimes competing EU member state policies towards Africa, the Middle East, Russia, Eastern Europe and Asia have hampered the development of an ‘external’ EU security culture which would make cooperation under the CFSP more likely in times of crisis. As security is a highly fluid and controversial policy area, it is easier for European governments to agree about broad concepts – such as their desire for peaceful crisis resolution and respect for the rule of law – and not to touch upon specific issues where states may not agree. Accordingly such high-minded concepts such as promoting peace through regional cooperation and institution-building tend to be easier to express than to enact.

3. The Security Community as an export commodity: European Union foreign and security policy in the Middle East and North Africa.

According to Javier Solana, the purpose of the CFSP and ESDP is to make the European Union more effective in dealing with security crises.[10] The 2003 European Security Strategy stresses the need for improvement in the EU’s capacity to prevent regional crises descending into violent conflict and threatening the security of the EU itself. Unsurprisingly, these assertions have proved popular with European voters (see table 2). The European Security Community model has assumed an ‘out of area’ function, and EU military operations in Kosovo and Congo appear to lend weight to observations that the EU is beginning to put significant effort into playing a greater role at the ‘sharp end’ of international crisis resolution. However, the security challenges presented by the MENA are very great indeed and the EU has struggled to match its regional ambitions with deeds.

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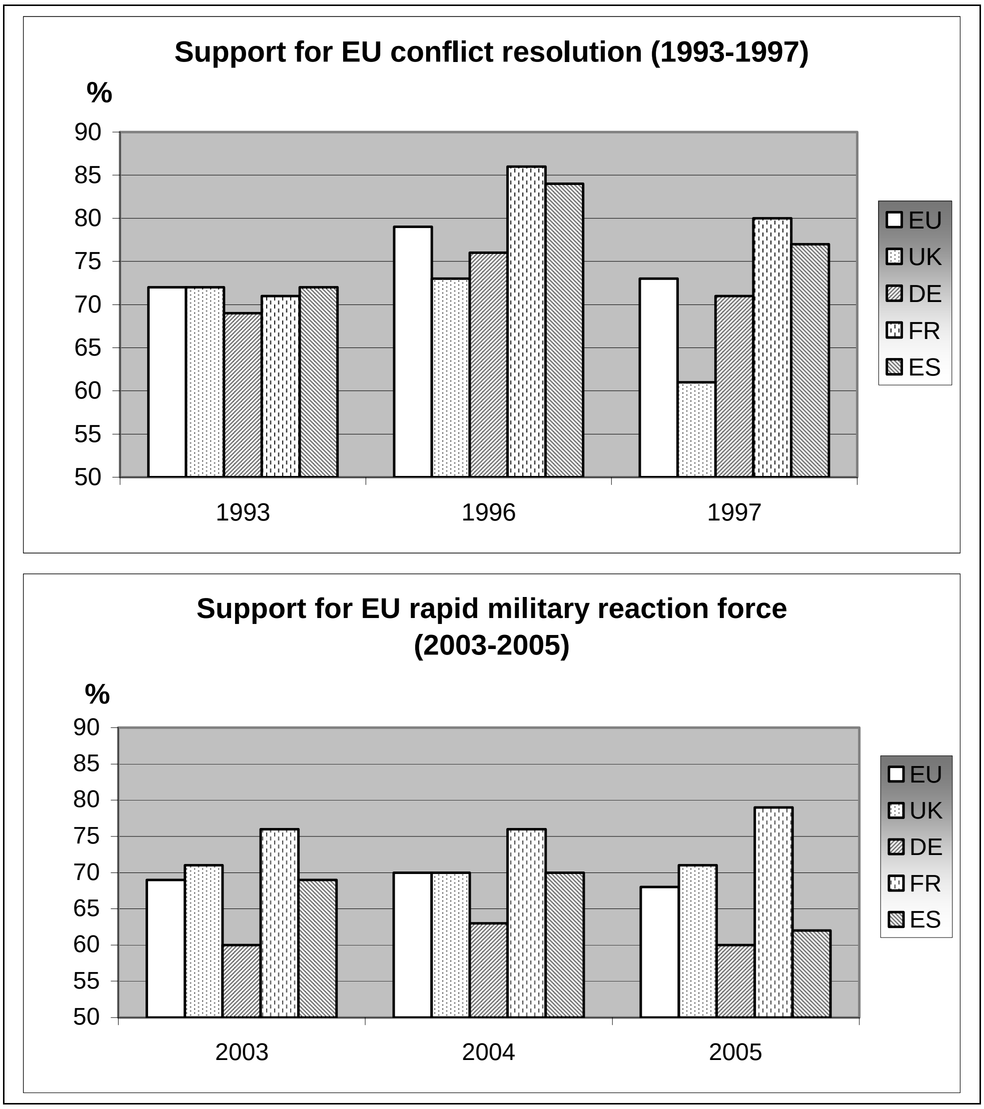
[10] See Javier Solana (2005) ‘Introduction’ p.5

Table 2



Support for EU conflict resolution (1993-1997)

Support for EU rapid military reaction force (2003-2005)

Source: Eurobarometer.

Most security threats originating from outside the EU's borders are older than the CFSP and the European Security Strategy's articulation of a common EU position (Quille 2004). This is certainly the case in the MENA, where the less than stellar record of European efforts to resolve long-standing conflicts prompted the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 (Solingen 2003, p. 180). The EMP is designed around a governance model based on the European experience that stresses the role of multilateralism and institutions, 'an interpretation that resonates with the concept of "security communities"' (Adler and Crawford 2004, p. 2) Similarly, Attina (2004) has described the Barcelona Declaration as 'the fundamental agreement of a regional security system' due to its multidimensional three-chapter overall strategy and the specific initiatives proposed under the 1st chapter (p. 2).[11] These include a commitment to

> 'promote conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among (signatories and to) support processes aimed at stability, security, prosperity and regional and sub-regional cooperation… including the long term possibility of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean pact to that end.'[12]

Negotiations on the proposed Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability were widely considered to be the key to the establishment of this pact. These were suspended ahead of the Fourth Euro-Mediterranean conference of Foreign Affairs Ministers in Marseilles in November 2000 after the resumption of violent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians (Balfour 2005, p. 14).

The core reason for the failure of EU efforts to begin building a MENA security community is the disparity of interests between the EU, its member states and its MENA partners. The EU does not face traditional security threats from nation-states but rather security 'risks' stemming from instability around its periphery (Peters and Bittner 2006). European security interests in the Mediterranean are mostly based on 'soft' security concerns – illegal migration, organised crime and people trafficking, environmental degradation and the fear of terrorist attacks in European cities. Conversely MENA governments understand national security in more traditional terms.

South Mediterranean commentators have argued that the EU security governance model is out of step with region's long standing problems. As Heller (2003) points out, against the threats posed by belligerent neighbours or domestic opposition, ‘regional cooperation facilitated by greater domestic openness and the reduction of barriers to cultural and economic interaction across borders is not seen as the most appropriate or promising response’ (p. 134). Soltan (2004) considers that ‘the new policies and attitudes represented in the EMP were too novel and immature to survive the political hardships of the last eight years’ (p. 3).

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[11] Attina also reminds us that the EMP is not the only multilateral security institution-building project in the Middle East and North Africa – the 'Mediterranean Dialogue' of NATO and the OSCE and the United States' BMENA initiative both complement and compete with the EMP. Interestingly, all of these efforts have been initiated by Western powers.

[12] Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference 27 – 28 November 1995, http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/bd.htm (accessed 23 August 2006).

More damningly, the cooperation of MENA countries in western-led efforts to enhance security cooperation has been undermined by widespread popular disillusionment with American policy in the region. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 has changed the balance of power in the Middle East, and its violent aftermath has the potential to plunge the region into long-term instability. Specific post-invasion problems in Iraq including the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal have fuelled perceptions that the United States does not practice the same level of behaviour that it demands of its international partners. While most European governments have condemned these tactics, Europe’s image has not been helped by reports that some EU members have allowed their facilities to be used for the ‘extraordinary rendition’ of terrorism suspects.[13] Even influential western commentators have argued that American and European policy in the MENA has ‘massively buttressed the old rejectionist thesis that America’s aim was to divide and rule the Muslim world, to control its oil and to impose Western culture.’[14] In a regional political climate beset by mistrust and violence it is difficult to envisage a positive outcome for multilateral security institution building based on dialogue and cooperation.

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[13] *Guardian* ‘Minister admits government in dark over rendition flights’ 8 June 2006.

[14] *Economist* ‘The Arab World: Coalitions of the Unwilling’ 19 October 2006.

4. EU responses to MENA ‘hard security’ crises.

Western Sahara

The three decades old Western Sahara conflict has damaged bilateral relations between Spain, France, Algeria and Morocco and undermined EU efforts to encourage multilateral security cooperation in the Western Mediterranean. The conflict escalated from an anti-colonial insurrection when Spain was forced to cede the territory to Morocco and Mauritania in 1976. The Saharawi resistance movement known as the Polisario Front began a guerrilla war against the occupying powers the same year, and although Mauritanian forces left after a partial peace agreement in 1979, the war lasted until a United Nations-brokered ceasefire took effect in September 1991. This ceasefire followed the creation of the UN MINURSO mission tasked with preparing a referendum on self determination for the Saharawi people. The ceasefire is still theoretically in effect even though no referendum has ever taken place. In 1997 former US Secretary of State James Baker was appointed as Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General to find a compromise resolution, but Baker resigned in 2004 after failing to satisfy all parties. Diplomacy has since stalled and the final status of Western Sahara remains uncertain.

The Moroccan government considers Western Sahara to be an integral part of its territory, but is wary of Saharawi autonomy because of the implication that devolution may have on other Moroccan provinces, especially the Berber areas (Gillespie 2004, p. 7). Rabat is supported by the United States and French governments, which fear the consequences of a Moroccan withdrawal from Western Sahara for the stability of the Moroccan government. France is also a major supplier of arms to Morocco (Fanés 2004 p. 98). Since September 2001 the White House has regarded Morocco as an important ally in its ‘war on terror,’ and in 2004 Morocco signed a free trade agreement with the United States (although this does not include Western Sahara) and became a ‘preferred partner’ of NATO.

The Algerian and Spanish governments have supported Saharawi independence claims and have insisted that any settlement be acceptable to the Polisario Front. Spain considers that it has an historic responsibility as former colonial power to ensure the self-determination of the Saharawi people. Madrid is also uneasy at the pressure that Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara might pose for Melilla and Ceuta, its two remaining North African territories (Gillespie 2001, p 11). Spanish public opinion is somewhat mixed – on one hand, a strong, stable Morocco might be better at preventing illegal migration to the Canary Islands and across the Strait of Gibraltar. On the other, there is widespread support amongst the Spanish public for the Polisario cause, and this has been reflected in the work of several European NGOs that have managed to influence some influential actors, most notably the European Parliament (Fanés 2004, p. 108). Algeria is wary of Moroccan power in the region, while domestic unrest in Algeria has complicated the issue further. Meanwhile Morocco has taken advantage of internal conflict in Algeria to hold back on any compromise (Gillespie 2004, p. 7).

The EU's role in the Western Sahara dispute has been constrained by disagreement between France and Spain over the final status of the territory. In 1976 the nine member EC decided to stay out of what it considered to be an African issue, a position it maintained until 1988 when the EC declared that it supported the UN's call for a free and fair referendum on self determination (Fanés 2004, p. 101). The French and German EU Presidencies in 1998 and 1999 reiterated the EU's full support for the UN Secretary General's plan. The EU has repeatedly called upon all parties to move negotiations forward and has raised the Western Saharan issue during its Association Council meetings with Morocco.[15] The most prominent EU body on Western Sahara has been the European Parliament, which in 1999 called on Morocco and the Polisario Front to cooperate fully with the United Nations.[16] The European Commission has been somewhat silent on the issue and does not provide a clear affirmation of the EU position on its website, despite Western Sahara's importance to the Barcelona Process. [17]

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[15] Statement by the European Union, Fifth Meeting of the EU-Morocco Association Council, 22 November 2005. EU press release C/05/308.

[16] *Bulletin EU* 1/2-1999 point 1.2.9.

The EU has been more active in conducting humanitarian activities in Western Sahara. In 2003 the Greek EU Presidency issued a declaration welcoming the release of 100 Moroccan prisoners of war by the Polisario Front and stated that the EU 'has carried out repeated demarches in this respect to the parties involved.'[18] In 2005 the European Parliament issued a resolution on human rights in Western Sahara, calling for the Moroccan authorities to cooperate fully with the UN in ascertaining what had happened to people who had disappeared since the conflict began and in facilitating NGO access to the territory.[19] More concrete initiatives have been carried out through ECHO, the European Commission's office for humanitarian aid. ECHO has been active in Western Sahara since 1993 and its role has been crucial in maintaining four refugee camps near Tindouf in south-western Algeria. The European Commission has distributed € 128 million to the Saharawi refugees through ECHO and in September 2006 allocated a further € 10 million for basic assistance, including the provision of food, water and other essential services.[20] The UN MINURSO mission currently includes personnel from EU members Austria, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy and Poland. However the mission is small with around 400 staff in total, and several non-European countries also participate.

It is evident from the frustrated efforts of the EU and UN that the Western Sahara conflict cannot be resolved by outside actors. Any lasting solution will require agreement among the governments of Morocco, Algeria, Spain and France. This may be possible: Morocco has recently indicated to the UN that it is ready to negotiate on Saharawi autonomy, while Algerian President Boutiflika has asserted that Algeria is no longer a party to the conflict and will accept any settlement between Rabat and the Polisario Front.[21] Gillespie argues that the election of the Spanish socialist government of Luis Rodriguez Zapatero has seen a change in policy: Spain has proposed a fresh solution that recognises autonomy for Western Sahara within Morocco, provided that all parties agree. Gillespie believes that the Spanish plan – rapprochement between Morocco and Algeria, cooperation between France and Spain, and backing for the UN resolutions combined with greater support for the Saharawi refuges – may be the key to a compromise solution (2004, p. 13).

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[17] Somewhat confusingly, the External Relations DG includes the territory of Western Sahara as part of Morocco in its 'basic facts' section on the country – see http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/morocco/intro/index.htm. Accessed 5 December 2006.

[18] 'Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the release of 100 Moroccan prisoners of war by the Polisario Front,' 5 March 2003. EU press release P/03/25.

[19] *Bulletin EU* 10-2005 point 1.2.5.

[20] 'Humanitarian aid: new €10 million decision for Sahrawi refugees in Algeria,' 15 September 2006. EU press release IP/06/1197.

Nevertheless the glacial speed of diplomacy may not prevent a resumption of violence. In February 2006 the 30th anniversary of the declaration of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic was celebrated in Tifariti, a ramshackle town on the edge of the Sahara desert. Some five hundred foreign journalists and aid workers attended the occasion and were reminded that while the Polisario Front remains committed to a diplomatic solution despite thirty years of frustration, this may not last. On a recent mission the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General found that 'there was a broad trend of resignation to the status quo with regard to the question of Western Sahara.' The Envoy was told that although the Polisario leadership would continue to call for restraint, they may not be able to prevent younger Saharawi from resorting to violent protest for much longer.[22]

The Iranian Nuclear Weapons Programme

Although not formally a member of either the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or the European Neighbourhood Policy, Iran is central to the EU's regional security objectives in the MENA. This has become even more apparent in recent years as the international community's concern that Tehran is developing nuclear weapons has grown, leading to speculation that an Iranian bomb could spark a nuclear arms race in the region among the likes of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt.[23] Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the EU and High Representative Solana, it appears that diplomatic efforts may not prevent the Iranian regime from successfully joining the family of nuclear armed states, a situation that would be disastrous for EU-led efforts to build a regional security community.

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[21] United Nations Security Council: Report of the Secretary General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, 16 October 2006, S 2006/817, p. 3.

[22] Ibid, p. 5.

[23] See *Economist* 'Nuclear Succession' 28 September 2006.

A strictly ‘realist’ interpretation of Iran’s unique geopolitical situation would conclude that its efforts to develop nuclear weapons are understandable – Iran is an historic regional power for which the combination of location, enviable natural resource endowment, revolution and ideological incompatibility with the West make it influential and vulnerable at the same time. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 the Iranian theocracy has been regarded as a pariah regime by the United States, and in 2002 US President George W. Bush included Iran in his ‘axis of evil’ along with Iraq and North Korea. Since 2001 the United States has invaded two of Iran’s neighbours, Afghanistan to the east and Iraq to the west. The American decision to invade Iraq in 2003 and replace its dictatorial regime removed Iran’s main regional competitor and left a power vacuum – especially in Southern Iraq – that Iran has moved to fill. Furthermore, Iran is in close proximity to two other nuclear powers with which relations have not always been cordial: Russia to the north, and Israel to the east. Iran has no diplomatic relations with Israel, and tensions between the two regional powers were raised after a speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was reported in Western media as a call for Israel to be ‘wiped from the map.’[24] Relations between Iran and Israel soured further during the 2006 summer war in Lebanon, discussed below. Given these circumstances it should surprise no-one that the Tehran government is attempting to develop nuclear weapons, if for no other reason than to protect itself from a similar fate to that which befell Saddam Hussein and the Taliban.

Furthermore, Iran’s conventional military power is weak relative to its neighbours. According to the London based International Institute for Strategic Studies, Iran’s military spending is consistent with that of other regional powers apart from Israel and Saudi Arabia which spend much more (see table 3). However, Iran purchases less new military equipment than its peers and much of its hardware is obsolete, while many of its service personnel are poorly trained. The nuclear weapons option has clearly been seen as a quick and relatively easy shortcut to a ‘minimal deterrent’[25]

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[24] There has been some confusion over the translation of this remark, which was itself a quotation of an earlier speech by Ayatollah Khomeini. See http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/jonathan_steele/2006/06/post_155.html, Accessed 1 December 2006.

Table 3

Military Spending and Arms Purchases/Sales 2002 – 2004 ($US million)						
	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**% GDP 2004**	**Arms purchases 2001 – 04**	**Armed forces personnel, 2006**[*]
Selected MENA Countries						
Iran	3,077	4,271	5,604	3.4	500	935,000
Turkey	8,034	9,036	9,390	3.1	n.a	996,000
Israel	9,677	10,325	9,661	8.3	3,400	584,000
Lebanon	539	512	528	3.1	-	85,000
Saudi Arabia	18,502	18,747	20,910	8,9	19,000	216,000
Egypt	3,300	2,732	3,589	4.6	5,900	1,228,000
Algeria	2,098	2,206	2,805	3.7	400	469,000
Morocco	1,545	1,826	1,990	4.0	300	401,000
Selected Western Countries					**Arms sales 2001 - 04**	
United States	348,555	404,920	455,908	3,9	53,967	2,492,000
United Kingdom	38,141	43,311	50,120	2.3	17,149	459,000
France	36,492	46,232	52,704	2.6	11,626	381,000
Germany	29,404	35,295	37,790	1.4	4,914	640,000

Source: *The Military Balance* 106:1 June 2006.

As one prominent Iranian-American academic has argued, Iran’s international assertiveness is partly motivated by a desire to compensate for the government’s domestic weaknesses and inability to reform the country’s political system and modernise its economy. President Ahmadinejad’s vocal support of Iran’s nuclear programme has been described as an effort to distract domestic attention from the slow progress of his election pledges to fight corruption and pass on Iran's oil wealth to ordinary Iranians.[26] Meanwhile, including Tehran in the 'Axis of Evil' has not served to exploit this situation but has paradoxically strengthened radical conservatives who assert that Iran is under threat from democratic reformers and their foreign backers. Iranian criticism of Israel and support for Hezbollah and the Palestinians is widely praised in the 'Arab Street' where the Israeli and American nuclear arsenals are considered to be a greater threat than any weapons developed by Iran.

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[25] Kaveh Ehsani ‘On the brink: the Great Satan versus the Axis of Evil’ *Open Democracy* 3 May 2006.

[*] Approximate figure, includes reservists.

The EU has taken a prominent role in the international community's efforts to convince Iran to give up its nuclear weapons programme. In October 2003 the 'E-3/EU' (Britain, France, Germany and the EU), supported by Javier Solana and the European Council, offered Iran a package of economic incentives in exchange for Iran's suspension of uranium enrichment and acceptance of inspections by the IAEA. Javier Solana has met on several occasions with Iran's chief negotiator Dr. Ali Larijani, and in November 2004 Iran and the E3/EU signed the Paris Agreement which reaffirmed the parties' commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.[27] Iran promised to suspend its enrichment activities and submit to IAEA inspections but rejected subsequent proposals from the EU and Russia to assist in building a nuclear electricity plant and enriching uranium outside Iran. In early 2006 the E3/EU was joined by the three remaining permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, Russia and the USA) in calling for further negotiations with Iran. However tensions rose again after Iran resumed uranium conversion and in April 2006 President Ahmadinejad announced that 'Iran has joined the group of those countries which have nuclear technology'[28] During a visit to Tehran in June 2006 Javier Solana presented the Iranians with a new proposal from the E3/EU+3 for opening negotiations and urged Iran to respond positively. However Iran was not prepared to suspend enrichment activities and British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett announced on 6 October 2006 that the matter would be referred to the UN Security Council.

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[26] Hooshang Amirahmadi 'Iran and the international community: roots of perpetual crisis' *Open Democracy* 24 November 2006.

[27] International Atomic Energy Agency: 'Communication dated 26 November 2004 received from the Permanent Representatives of France, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom concerning the agreement signed in Paris on 15 November 2004,' IAEA INFCIRC 637, 26 November 2004.

[28] BBC News 'Iran declares key nuclear advance' 11 April 2006.

North Korea's nuclear tests in mid 2006 are a clear indication of the inability of carrot and stick diplomacy to deter a state determined to acquire nuclear weapons. Moreover, events since the accession of India and Pakistan to the nuclear club in May 1998 indicate that pariah status need not necessarily follow nuclear weapons acquisition. The Iranian government has so far rejected overtures from the international community and has not accepted any deal that would remove its option of developing a military nuclear capacity if it were to choose to do so. However the Iranian government have indicated on several occasions that they are prepared to put their nuclear programme on the table in return for a promise from the United States that it will not continue to seek regime change in Tehran. The EU cannot provide Iran with this assurance – it can only work behind the scenes to convince policymakers in Washington that the way forward is to normalise relations with Tehran and work from a platform of quiet diplomacy that recognises the interests of both sides. In the current climate it is unlikely that this kind of proposal will gain much traction, and that instead the UN Security Council will impose a weak sanctions regime that will isolate the Iranian government but will not prevent it from building nuclear weapons. As neither the United States nor Israel are prepared to risk launching a pre-emptive military strike on Iran, it is highly likely that Tehran will acquire nuclear weapons within months – a scenario that the Israeli government is reportedly preparing for.[29]

The 2006 Summer War in Lebanon

The biggest security challenge in the MENA remains the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU has repeatedly stated that a permanent settlement between Israel and the Palestinians is the key to the success of the Barcelona Process, especially in the security arena. The ESS states that 'resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a strategic priority for Europe. Without this there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in the Middle

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[29] See *Jerusalem Post* 'US won't order preemptive Iran strike' 5 December 2006.

East.'[30] The EMP was launched during a period of relative calm in the mid 1990s when expectations were high that negotiations could lead to lasting peace, but hopes were dashed by the second *intifada* which began in September 2000. The subsequent cycle of tit-for-tat violence that has prevented the resumption of serious negotiations among the key parties, and the EU appears to be unable to make a difference in this most intractable of crises.

During the summer of 2006 the Barcelona process seemed a distant dream. On 12 July Hezbollah guerrillas attacked an Israeli border patrol and abducted two soldiers. Israel responded with a massive military operation against Lebanon, targeting ports, roads, bridges and the Beirut international airport in an effort to cut Hezbollah's lines of supply. Israeli troops invaded southern Lebanon for the first time since their withdrawal in 2000 after 18 years of occupation. They could not prevent Hezbollah from firing thousands of rockets into northern Israel over the next month, and the conflict ended on 14 August when UN Security Council Resolution 1701 came into effect. The resolution, which was delayed due to disagreements over whether or not the text should call on Israel to release Lebanese prisoners, called for the Lebanese government to deploy forces in southern Lebanon and maintain a monopoly over armed force throughout its entire territory. It also called for the international community to strengthen the UNIFIL mission, present in Lebanon since 1978, to 15,000 troops.[31]

During the summer war the EU did not fiddle while Beirut burned – but there was little Brussels could do other than issue statements, launch a humanitarian mission and prepare funds for the aftermath. Javier Solana travelled to Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, but could not use EMP instruments to defuse the crisis (Youngs 2006, p. 27). The European Council called for Hezbollah to release the captured Israeli soldiers, and for a cessation of hostilities and return to diplomacy. The Council urged Israel not to resort to disproportionate action and called upon all parties to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.[32] ECHO opened an office in Beirut as early as 12 July, and EU officials pressed the Israeli government for safe corridors for the access of humanitarian convoys. By the 8th of August the EU and its members had pledged over €100 million in assistance to the crisis in Lebanon.[33] In the wake of the conflict the EU has reiterated its commitment to the Lebanese government, and has committed to the reconstruction process. Thirteen EU countries take part in UNIFIL with major contributions from EU members France (2000 troops) and Italy (3000 troops).[34]

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[30] *ESS*, p. 8

[31] UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006).

The situation in Lebanon following the August 14 ceasefire remains precarious. The Lebanese government led by Prime Minister Siniora came to power after Syrian forces withdrew following the assassination of the pro-Western former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The 'cedar revolution' received the enthusiastic endorsement of the White House and the European Union, both of whom regard a sovereign and democratic Lebanon as an important factor in their wider objectives in the Middle East.[35] Inevitably anti-western voices in Lebanon and throughout the region have accused Siniora's government of being an agent for Western influence. Siniora's position was not helped by his western allies' diplomatic inertia while Israeli aircraft destroyed his country's infrastructure during the 33 day war. Although Hezbollah's claims of divine victory may be overstated, the Shi'a organisation has gained confidence from the inability of the Israeli military to inflict an unambiguous defeat. Meanwhile the international community's failure to bring the conflict to an early conclusion did nothing to raise hopes among liberal Lebanese that the West is capable of preventing Hezbollah's drive for power. In December 2006 Hezbollah inspired street protests attempted to force the Siniora government's resignation. As it is unlikely that Israel will stand by while a hostile government takes control of its northern neighbour, it appears likely that the 2006 summer war may turn out to be a mere phase in a wider regional conflict.

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[32] Council of the European Union 'Council Conclusions: General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting – Brussels 17 – 18 July 2006'

[33] European Commission 'EU response to the conflict in Lebanon,' MEMO/06/306 8 August 2006.

[34] Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden have committed personnel. Despite UNSC 1701's call for a force of 15000, only 10,480 military personnel were deployed with UNIFIL on 24 November 2006.

[35] See www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/11/20061101-1.html. Accessed 30 November 2006.

5. Observations and policy recommendations

The persistence of hard security crises in the MENA is indicative of a regional security environment that is significantly different from that envisaged by the EU's Mediterranean policy and the security community model at its heart. Europeans are faced by a classic 'catch 22' situation: regional actors will not conduct their relations in the cooperative spirit necessary for building a security community while the crises with which the model is designed to deal remain unsolved.

Several factors contribute to this conundrum. First, the EU and MENA countries have very different priorities in the security arena. Most Arab governments are concerned with the security of the state – meaning the regime in many cases. They are not inclined to engage seriously with governance initiatives that require them to relinquish control of the levers of their own power. Second, an EU-led MENA security community cannot take root while the EU is not taken seriously as an actor by the key regional powers – including the United States. It is also a development that can be ruled out absolutely while EU member states have not settled on the Union's external 'security culture,' or character and role as a security actor. This leads to the third problem for CFSP architects: the EU's own decision-making structures. The unanimity rule for security-related decisions results in overall policy platforms that reflect only the broad range of objectives while reducing the likelihood of common action in specific areas where member state interests diverge.

The three crises discussed in this paper highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the EU's MENA security policy in different ways. In the Western Saharan case, the EU has been unable to agree on a common position because of disagreement between France and Spain over the territory's final status. As a result, the EU must support the UN position despite the fact that it has not broken the deadlock in 30 years. The EU can serve as a forum for debating issues and can offer advice and humanitarian assistance. It can act as a salve to its members' conscience by providing money to Saharawi refugee camps in the Algerian desert. But any final agreement must be reached by the governments of Spain, France, Morocco and Algeria, together with the Polisario Front. Opportunities may arise in the short to medium term for the EU to facilitate an agreement as the ongoing stalemate appears to no longer appeal to the actors involved.

Iran's nuclear ambitions are difficult to contain as they reflect structural patterns of power and self-help in the international arena. Moreover Iran has a government that does not play by Western rules and whose objectives would not be undermined by sanctions and isolation. Tehran has oil wealth and several cards it can play in the region – especially through Shi'a proxies in Lebanon and Iraq – meaning it is able to respond to threats. The key to containing Iranian ambitions is through achieving a stable balance of power in the broader Middle East. This means that the US and European governments need to treat Iran's situation seriously – the 'axis of evil' metaphor precludes a rational assessment of Iran's interests and prevents negotiations on managing them. The West is faced with the choice between treating Iran as just another state or with resorting to sanctions that will further isolate an already nervous regime with nuclear objectives. While engagement is also no guarantee that Iran will abandon its nuclear programme, North Korea provides clear precedent for the likely outcome of ostracism. The EU, through the work of Javier Solana, has not backed away from engaging with Tehran thus far. While there may be little that European policymakers can do to make the US do the same, there may be value in encouraging Washington to establish normal diplomatic relations. If Iran is to return to the NPT and submit to IAEA inspections it needs a security guarantee, which is something that the EU by itself cannot provide.

European countries could not do anything to halt the fighting in Lebanon either individually or collectively. France, the United States and Israel reached an agreement only after Israel's efforts to achieve a swift and unambiguous victory failed and the Olmert government came under pressure at home. The EU was able to step into the aftermath with money and expertise, but European military intervention was impossible without the legitimacy of a UN resolution. Furthermore, the main Western actors involved were able to do little to persuade Hezbollah's Iranian and Syrian backers from using Lebanon as a proxy for their own regional ambitions, or to convince the Lebanese people that a better future lies with orienting their country towards the West – an example that the EU may be able to provide through its reconstruction efforts. The current political situation in Lebanon remains volatile and, should it again deteriorate into violence, European soldiers may be called upon to work in dangerous surroundings. This is likely to severely test the will of EU member states to remain engaged with UNIFIL, and by extension the ability of the EU to use its good offices to achieve peace through example. A long term resolution of the Lebanon crisis will require European participation in the political and economic reform process needed to stabilise democratic government and restore the confidence of investors and tourists in Lebanon (Salem 2006, p. 13). But the 2006 summer war was only symptomatic of wider regional geopolitical problems for which there appear no easy solutions.

Given the internal political character of the EU, it is difficult to imagine Brussels promoting a model for MENA security that differs from the pluralistic security community in any significant way. European citizens want the EU to play a role on the international stage, they want common foreign and security policy to reflect the Union's founding principles and ideals, and they want the EU to intervene in foreign crises. They also want the EU to be successful in its endeavours. But just because the 'European way' works in Europe doesn't mean that it will automatically work elsewhere. The security community model is in many ways a view of the world as Europeans would like it to be, and not of how the MENA is. While there is no doubt that the ESDP has developed rapidly since 1998, member states are not considering giving Brussels an army and the right to decide when to use it – a development that would completely transform the EU as an international actor, and not necessarily for the better. The EU is not a nation state and some of the time honoured techniques of international diplomacy – such as brinkmanship – are unavailable to its leaders. Such limitations mean that the EU's ability to resolve international hard security crises often falls short of the expectations of Europeans.

The key to successfully appealing to others to respect principles of non-violence is to be seen to adhere to these standards at all times and in all situations. The failure of the United States to respect this basic principle in recent years has undermined its credibility, particularly in the Middle East. Several EU member states have also suffered reputational damage because of their association with American policies and practices. There are signs that Washington is considering a return to multilateral diplomacy in the MENA: recent American studies have concluded that there is an urgent need for a regional security institution that includes all of the big players (Princeton Project 2006, p. 36).[36] The EU will welcome this development, and could view it as an alternative to the failed Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability. A draft framework that includes regional powers currently outside the Barcelona Process, such as the United States, Iran, Libya, Russia and China, would be a more appropriate forum for discussing MENA security issues.

The Barcelona Declaration was signed in 1995 during a period of optimism about the prospects for lasting peace in the MENA region. Since the turn of the century this optimism has faded amid a series of crises with regional and global implications. Given the cyclical nature of international politics it is likely that future opportunities for ambitious regional initiatives will arise, provided that policymakers are prepared to seize them. The European Union has developed through a series of negotiated frameworks that build on past efforts, and EU foreign policy is gradually extending into areas where member states consider that collective efforts bring the greatest rewards. While member state interests will continue to define the EU's role in crisis resolution and management, the ability of Brussels to add value to international discourse on security issues is growing. As the crises dealt with in this paper indicate, the European security community is not currently an appropriate model for the MENA. If it is to be so in future, a period of consolidation based on rational calculation of interests is preferable while instability persists.

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[36] The Iraq Study group has made a similar recommendation for a regional grouping including Iran, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the European Union. The group's initial task would be to stabilize Iraq, but the report also recommends a new diplomatic offensive aimed at solving all of the problems in the Middle East. See *Economist* 7 December 2006.

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