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The Political Economy of Governance in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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Working Package 10
New Challenges: Geopolitical Change

Working Package Summary
New Challenges: Geopolitical Change

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1 Introduction: Regional Security in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Middle East and North Africa is at the crossroads of the global trade in goods and ideas, and the 'great game' has long been played by nations and empires competing for resources and influence in the region and beyond. In the 21st century the MENA's importance beyond its geographical borders is reflected in the influential political contests that take place there, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iraq war, and the international campaign to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership does not operate in isolation from the geopolitics of the MENA region. State and non-state actors that have not signed the Barcelona Declaration, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Hezbollah and the United States of America, have political and security concerns and preferences that affect the EMP fundamentally, and in so doing create both opportunities and restrictions for Europe and its Mediterranean Partners.

Working Package 10 concentrates on the central geopolitical issue of regional security, and has two principle objectives. The first of these is to explain the lack of security cooperation in the MENA, especially the absence of a formal set of rules governing security cooperation. Working papers address the role of regional and extra-regional actors, the functioning of the institutional setting, and the influence of conflict and tension on regional security cooperation. The working package's second objective is to identify areas in which regional and external actors may cooperate better during the next decade or so. The objective of this analysis is to identify ways in which the European Union and its Mediterranean partners can contribute to the development of a regional security regime, such that proposed by the EMP's security basket.

At the international level, government actors base security policy on their perceptions of the gravity of threats to the state as a territorial, political and economic entity (George 2006). These perceptions in turn shape their preferences, which they pursue through a series of interactions which take place in a given institutional setting. Should the institutional setting prove incapable of providing an environment in which heterogeneous preferences can be reconciled, actors can choose either to step outside the institutional setting or to take steps to change it. Actors may decide to pursue security objectives multilaterally, bilaterally, unilaterally or as a member of a coalition or alliance. The outcomes of this process depend on many factors including the relative power of the actors, the level of threat perception, and the restrictions and incentives on offer.

The Euro-Mediterranean area cannot be characterized by the absence of threat. It is fundamentally affected by conflicts and crises in the wider MENA region, and to date no region-wide initiative has emerged to deal with these security problems. The security of one actor cannot reasonably be separated from the security of other states and non-state actors in the region (Buzan and Waever 2003). Actors are caught in a trap: bilateral security issues are often blamed for preventing the development of multilateral cooperation, and yet multilateral cooperation is needed as there are few bilateral issues that affect only their immediate protagonists. MENA security is also influenced by the interplay among external actors with global influence and ambitions, such as the United States, Russia, China and the European Union. Security at the intergovernmental level is further influenced by transnational and sub-national forces including pan-Arabism, Islamism, the activities of powerful non-state actors such as Hezbollah, and the Sunni-Shi'a schism within Islam. These factors combined present significant challenges to the efforts of European and Mediterranean policymakers to base security interaction on an agreed set of rules.

2. Major Findings of Individual Reports

Paper 1, Spain: "The influence of external actors on security cooperation in the MENA: Are United States and European Union security interests in the MENA complementary or conflicting?

If regional actors cannot manage their heterogeneous preferences to work in the promotion of peace and stability by themselves, then an external actor or a combination of external actors could intervene. However, if the preferences of external actors in security matters in a region are heterogeneous, incentives for security cooperation within that area will not exist or will be less than if the preferences would be similar. Taking into account these ideas, this paper analyses the geopolitical influence of external actors in the MENA, focusing on two external actors, United States and the European Union. The paper begins with an approach to the security policy priorities of these actors towards the MENA. The objective is to determine whether the US and EU foreign and security objectives towards the MENA are compatible. The second part of the paper analyses the existing instruments for cooperation in the MENA. The instruments for security cooperation between the US and the EU are examined, with the goal of identifying possible areas for cooperation.

As a result of the research, the following conclusions have been drawn:

The US and the EU have many similar strategic interests in the MENA, due to the fact that Mediterranean is a sum of almost all the major issues that the international community currently faces. Following Haizam Amirah Fernández, 'there is a broad spectrum of concerns, ranging from stability, development, energy security and democratisation to international migration, terrorism, drugs and human trafficking and environmental protection' (Amirah, 2007:2). However, between the two areas there are differences in strategic cultures and historical experiences that affect the priorities and approaches towards the region and that justify divergent policies and different perceptions of threats.

As common elements of the US and EU policy towards MENA, three matters of interest have been identified:

- The Middle East Peace Process.

- The Fight against Terrorism

- Political and Economic Reform at the regional level.

As main differences of these two policies, we can point out the following aspects:

- In the US there is a special section within the Department of State which focuses attention on the whole MENA region. The EU does not see MENA as a unique area. EU foreign policy towards the MENA does not have, in principle, the same root.

- In contrast with the US, the EU does not have a Defence Strategy. Furthermore, at the EU level there are no specific forces devoted to the MENA. US defence policy divides the MENA in two. On one hand EUCOM (AFRICOM after 2008) deals with Northern African countries, on the other CENTCOM deals with the Middle East.

- European cooperation in cultural issues and the special interest of the US in Iraq are further examples of possible divergences between the policies of these external actors.

Progress made in the economic aspects of the Atlantic Agenda proved the extent to which US-EU cooperation can be effective if they really share an aim as well as combining the means for achieving it. Perseverance in this sphere is absolutely essential, since economics is a way of compensating for misunderstandings in Security and Defence policy.

Paper 2, Turkey: The influence of regional actors on security cooperation in the MENA "Geopolitical Challenges in the Middle East: Political Legitimacy and Regional Security"

In the MENA, actors such as Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Israel and Iran have heterogeneous preferences which are difficult to reconcile, particularly when these countries are able to turn disagreements between external actors to their advantage. Regional actors do not share the perspective of external actors such as the European Union – while the EU and its members perceive mainly 'soft' security risks that emanate from the region as a whole, MENA actors are more concerned by traditional military and political threats posed by neighbouring countries. We should assume that regional security (as opposed to regional conflict and violence) is an objective that all regional actors share. However these states are also concerned with national and domestic security, objectives that create a security dilemma when they are pursued confrontationally rather than cooperatively.

The threat perceptions and security priorities of MENA states are influenced by the region's internal peculiarities. The central argument of this paper is that the states of the region tend to develop their own unique interpretations on geopolitical developments and dynamics, vis-à-vis each other and the Western world, particularly with regard to their implications in terms of their evolving national security interests and objectives. This trend complicates the creation and maintenance of a region-wide, comprehensive, sustainable security framework.

Perceptions and priorities are shaped by an intricate pattern of interactions between objective and subjective factors. On one hand, states are still frame their security policy choices in accordance with such materialistic concerns as capitalizing on the opportunities and constraints of the regional and global balance of power. On the other hand, normative and cognitive factors such as political legitimacy, ethnic and religious identification deeply influence the way they perceive internal and external security threats and formulate their official and unofficial policy. As a consequence of the domestic implications of globalisation the subjective dimension has recently acquired more prominence in determining how MENA states define and respond to the security challenges of the contemporary geopolitical conjuncture.

In this context, the deficiencies of some of the key regional state actors in political legitimacy facilitate the manipulation of sub-state actors and supra-state movements as a form of exerting influence and promoting national interests. Despite the example set by the full-scale invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, this trend renders full scale war less and less feasible, diminishing its relevance for the dynamics of the region in terms of inter-state

relations. The resultant low-intensity violence persistent across the region further complicates the prospects for the establishment and preservation of a collective security arrangement in the traditional sense, based on firmly grounded principles, rules and norms that would be shared by all relevant state-actors.

It is often easy for policymakers to fall into the trap of regarding state-actors as rational, unitary players who are able to calculate their benefits, costs, and risks correctly and reasonably. Actors do not always behave in a manner that others would consider rational when they perceive a threat to their security. Living in a region marked by the presence of numerous religions, ethnicities and nationalities juxtaposed next to each other, contemporary Middle Eastern states and societies face unique challenges. Increasing awareness and rising expectations in the Muslim societies have led some to ask what went wrong compared with the stable, peaceful and developed parts of the world.

This analysis suggests one important, relatively prescriptive perspective: the paramount importance of state authority in promoting not only certain domestic reforms but also regional security and stability in the Middle East. The Muslim societies of the region are still struggling at the initial and mid phases of modernization. They still have a long way to go before achieving the consolidation of the third pillar of political modernization: the expansion of meaningful political participation. After all, authority has to exist over all segments of a society prior to limiting it; effective authority is imperative to cultivate political order and, thus, a reasonable degree of political legitimacy; and the stability of the system must be ensured by effective institutional mechanisms in order to structure the increasing demands of various social forces produced by modernization and to moderate their disruptive impacts. The current phase of modernization that the majority of the Muslim societies in the region have achieved requires the accumulation and centralization of power, on the one hand, and its 'tempered' dispersion coupled with steps toward political institutionalisation, on the other. In light of this analysis, the argument that more democracy is what MENA states really need for a stable, secure interstate order seems to be a precipitate inference from the democratic peace theory. Therefore, the recognition of this need and reality by policymakers is paramount to the success of both exogenous and endogenous efforts to promote security and stability in the region, especially in light of the increasing prominence of disruptive sub-state groups

Paper 3, Germany: The institutional setting -

"Regional Security in the Middle East and North Africa: Developing an Institutional Framework for Cooperation?"

The EU has a transformational agenda with regard to security policy in the MENA. The EMP is a deliberate attempt to change the institutional setting within which regional security cooperation takes place. To date, EU-initiated efforts to base regional security on a multilateral model reliant on rules and 'shared values' have been unsuccessful. It is likely that the reasons for this are that the institutional framework the EU is proposing is not reconcilable with the preferences of the main regional actors.

Power politics is the dominant form of security relations among MENA countries. Nevertheless, as the EU case shows, significant national rivalries can be overcome when actors build institutions that enable preferences to be pursued peacefully. MENA governments therefore have a choice: they can cooperate and work towards developing institutional safeguards to reinforce their cooperation; or they can continue to let domestic and international conflict undermine their relationships and create further instability. Governments from outside the region have a similar choice: to assist in bringing MENA governments together, or to continue to use the region's divisions for their own purposes.

Since the end of the Second World War there have been several attempts to develop rules-based security cooperation among MENA governments. Some efforts have been initiated by regional state actors, such as the Arab League's Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty (JDEC) in the 1950s and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the 1980s. The impetus for other efforts has come from outside actors, including the EU-sponsored Barcelona Process and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue in the 1990s. There are two main explanations for why these efforts have not resulted in region-wide, rules-based security cooperation. Firstly, they have not been adequately supported by regional governments, who are aware of the need for cooperation but have been unwilling to formalise multilateral security cooperation. There are many factors behind this, including a lack of trust in the intentions of other state and non-state actors, domestic political considerations, and the tendency of some governments to use conflicts as a means of maintaining domestic control. Second, the inability of regional governments to cooperate creates a demand for external actors that can guarantee regional security arrangements. However external actors have been unwilling to work together on a common strategy for MENA security and their institution-building efforts lack credibility. Moreover, external actors have their own security interests in the MENA, and

these have contributed to regional conflicts and hampered cooperation among MENA governments.

The 'prisoners' dilemma' is a useful metaphor for the institutional framework for security cooperation among MENA governments. The MENA region is marked by lack of trust. Some governments do not maintain diplomatic relations, the basic standard of international cooperation. Rules-based security cooperation is based on an incomplete set of peace treaties, and on partial cooperation with a few multilateral agreements. There is little consistency of membership in regional multilateral security institution-building efforts, whether local or sponsored by external actors.

The Arab League's JDEC is the only effort to include members from the Persian Gulf and the Levant. Neither NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue nor the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership extend to the Gulf, although both NATO and the European Union have expressed a desire to institutionalise security cooperation with the GCC and its members. While no regional government is a member of all four agreements, Jordan and Egypt maintain strong ties with Saudi Arabia alongside their Arab League commitments and participation in NATO and EU-led efforts. None of these efforts appears likely to result in a region-wide agreement on rules governing security interaction among MENA countries.

There are several reasons for this. MENA governments have not been able to muster the political will to make a serious effort to cooperate formally on regional security, whether among themselves or in cooperation with the EU or NATO. While it is likely that they are well aware of the potential benefits of cooperation, they believe that they cannot trust their neighbours not to cheat on formal commitments. There are historical reasons for this lack of trust: enmities among the region's ruling elites date back to the decolonisation period and the threat of pan-Arabism to their legitimacy. These old enmities contribute to the desire of ruling elites to retain the ability to act unilaterally when it suits their purposes to do so (Soltan 2002). National security infrastructures are geared towards defending the state against domestic opposition as much as for defending the country against foreign enemies, and conflicts have become useful legitimising tools for authoritarian governments. Domestic predominance is justified in many MENA countries by a combination of appeals to nationalism and support for the Palestinian cause (Landau and Ammor 2006). These practices do not sit well with formal cooperation, which is viewed by most MENA governments as imposing costs on their independence. In this climate it is very easy for bilateral security issues and unresolved conflicts to be blamed for undermining multilateral cooperation initiatives.

Disagreement among regional governments means that security cooperation in the MENA must be guaranteed by an external actor if it is to be stable. In keeping with the prisoners' dilemma metaphor, an external actor influences proceedings as might a 'lawyer' who is introduced into the jail. A good lawyer can provide the prisoners with information about the other that each can rely on, and can advise as to the potential consequences of the prisoners' decisions. The problem is that most lawyers are not neutral actors. Problems arise if they supply misinformation for their own purposes, or if there is more than one lawyer with different interpretations of the statutes. A second influence an external actor can have is more akin to the role of the court in domestic proceedings. A strong external actor can guarantee that the outcome will be stable by promising to send anyone that breaks the peace back to jail. The problem with this role arises when prisoners do not recognise the court or the external actor's right to enforce its provisions.

External actors do not have a record of encouraging unity among MENA states and societies. British and French policy after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I was to divide the Arab world in an attempt to control it. More recently, external actors have been united on the need for stability in the MENA, but divided over the best means for achieving this. An example of the uneasy cooperation between the US, the EU and Russia can be seen in their divergent approaches to dealing with Iran's nuclear weapons programme. All the external powers share a common interest in preventing an arms race in the region but have different strategies for preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons capability.

The main question for external actors is how they can provide incentives and build confidence among MENA governments to help them escape from the prisoners' dilemma. To date divergent American and European approaches to regional security have not been able to ease the dilemma. Both the EMP and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue exclude key regional states, and both initiatives have struggled to enlist the full cooperation of the states that have signed. Intra-EU disagreements over the Union's role and capabilities as a security actor raise questions about whether the EU is prepared to bear the costs of maintaining a security institution for the Mediterranean, let alone the wider MENA region. Meanwhile, several key MENA governments receive military, political and financial support from the United States and are heavily engaged in alliance building and balancing. American support enables Egypt and Israel in particular to pay lip-service to EU-sponsored efforts to encourage rules-based security cooperation. It is highly unlikely that a set of rules that lead to deeper formal commitments among MENA governments will emerge until external actors can cooperate on a multilateral strategy for the region as a whole, and a common approach for implementing it.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

Working Package 10 has developed a deeper understanding of the dynamics of regional security interaction in the Euro-Mediterranean area and the wider MENA. The EMP's security basket faces significant obstacles if it is to develop into a set of rules governing security interaction among its members. By placing the EMP into its broader MENA context, working package 10 participants have shown that EMP actors have security concerns and preferences that are not addressed by the Barcelona Process framework. There are, nevertheless, promising areas for cooperation within the EMP which may build confidence for wider, more formal cooperation.

The main conclusions and policy implications of this work are:

It is essential to continue with Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on the basis of the existing instruments and developing the agreed objectives. The European Neighbourhood Policy is the best example of the potential efficacy of the EU´s soft power in the MENA for improving relations with these countries and compensate for anti Western attitudes that have prevailed in this area, mainly as a result of US actions.

It is unlikely that the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability will develop into a regional security regime unless it broadens its focus to include the broader MENA region. The EMP framework is valuable as an institutional setting in which cooperation on specific issues can take place at a sub-regional level, such as on illegal migration among the countries of southern Europe and North Africa. The Barcelona Process is an appropriate framework for building confidence and cooperation on soft security issues. However, the EMP's 'comprehensive' approach to security, which links military, political, socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects of security, does not address the 'hard security' issues that are faced by most Mediterranean partner governments. A set of rules that forms the basis for cooperation on these issues needs to be agreed by nearly all of the actors who will be affected by them – this includes Iran, the Persian Gulf monarchies, and the United States.

Deep differences among the MENA region's governments create a demand for an external actor to underwrite a rules based security regime. The EU is the most appropriate external actor to perform this task, as it is seen as a relatively honest broker by most MENA governments. However the EU does not have the power to make this happen on its own. If EU officials are to produce a charter for MENA peace and stability that the region's actors can accept, they need to start working closely with them on defining the rules. Most

importantly, EU officials need to work more closely with the United States. Divergent current EU and US policy lowers the EU's credibility as a MENA security actor. It also provides some MENA governments with an opportunity to play the US and the EU off against each other. Close cooperation between the EU and the US is essential if a workable rules based framework is to emerge.

It may be necessary to develop a new set of institutions for managing security cooperation in the Mediterranean that may develop into a wider set of rules for the MENA. French President Sarkozy's proposal for a Mediterranean Union could provide the basis for such an institutional framework. This initiative could be very interesting to the EU at political level, not only like development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, but also because the Mediterranean Union could include a huge internal market, reducing migration pressure towards the North as a consequence of the economic progress in neighbouring countries.

A further development along these lines would be the establishment of a permanent security (foreign affairs) council comprised of government representatives from EU member states and MPCs. At the supranational level, the appointment of an EU Commissioner responsible for the relations between EU and MPCs in the topics of issues declared in the Barcelona Declaration in 1995 could be foreseen. These new institutional initiatives from within the EU can assist in clarifying the EU's position and improving the quality of dialogue. A permanent council would also have a role in crisis management.

There is a need to find and foster the common interests of the European Union and US in the Mediterranean. Cooperation in specific areas may spill over to other policies. Incentives for cooperation based in US and EU policies already exist in the MENA (i.e. Gulf countries). If those efforts were to be put together they will probably be more effective.

6. References

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