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# TOWARDS A SECURITY ARCHITECTURE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN: A CHALLENGE FOR EURO-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS



## Opening Session

Ambassadors Senén Florensa (IEMed) and Marc Otte (EGMONT) introduced the annual conference, which was presented as the EuroMeSCo's contribution to the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. Recalling the advocacy mandate of EuroMeSCo, Ambassador Florensa stressed that it was indeed the responsibility of the network to contribute to the reflection on the situation in the Euro-Mediterranean space and to make its voice heard to policy-makers.

The Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Pedro Serrano, gave an official address to the participants of the EuroMeSCo annual conference, setting out the security challenges the Euro-Mediterranean region was facing. He stressed the need to put an end to military struggles and to work actively on conflict resolution in the region to address domestic, regional and cross-border challenges. He highlighted the active role of the EU in addressing these challenges by actively supporting the efforts to solve conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, he mentioned the active involvement of the EU and its Member States in the international coalition against Daesh as well as the fight against terrorism and the smuggling of migrants in the Mediterranean. The Deputy Secretary General also stressed that the European Neighbourhood Policy would seek to involve regional actors even beyond the neighbourhood. In this context, he put the emphasis on the need for regional cooperation. Cooperation structures in the MENA region had not been effective in addressing the security situation. Yet, the creation of new functional regional security structures remained a long-term goal. He acknowledged the need to overcome structural weaknesses, polarised situations and bilateral conflicts along the way. He underlined the success of ad hoc activities and bodies such as the International Syria Support Group or the Iran nuclear deal as incentives for regional cooperation. He also stressed the role of the Union for the Mediterranean in promoting pragmatic cooperation in the region and as a format for political and security discussions. The EU had also been developing closer engagement with the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue to move security cooperation in the region forward.

The security of the EU is intrinsically linked to that of the Mediterranean

The Deputy Secretary General of the EEAS announced that the Mediterranean would be pivotal in the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. He claimed that the strategy would recognise that the security of the EU was intrinsically linked to that of its neighbours, in particular the Mediterranean region. It will also consider options to consolidate state and society resilience in the countries surrounding the EU without which building stability and security would not be possible. He expected the EU Global Strategy to contribute to the EU ability to promote regional views and solutions. Indeed, Mr. Serrano pointed out that despite growing tendencies to seek isolation out of fear, solutions to security challenges would only be found through greater regional engagement and cooperation.





Plenary Session: **Mapping the Security Threats in the Mediterranean**

**Christian Berger** (Chair), Director for North Africa, Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq, EEAS; **Ettore Greco**, Director, IAI; **Şaban Kardaş**, President, ORSAM; **Salam Kawakibi**, Deputy Director, ARI; **Nicolás Pascual de la Parte**, Ambassador Representative to the Political and Security Committee

The first plenary session explored the multiple crises that the Mediterranean region was currently facing. The Mediterranean was the scene of combined forces of fragmentation, radicalisation and militarisation, leading the path to a security competition rather than security cooperation.



The context was first described as extremely complex with states and societies of the Euro-Mediterranean challenged by economic, environmental and identity crises, conflicts, radical groups such as Daesh, and massive flows of migration. This situation was leading to a political and security vacuum in a number of countries that was in turn exploited by radical organisations and fuelling further rivalry and tensions between regional powers.

Some panellists argued that we were witnessing the transformation of the regional order or a “strategic dislocation” of the Mediterranean region. Both Southern countries of the Mediterranean and Europe were challenged by this transformation, which had started with the “Arab Spring”. First, borders in the Middle East and North Africa region were being contested. It was acknowledged that the redrawing of borders and dismantlement of states had become a political option advanced by some to solve crises and conflicts, especially in the case of Iraq and Syria. For a panellist, this was a sign that the existing borders were not recognised as a legitimate basis for the future of the region and were losing their meaning as demarcation lines between states. Several states had also lost control of part of their borders. However, it was



argued that the partition of the Syrian territory was not a realistic solution to the conflict as it could have dramatic consequences, such as ethnic cleansing.

Any plan aimed at stabilising the region should include efforts to foster the rule of law and to mitigate the socio-economic marginalisation of wide sectors of the population, including the youth

Secondly, a number of states had seen their authority being challenged, eroded and in some cases lost to the benefit of violent groups. The resulting security vacuum was a threat to the overall regional stability. Indeed, the empowerment of these non-state actors had taken place at the expense of modern Arab nation-states, which were the bearers of a national identity to which sectarian groups were pretending to propose an alternative. Moreover, the deterioration of the socio-economic indicators in a number of countries of the region was undermining the political development of the area. It was generally stressed that the economic hardship affecting mainly the youth was one of the factors leading to social frustration and potentially to radicalisation. The critical socio-economic situation had been the roots of the Arab uprisings and was still to be addressed to prevent popular discontent and to fulfil the expectations of the youth. Political elites had lost some of their credibility and legitimacy, as they had not been able to fulfil the expectations of their societies. A panellist linked the rise of radical political Islam with the social frustration in southern countries of the Mediterranean.

It was argued that the European Union should constructively engage conservative and Islamic segments of the Middle Eastern and North African societies. According to a panellist, the EU had been reluctant to engage Islamists and this fear had led to the impasse of backing authoritarian regimes in some southern countries as preferred allies for stability and security. This strategy of supporting unconditionally authoritarian regimes had proved to backfire on the European interests, which was one of the key lessons of the western involvement in the region according to panellists. Any plan aimed at stabilising the region should include efforts to foster the rule of law and to mitigate the socio-economic marginalisation of wide sectors of the population, including the youth.

The EU is losing its economic and diplomatic clout in the Mediterranean

In the North of the Mediterranean, domestic challenges were acute as the European Union still had to recover from the economic and financial crisis, was destabilised by terrorist attacks and by an uncoordinated response to refugee flows coming from the South and the East of the Mediterranean. The EU was

confronted with the return of nationalist and xenophobic movements, an identity crisis and a lack of confidence in its own model.

At the same time, it was stressed that the EU was losing its economic and diplomatic clout to manage foreign policy challenges, while it should be a key actor considering the United States disengagement from the region and the (re)emergence of other influential actors. The risk was that the EU would shrivel up in a purely reactive manner and would concentrate on the immediate threats rather than tackling their root causes. Therefore, the transformative role of the Union was questioned. A panellist argued that its interest was to promote multilateral frameworks to prevent influential powers from acting on a unilateral basis in the region. Mistakes had also been made in the past with counter-productive military engagements and should not be repeated.



The Syrian conflict was also the subject of much discussion. A panellist rejected the concept of a “civil war” in Syria and argued that it was more adequate to refer to “wars waged against the civilians” by several actors with no interest to put an end to the conflict. Meanwhile, the Syrian regime had continued to count with the support of its close allies including Russia, while the Syrian people had felt abandoned by an international community primarily concerned with

terrorist threats and refugee flows coming from Syria. It was claimed that the Syrian opposition was very diverse and should not be perceived and presented as “radical” but rather “radicalised”. The feeling of being abandoned under the bombs had contributed to feed the radicalisation of young Syrians in particular.

Projects supported by the EU are contributing to prepare the ground for the day after in Syria

A panellist, who described the EU role as exclusively humanitarian, lamented the lack of a European Union policy in Syria. Some argued that the intra-Syrian negotiations taking place in Geneva under the United Nations umbrella should be strongly supported. Others were rather pessimistic on their outcomes as long as the Syrian regime would not genuinely recognise the need to negotiate a political transition with the opposition.

Nevertheless and despite the war “against the civilians”, a rise of the civil society, previously inexistent in Syria, could be reported through the development of a number of human rights, education, and humanitarian organisations. Projects supported by the European Union were contributing to prepare the ground for the day after, especially through training future leaders of the country. Moreover, with the development of citizen journalism, the point was made that the freedom of speech in Syria had never been more extended since 1970 than nowadays.



### Plenary Session: **The Current Security Framework in the Mediterranean**

**Ian Lesser** (Chair), Senior Director for Foreign and Security Policy, GMF; **Lahebib Adami**, Ambassador Head of the League of Arab States Mission to the European Union; **Emiliano Alessandri**, Senior External Co-operation Officer, OSCE; **Tamara Cofman Wittes**, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings; **Florence Gaub**, Senior Analyst, EU ISS



The current security framework in the Mediterranean is elusive and dysfunctional

The session screened the existing security frameworks in the Mediterranean with the idea of identifying to what extent they were tailored to address the main threats and challenges discussed in the first session.

The current regional architecture was said to be dysfunctional and unable to deal with the current threats. The panellists observed that the current security frameworks were elusive and mostly did not involve the key actors that were active and relevant in the region. The region was becoming more fragmented and polarised, but at the same time more globalised, with new actors such as China becoming increasingly involved. It was argued that the United States and Russia, though very much engaged in the region, were not in the position to be the pillars of any new order. With regard to regional actors, such as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the panellists observed that they were still not willing to look for compromise, focusing instead on advancing their respective interests.

In this context, talking about a security architecture was ambitious, as threats had increased while institutions were lagging behind. Echoing the discussion in the first session, one of the experts assessed that one of the main challenges faced by the region was the collapse of states and of the state system, as well as the breakdown of order within states and the breakdown of regional balance of power. Regional security and stability could not be ensured without addressing the collapse of authority and reconstructing the broken social contract between governments and societies. According to a panellist, setting up political institutions would not be sufficient, as politics was about people and without people's trust, those institutions were meaningless.



Three priorities for action were suggested. First of all, there was an urgent need to put an end to civil wars in the region. Diplomatic efforts were insufficient and the need to think about enforcement mechanisms and stabilisation of diplomatic agreements was underlined. Moreover, the importance of working with societies and local populations was stressed as conflict resolution and the rebuilding of authority would be achieved through bottom-up rather than top-down processes. It was suggested that a good starting point would be to work with refugee populations. In the same vein, the need to address other conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the issue of contested territories, such as the Western Sahara, was underlined. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict constituted a matrix of frustration and was the main obstacle to the establishment of regional stability.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict constitutes a matrix of frustration and is the main obstacle to the establishment of regional stability

A regional security order requires stable states

Second, the collapse of states and the rise of new conflicts should be prevented. Most of the underlying drivers of instability were still there. Some states that did not collapse after 2011 were very fragile and were still struggling to advance reforms. In some cases, the reforms that may have generated stability had not been implemented because of their associated political cost. Therefore, it was suggested that external actors should seek ways to incentivise reforms and political will to reform.

Most of the underlying drivers of instability were still there. Some states that did not collapse after 2011 were very fragile and were still struggling to advance reforms. In some cases, the reforms that may have generated stability had not been implemented because of their associated political cost. Therefore, it was suggested that external actors should seek ways to incentivise reforms and political will to reform.

A comprehensive strategy that would combine maritime and land parameters and that would recognise the Mediterranean as a security space is lacking

Third, the regional order should be rebuilt. However, such an order required stable states. In this context, the case of the weapon of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East was made. As most of the challenges could not be tackled by states alone, cooperation was needed. According to one of the panellists, the Middle East needed a new, multilateral and comprehensive forum, dealing with security, politics and economics, and bringing together all stakeholders interested in regional stability. The need of increased cooperation between states and international organisations was equally highlighted and the strategic dialogue between the League of Arab States and the EU launched in November 2015 was given as an example. However, it was stressed that the dialogue should be adapted to the needs of both parties and include the economic dimension. Assisting the development of countries in transition, advancing legal migration schemes and transferring technologies were said to be crucial conditions for peace, stability and economic development.

Some existing mechanisms for cooperation could also be strengthened. The Union for the Mediterranean, although currently focusing on concrete projects, had an important role to play, as it focused on development policies, and the issue of security could not be discussed in isolation from broad developmental and policy issues.

While economic and social interdependence of Mediterranean states was increasing, the same level of integration at the political and security level was missing. A comprehensive security strategy that would combine maritime and land parameters and that would recognise the Mediterranean as a security space was lacking. In contrast to other semi-blocked seas, the Mediterranean Sea was a highly international water, with only 16% of territorial seas and the rest beyond sovereign control, i.e. either international or contested waters. Those waters were in principle regulated by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was however not ratified by key Mediterranean countries such as Turkey, Israel, Libya and Syria. Therefore, the vast majority of the Mediterranean was outside any jurisdiction. In addition, 30% of the global sea trade passed through the Mediterranean. It was suggested that the problem of legal vacuum could be addressed by reactivating the UN Convention of Law of the Sea. The idea of creating a Mediterranean maritime surveillance system that would include all the coastal states was also put forward. Such cooperation could form a basis and spill over to other more political and strategic issues.



Plenary Session: **Towards a New Security Architecture in the Mediterranean; What Role for the European Union**

**Miguel Angel Moratinos** (Chair), Former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; **Joost Hiltermann**, MENA Programme Director, ICG; **Anis Salem**, Ambassador, ECFA; **Pierre Vimont**, Senior Associate, Carnegie Europe

In the third Plenary session, panellists and participants discussed the need for a renewed security system in the Mediterranean, mapped the constraints towards establishing such a system, identified some of its possible parameters and the role of various organisations in contributing to this effort, including the European Union.

The responsibility of some European states in arming Arab regimes must be stressed

As discussed in previous sessions, a number of threats and mutations in the region were making renewed security cooperation an absolute necessity. Transnational terrorist groups such as Daesh were putting into question the geopolitical order and the borders in the Middle East. The terrorist threat had extended to all Euro-Mediterranean countries. According to a speaker who pointed the responsibility of European States in arming some regimes in the Arab world and regretted that the Iran nuclear deal had not been used to solve the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East in a more comprehensive manner, the resurgence of the arms race was another destabilising factor for the Mediterranean.

The resurgence of the arms race in the Mediterranean is a destabilising factor

However, it was acknowledged that reshaping the security system in the Mediterranean was a difficult endeavour because of a number of constraints and limitations. First, the geopolitical situation in the Middle East was still very fluid and complex. It would be difficult to establish a new security architecture, while



Northern African states have been rather reluctant to engage in security cooperation with the EU

a new order was still in the making with shifting balance of power and weakened state structures. Second, there was some reluctance from Northern African countries to engage in security cooperation with the European Union in established regional frameworks according to one of the panellists who shared his diplomatic experience, although another argued that recent developments had created a new momentum for such a cooperation. Third, the difference of security “nomenclatures” in the Arab World and in the EU was highlighted as an obstacle with references such as “political Islam”, “migration” and “authoritative regimes” dominating in the European Union and references such as “State collapse”, “role of non-state actors” and “interventions from external players” characterising the discourse in South and East Mediterranean according to a panellist. This discourse had materialised in a diversification of foreign policy options by some Arab regimes as well as with a decreasing tolerance towards foreign interventions linked with conditionality and a reform agenda.

Based on the identification of these constraints, the panellists and participants also identified essential requirements for renewed security arrangements in the Mediterranean. Some participants argued that there had not been such a collective and global architecture yet, hence the need to speak about the need for a security architecture rather than a new security architecture. A first requirement was to come up with a shared and innovative vision and concept of security, a “new security mindset” according to a panellist. Linked to this was the effort of discussing and



identifying main priorities as well as a common threat assessment that should be holistic, realistic, not “eurocentric” and future oriented. It was also argued that this discussion should involve euro-mediterranean think tanks and academics and not be limited to security services. A second requirement would be to underpin any security initiative with a consistent effort in terms of economic reconstruction on the one hand and peace making on the other hand. Third, the geographical remit of security initiatives had to be thought through. On the one hand, any renewed effort should somehow include territories at the southern borders of northern African countries that were particularly problematic for the security order of the Mediterranean. On the other hand, it was key to discuss security frameworks with Sahel, Horn of African and Gulf countries.

The case was made for a gradual approach that would first be restricted to renewed cooperation on specific threats

The discussion then turned to what security arrangements in the Mediterranean should look like. There were diverging views on whether a grand new initiative should be launched or whether existing structures should be used. With the Helsinki conference used as a reference, some argued that a security, solidarity and cooperation pact was needed in the Mediterranean. The case was made to move away from the “piecemeal approach” that was dominating the security scene in the Mediterranean today. However, coming up with a grand conference was also seen by others as at odds with a general trend of rebilateralisation and differentiation of relations (as evidenced for example in the renewed European Neighbourhood Policy) and a general trend of ad hoc coalitions on specific situations. Therefore, the case was made for a more gradual approach that would first be restricted to renewed cooperation on some specific threats like anti-terrorism and that would build from existing organisations. The Barcelona Process, the Madrid conference and the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM) were mentioned in this context, although a speaker expressed doubts about the opportunity to use the UfM for security cooperation and made a plea in favour of renewed engagement with the League of Arab States and the African Union. Indeed, despite their limitations, it was important to engage with these organisations that had already a track record of accomplishments in the region. However, some also questioned the credibility of the League of Arab States in the absence of unity of its members. The future of the Arab League would depend on the willingness of Saudi Arabia to contribute to strengthen it. Signs in favour of a competing Islamic system promoted by Saudi Arabia were not pointing in this direction.





The lack of political input in EU Foreign Policy is one of its structural shortcomings

From the possible parameters of a renewed security system in the Mediterranean, the discussion shifted to the specific role of the European Union in contributing to the security architecture in the Mediterranean. The view that the EU was performing best as a “payer” was challenged. The EU had to cease being only a payer and become a proper player, which in turn required a consistent geopolitical approach that the EU was lacking at the moment. The lack of political input in EU Foreign Policy was described as one of its structural shortcomings that had to be overcome. The EU also had to define how it fitted in this global context. A number of recommendations were made in this regard. The EU had to come up with a political strategy that would entail a strong security dimension rather than a security strategy. There was an urgent need for an EU narrative. According to a panellist, the focus should be on conflict prevention, state capacity building, governance, youth, not reinforcing some regimes “worse instincts”, continuing to push for reforms, and prioritising intelligence cooperation (including within the EU).

There is an urgent need for a common EU narrative

While doing so, the EU had to remain engaged on solving conflicts. The European responsibility in contributing to a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was mentioned by a number of speakers. However, the EU also had to avoid counterproductive interventions. Security and short term responses in countries such as Libya would not work without thorough political and diplomatic efforts. Mismanaged interventions could be a step back. Although the EU had directly suffered from terrorist attacks, it had to acknowledge it was also part of the problem itself as the EU was exporting home grown jihadists. Similarly, in the case of the “refugee crisis”, the EU had to put things into proportion and acknowledge that the largest number of Syrian refugees were in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. Acknowledging that the “refugee crisis” and the terrorist attacks were symptoms of the crisis rather than the crisis itself, the EU had to design its response accordingly. A badly designed response and an overreaction to the terrorist attacks and to the “refugee crisis” could itself become a threat to the European Union. The EU had to avoid inflaming the situation; some European states were heavily contributing to the arming of some countries in the Arab world and in the Gulf with arm shipments.

A badly designed response and an overreaction to the terrorist attacks and to the “refugee crisis” could themselves become a threat to the European Union

Parallel Session: **Hard Security Challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**

**Sven Biscop** (Chair), Director of Europe in the World Programme, EGMONT; **Ziad Akl**, Senior Researcher, ACPSS; **Ali Fathollah-Nejad**, Associate Fellow, DGAP; **Oded Eran**, Senior Research Fellow, INSS; **Mattia Toaldo**, Senior Policy Fellow, ECFR



A political long-lasting solution in Libya requires the inclusion of Libyan militias

This session focused on the evolution of hard security threats, including terrorism, sectarian violence and intra and inter-state conflicts, as well as their impact on future dynamics in the Mediterranean. The session started with an exchange on Libya based on the presentation of a research project on the issue of the institutionalisation of Libyan militias. Libya was going through a contentious post-revolutionary political transition whereby state structures had become largely dysfunctional. Disarmament, de-mobilisation, and rehabilitation, which constitute traditional post-conflict approach towards militias had always failed in Libya. Therefore, with Libya in the midst of ongoing political divisions, a state of multiple sovereignties, regional powers and international actors arguing over its future, it was stressed that there was no way for a political long-lasting solution to be implemented without the inclusion of Libyan militias.

Although there had been over 40 militias in Libya, it was claimed that a distinction should be made between militias and armed factions which could be institutionalised and assimilated by the state's structures on the one hand and those which could not on the other hand. Two criteria were mentioned to determine their possible inclusion: the willingness to participate in a political process and their ideologies.

The militias which could be institutionalised were mainly non-ideological groups and rather driven by political interests.

Coercion, cooperation and inclusion are three approaches that should be considered in order to deal with militias in Libya

Three different approaches were considered in order to lead the institutionalisation process of militias in Libya: coercion, cooperation and inclusion. These approaches would need to be adapted to the different natures of militias. Over the past 5 years, some Libyan militias had managed to develop an engagement pattern with the state. This means that in many cases local authorities had relied on militias which had controlled an important number of state facilities. Therefore, the priority of dismantling these structures of interaction was highlighted. Another tool for the institutionalisation was training and empowerment of the security sector as Libya had lacked a proper army.



Then, it was argued that the institutionalisation of militias in Libya and their integration to the bureaucratic apparatus of the state required a detailed programme of assimilation and a very high degree of decentralisation. For this purpose, it was asserted that the Libyan state needed to reclaim the sovereignty of its own soil. Libyan militias should be divided into different law enforcement and legitimate coercion branches as it could prove to be difficult to mould all of them

in order to integrate them into a Libyan national army. Another crucial point mentioned was the funding of the militias. Indeed, it was argued that the economy of Libya was the real priority as the system that had ensured government salaries to some militias was about to collapse, leading to the evolution of militias into proper criminal organisations.

The recent political agreement in Libya was commented upon. Further political engagement was required in Libya in order to consolidate the political agreement. Some argued that there would be no sustained political settlement in Libya without some form of federalisation of the state. Some participants mentioned the risks of renewed military interventions in Libya, while others commented that some form of military operation would become necessary at some point. Any form

of intervention would need to be based on a well-designed strategy that would establish for instance whether Daesh would be the only target or whether other militias would be targeted as well.

From local challenges, the discussion then turned to a different regional perspective with a focus on the concepts, initiatives and realisation potentials of a regional security architecture, based on the presentation of another research project. It was stated that the broader Middle East region had constituted a regional and highly interdependent security complex with a wide range of actors. Despite past efforts towards thinking a regional security architecture, such initiatives had been perceived as futile by Western actors given either structural constraints or contingencies from day-to-day politics. This longstanding deficit of an exclusive security architecture had been exacerbated by the Arab revolts as well as the ramifications of the Iran nuclear deal that had been underestimated by Western players. However, it was stressed that the idea of a regional security architecture must not be buried due to regularly erupting conflicts and the rivalry between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

A security architecture cannot be built upon sand

The case was regularly made that initiating a security architecture was too ambitious given the degree of turmoil and antagonisms that existed in the region: the collapse of order, the crisis of authority and fundamental political and geopolitical shifts in the region in the wake of the US-led occupation of Iraq. The scale of this architecture (a region-wide or a Persian Gulf initiative) had also been questioned. However it was argued that establishing a security architecture would be indispensable to provide longer term, sustainable security, stability and development for the countries of the region and Europe. The idea of re-establishing the regional order before starting to examine further initiatives was mentioned as a security architecture could not be built upon sand.

Some initiatives to build a security architecture in the region over the past decades were mentioned. The idea of a Conference of Security and Cooperation in the Middle East was claimed to be the most comprehensive initiative. This initiative was claimed to be based on a regional security interdependence and had established a weapon of mass destruction free zone as a key goal. The Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East Initiative directed from the Frankfurt Peace Institute, and the Sub-regional



Persian Gulf Initiative were also mentioned. Solving the escalation between Iran and Saudi Arabia through power-sharing and the common security concept was mentioned as the basic idea of the Persian Gulf initiative, perceived as crucial in a context of the growing militarisation of the zone.

A regional security architecture could not be realised without external pressures from Western actors. As the United States position in the region was perceived as unclear, it was argued that the European Union had the responsibility to exert such pressures. Nevertheless, the divisions within the EU weakened its leadership. The issue of energy as a means to enhance regional cooperation was also raised; recent discoveries of gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean could bring together some of the regional actors in the Levant.

Parallel Session: **Socio-Political Challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean**

**Hatem Ben Salem** (Chair), Director, ITES; **Mario Abou Zeid**, Former Research Analyst, Carnegie Middle East; **Haizam Amirah-Fernández**, Senior Analyst, ELCANO; **Mohamed ElHachimi**, Senior Research Fellow, CERSS; **Marc Franco**, Senior Associate Fellow, EGMONT; **Mustapha Kamel Al Sayyid**, Executive Director, PiD

Socio-economic and political inclusion need to be addressed to prevent another wave of popular protests

This working session aimed at assessing the impact of domestic developments and economy on the reform processes and stability of states in the Euro-Mediterranean region. A widely shared view was that the situation in most of the Arab countries was worse than before the beginning of the Arab uprisings. Hopes for more open and inclusive political systems, responsive governments, social justice and economic opportunities raised by the Arab awakening had been dashed in several Arab countries. In other words, the underlying factors that had pushed many people to take to the streets in 2011 and to ask for the removal of authoritarian regimes were still present in many Arab societies.

A lot had been debated about the solutions societies needed to solve the multiple crises they were facing. However, it was acknowledged that the focus of most of



the debates had shifted to geopolitical issues, terrorism, refugees, failed states, military interventions, and the prospect of returning to some sort of “authoritarian stability.” It was observed that less and less reference was made to inclusiveness, economy, demography, and to the internal social processes that were at the heart of the Arab uprisings. Should these not be properly addressed, they may lead to another wave of significant popular protests.

The socio-economic and political inclusion of the youth was raised as a key challenge for the future of the southern Mediterranean societies. The fracture between the ruling and socio-economic elites on the one hand and the young generation on the other hand had not been tackled after the Arab uprisings that had been precisely initiated by the youth. Unfortunately, the fact that two thirds of Arab people were under 30 years old tended to be perceived as a demographic time bomb rather than a fantastic human capital with the potential to quickly develop these countries. Indeed, the vast majority of them were more urbanised, educated, entrepreneurial, cosmopolitan, and highly interconnected than any previous Arab generation. However, they still remained excluded from politics, and a large part of them suffered from unemployment and poverty. Thus, the collusion between political and economic elites as well as neo-liberal economic policies marginalising large segments of the societies were highlighted as the main elements preventing a transition to inclusive socio-political systems ensuring social justice and economic development.

The Islamist-secularist divide has put obstacles to political stability

Models of governance in Arab societies that had failed to include large segments of their societies would prove to be equally unfit to respond to similar challenges now. Hence, the need for these countries to promote good governance, rule of law, socio-political inclusion, consensus building, transparency and accountability. However, some also argued that some authoritarian regimes had also developed the capacity to address these challenges artificially by adopting a pre-emptive approach to deal with these pressures for change. In some cases, the adoption of cosmetic democratic reforms was designed to undermine any strong and challenging political alternative. Other regimes had declined their authoritarianism through a more brutal repression, perceived as a sign of weakness and vulnerability.

Another key challenge discussed was sectarianism and more broadly, identity conflicts. It was acknowledged that sectarian turbulences had serious consequences

on security, social, and political situations in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. In Lebanon for instance, socio-political challenges were much related to the sectarian political dynamics. The proper functioning of Lebanese political institutions was indeed paralysed as a consequence of the Sunni – Shiite divide (affecting most of the Middle Eastern countries). This political stalemate was preventing the Lebanese state from developing a clear strategy to deal with the spill-overs of the Syrian conflict including the massive arrival of refugees. Jihadi groups had also tried to draw benefits from the situation, which was further jeopardizing the stability of Lebanon. Other identity conflicts were based on ideology, such as the Islamist – secularist divide, and were also important obstacles to political stability. According to the experts, the best responses to identity disputes were the acceptance of the plurality of identities and the establishment of inclusive political systems, giving the accurate political representation to the different communities to avoid their political alienation. Again, the panellists rejected the arguments in favour of the partition of the Middle East along religious or ethnic lines.

EU domestic challenges are weakening its capacity to act as a credible player

Finally, the discussion turned to the role of the European Union in addressing these socio-political challenges in the south of the Mediterranean. The point was made that the European Union was facing similar problems than in southern and eastern Mediterranean although they were different in scale. First, the marginalisation of young people was mentioned, especially in southern European countries characterised by high rate of youth unemployment and increasing job insecurity. In addition to the difficult recovery from the economic and financial crisis, Europe was also facing a political crisis with the rise of populism and with some EU members turning their back to fundamental values of the European democratic system. This situation was weakening the European Union and its ability to act as a credible actor in its relations with the South of the Mediterranean. As a result, the EU policy towards its southern and eastern Mediterranean neighbourhood had shifted from the promotion of democratic values and good governance to the prioritisation of security and stability. Nevertheless, as most of the participants argued, in order to address the socio-political challenges in the Mediterranean, the emphasis should be placed on the sustained promotion of the principles of good governance, socio-political inclusion of the youth and marginalised communities, and inclusive economic development.



Parallel Session: **Environmental and Geopolitical Challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**

**Anne-France Didier** (Chair), Director, Plan Bleu; **Diana Szőke**, Policy Analyst, IFAT; **Francesca Fabbri**, Programme Assistant, EPC; **Andrea Frontini**, Policy Analyst, EPC; **Mohamed Behnassi**, Associate Professor, Ibn Zohr University of Agadir

The sessions started with the assumption that the terrorist attacks and the refugee crisis had overshadowed other important developments in the region, including the recent significant discoveries of petroleum offshore in the Mediterranean. In fact, although the region was among the most underexplored territories for oil and gas appraisal, over the last years, major discoveries were made in Israel (2010), Cyprus (2011) and Egypt (2015). The outlook for the petroleum production in the Eastern Mediterranean was analysed from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Regional conflicts are an important hindrance to untap the cooperation potential of oil discoveries in the Mediterranean

First, the geopolitical implications of the discoveries on the wider Middle East and on the global energy market were discussed. The current regional conflicts were an important hindrance to untap the regional cooperation potential of these discoveries. In this context, discoveries and the resulting petroleum production could also be accompanied with additional security risks, such as terrorism, piracy, and possibilities of standoffs between the various navies. With regard to the broader implications, an increase in petroleum production in the Levant basin might undermine the position of traditional Middle Eastern exporters. In addition, it could constitute a new source of energy imports for the EU, thus increasing its security of supply.



From a legal point of view, border disputes in the region, such as the Turkish-Greek conflict over the status of Cyprus, a lack of clear delineation of an exclusive economic zone between Israel and Lebanon and the issue of Palestinian sovereignty, might underscore the developmental perspective. In economic terms, an increase in indigenous gas production would provide a buffer to the economies of the region and ease reliance of some countries in the region, namely Israel, on energy imports. However, in order to maximise the economies of scale, the cooperation of countries in the region would be needed.

The environmental and climatic perspective was not –yet- on top of the agenda. Another dimension to take into account were the technological problems that might be encountered. The location of the finds in deep offshore water would result in very high operational costs. Moreover, the infrastructure for exports would need to be developed. Finally, the size of reserves was uncertain, which could make it more difficult to attract investors.

Therefore, it was observed that despite significant gas discoveries over the past years, the progress in production was very slow. In order to maximise the potential of discoveries, countries in the region would have to work together, which still remained rather a rather long-term perspective, considering the political, economic and technological obstacles.

Water security is to become a key challenge for the stability of the Mediterranean

The discussion then turned to the issue of water security and water diplomacy in the Mediterranean. It was observed that climatic and topographical characteristics of Mediterranean region made this area one of the most vulnerable in terms of climate change impact. Water availability was expected to fall by 50% before 2050 while the demand was expected to triple. Climate change and water scarcity could constitute an amplifier of existing fragilities, challenging security not only in the MENA region, but also in Europe. Therefore, water security was said to become a key challenge for the stability of the Mediterranean.

The experts observed that the “water-security nexus” could be understood at two levels: a) water access and use within countries, which might produce internal tensions; b) issues related to transboundary waters that may complicate relations

between states. Nile and Tigris-Euphrates river basins were given as examples of disputes related to shared water basins. International cooperation and water diplomacy were key to enhance broader political, economic and societal relations between the countries in the region and to prevent potential conflicts.

A number of considerations had to be factored in water diplomacy in the region, including the main socio-economic indicators of the countries concerned (wealth, demography and resources), the existence of water treaties, the ways in which negotiations on transboundary water were being conducted and the impact of shared water agreements on the users. The evaluation of these factors would allow the policy makers to identify and put in place the most adequate policy solutions, from cooperation on economic or scientific level to conventional diplomatic instruments.

The EU has recognised that water security poses a direct challenge to EU's overall security

The EU had developed a comprehensive assessment of the threats posed by water security in its Southern Neighbourhood. Climate change related challenges already featured in the 2003 European Security Strategy. July 2013 Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on "EU Water Diplomacy" represented a further effort to factor in water in the EU Foreign Policy. The EU had recognised that water security posed a direct challenge to the EU's overall security. As a result, the EU had started engaging in concrete projects on infrastructure development, sanitation and capacity building. In addition, the EU and its Member States got involved in water related mediation between Egypt and Ethiopia and in the context of the Middle East Peace Process. The European private sector and scientific community had also been involved in a number of water-focused technical projects in the MENA region.

Nevertheless, the panellists observed that if the EU wanted to become an even more active player, it should develop a more strategic and comprehensive approach toward water security and diplomacy in the region, maximising all tools at its disposal. In this view, the forthcoming EU Global Strategy, the on-going bilateral consultations based on the revised European Neighbourhood Policy and the COP21 commitments may provide an opportunity for the EU to make its approach towards the water challenge in the MENA region more strategic and to become an international actor in assisting the countries in the region in adapting to climate change. Greater operational capacities should be mobilised and a political

consensus among the Member States on how to address the water challenges in the MENA region should be achieved. The EU should also ally politically and operationally with other actors in the region, including the UN, the League of Arab States, NATO, but also the United States and Gulf countries which were directly affected by water scarcity and increasingly politically engaged in the region.



Parallel Session: **Terrorist Threat in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**

**Hanaa Ebeid** (Chair), Researcher, ACPSS; **Fouad Ammor**, Researcher, GERM; **Dalia Ghanem-Yazbeck**, Research Analyst, Carnegie Middle East Center; **Patrycja Sasnal**, Head of Middle East and North Africa Project, PISM



The aim of the session was to present the final research results of the Working Package “Terrorist Threat in the Euro-Mediterranean Region”. The Joint Policy Study looked into the phenomenon of radicalisation and the growing appeal of terrorist groups, with a special focus on Daesh, Jabhat al Nusra and AlQaeda.

Four main categories of reasons behind the appeal of Daesh were presented. There were ideological and political, sociological and psychological, economic, and also technical and practical reasons. Regarding the first category, it was observed that the nature of Islam and its plasticity enabled jihadists to integrate it in their discourse. The crisis of values and ideologies, Western policy failures and the weakness of the Arab state and of the state in general vis-à-vis other actors, be it religious, social, economic, were said to have also contributed to the “popularity” of Daesh. Among the sociological and psychological reasons, the sense of exclusion and social rejection, sexual frustration and the attractiveness of evil were enumerated. As part of the economic reasons, the feeling of relative deprivation and impossibility of

moving socially between classes, lack of prospects and poverty were stressed. Finally, the fact that Daesh was joined mostly by young people, often with highly developed internet skills, was said to contribute to strengthening its outreach and level of attraction.

The session then focused on the phenomenon of female radicalisation. First of all, it was highlighted that women were not passive agents in this process, but political and engaged actors. There were numerous reasons for which they decided to join Daesh. The ideological drivers were said to be among the most important ones. The process of othering and distinction between the “us”, meaning pureness, and “them”, meaning dirtiness, used very often in Daesh’s discourse, was said to contribute to the desire to join the organisation. The feeling of social alienation among the Westerners and conviction that joining Daesh would allow them to practice their religion freely constituted further push factors. Another motivation was the feeling of sisterhood. Daesh depicted its so-called state as the perfect community, where fraternity was at the core, and discrimination and inequalities did not exist. Longing for social security was also a driver, as Daesh presented itself as a welfare state, capable of providing its followers with professional opportunities and social services.

Among the psychological and philosophical motivations, the possibility to become somebody else by joining the group and acquiring new identity, often through name change was observed. The use of the imagery of revenge by Daesh, presenting the umma as a suffering community and all its military or terrorist attacks as defensive, were said to be one of the drivers. The importance of family ties was observed, as something that may boost one’s predisposition of joining the group. Among the additional drivers for Arab women, the economic motivation and the engagement by involvement were underlined.

In order to be more credible, the counter-radicalisation campaigns should involve the returnees

While listing possible counter-radicalisation policies, the expert stressed the necessity of conducting multilingual campaigns with the participation of the returnees, as this would increase their credibility and legitimacy. Also, the need of engaging families of victims, who might talk about the damages of jihadism, was underlined. Finally, there was a need to rehabilitate and offer the returnees professional opportunities, in order to make them regain their feeling of citizenship.



The session then turned to the analysis of the regional and international context. It was observed that each actor in the region had its own priorities, and the clash of those priorities gave Daesh some kind of resilience. With regard to the United States, it was observed that 9/11 brought the country at the epicenter of international counterterrorism efforts. The main priorities for the US in the region were discussed. Regarding Russia, its support to the Syrian regime had been driven mostly by its willingness to regain influence in the region. However, Russia's involvement in the region should not be overestimated, as it faced strong resistance from some Sunni-majority Arab states in the region. As far as the EU was concerned, it had lost some of its leverage, caused by internal divisions and domestic challenges. In this context, renewed mechanisms of international regulation and cooperation were needed in order to effectively counter Daesh.

During the debate, the experts observed the necessity to analyse the possible threat of maritime terrorism and nuclear terrorism and to concentrate on preventing the smuggling of radioactive materials to the territories occupied by Daesh. The role of Syrian regime in the expansion of Daesh was once again highlighted. It was also argued that the level to which the expectations behind joining Daesh had been fulfilled should be thoroughly examined, as the possible disillusion with the organisation might actually contribute to jeopardise its sustainability in the long run. Finally, it was observed that many foreign fighters came from specific locations. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the economic and social situation in those areas was required, in order to be able to design effective and preventive policies at the local level.

Parallel Session: **Migration and Refugees: Impact and Future Policies. Case Studies of Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Italy and Greece**

**Roderick Pace** (Chair), Professor, Institute for European Studies, University of Malta; **Sükrü Erdem**, Professor, CERMC; Dimitris Skleparis, Research Fellow, ELIAMEP

During this session, the results of the Working Package on Migration and Refugees were presented. Although the Joint Policy Study had not been published yet, insights of the research were shared with the audience.

First, the situations of the Syrian refugees in Turkey as well as the Turkish policies towards this population were discussed. It was argued that Turkey was unprepared when it chose to implement an open-door policy towards Syrian refugees. The country did not anticipate that the refugees could stay permanently in the country. Indeed, the Syrian refugees were officially received as “guests” and given the “temporary sheltering status” by the Turkish government that had managed to building camps of good standards. Nevertheless, only 10% of the 2.7 million refugees in Turkey were living in these camps. It was argued that while the camps were well managed and resourced, the non-camp refugee population continued to experience significant problems that had to be addressed. While the concept of integration had not been much developed in Turkey and migrations had been mostly managed through a security approach, the socio-economic integration of the Syrians refugees had now become the main challenge for the Turkish authorities and society. Education of the youth and access to the labour market were raised as the most pressing issues to facilitate their integration. The EU-Turkish Agreement was also acknowledged as a possible incentive for Turkey to take measures to enhance the integration of the Syrian refugees. The negative perception of the refugee population by Turks was mentioned as an obstacle whereas it was argued that their presence would have positive economic impact on the Turkish society.

The socio-economic integration of the Syrian refugees has now become the main challenge for the Turkish authorities and society

The discussion then turned to policy responses to the so-called refugee crisis from a European perspective. The demographic profile of the migrants crossing the Aegean Sea was analysed.







While in 2015, migrants were mainly men, they were followed by their families over the first months of 2016 in an attempt to reach the European Union before the implementation of the EU-Turkey Agreement as it was assumed by an expert. But a large number of them had been stranded in Greece

in poor humanitarian conditions, as a result of a series of policy decisions. First, the closure of the Balkan route was mentioned. Another response had been the involvement of NATO in the Aegean Sea. Then, the highly criticised EU-Turkey deal, implemented to end irregular migrations between Turkey and Europe, was closely examined. One of the implications of this agreement could be the opening of new routes of irregular migration. The ethical and legal issues of this “push-back policy” were raised. The emergency relocation scheme designed by the EU in 2015 was also discussed. While it was argued that it was the least costly and problematic solution, its inefficiency was widely acknowledged as a number of EU member states had been reluctant to accept refugees. Therefore, some argued that the situation should rather be described as a humanitarian crisis or international protection crisis than a migration or refugee crisis. Finally, a greater securitisation of the migration policies at the expense of a humanitarian approach was highlighted.

National plans in Jordan and Lebanon to deal with the Syrian refugees in these countries were also examined. Jordan did not have an explicit law to address issues related to refugee. The Jordan 2015 response plan had adopted a resilience-based approach to mitigate the effects on the host communities. The plan was intended to strengthen the capacities and the resilience of the health, education, justice, water and sanitation services. In Lebanon, a new border policy was launched in January 2015 by the government that almost totally barred Syrians from entering the country. The Lebanese had also requested from UNHCR to stop registering refugees. This had been assessed as a sign that Lebanon could no longer cope with the phenomenon. As a consequence, a high number of Syrian refugees were off the radar and deprived of basic rights in Lebanon. Some policy recommendations were provided such as continuing to provide humanitarian aid, implementing programmes to prevent the development of the informal economy in both countries, providing incentives for business to employ both refugees and nationals, fighting child labour, or implementing poverty alleviation programmes.

Parallel session: **Youth Activism in the South and East Mediterranean Countries Since the Arab Uprisings: Challenges and Policy Options**

**Silvia Colombo** (Chair), Senior Fellow, IAI; **Nadine Abdalla**, Research Associate, AFA; **Omar Shaban**, Director, Pal-Think

It is important to unpack different youth groups and to promote tailored policies accordingly

This parallel session had the objective of analysing the state of the Arab youth in a post-Arab Spring context based on the presentation of the Joint Policy Study on youth activism. The panellists and the participants to this session discussed the definition of youth as a population grouping representing about 50% of the population in Arab societies, the main trends on youth Arab activism and the problems that youth were currently facing. It was argued that the situation of the youth and youth empowerment were key to the overall improvement of the political and economic situations in Arab countries. There was a number of studies looking into youth marginalisation in a regional perspective. While some trends and challenges could indeed be analysed regionally, it was also important to unpack different “youth” groups and to promote tailored policies accordingly. Case studies of youth activism in Egypt, Tunisia and in Palestine illustrated the diversity of youth activism, reflecting the diversity of political and social situations in the region.

In the case of Egypt, local activism turned to be one of the most effective mechanism of social activism in Egypt in the current circumstances. It contributed to create platforms to express the everyday life problems of the population. It helped to build up a local community that often became the only opposition to the local council and it also helped to fill the “accountability gap” that was prevailing in Egypt. However, challenges such as the disengagement of the youth, bureaucratic problems or corruption of the movement itself challenged the effectiveness of local activism.

Local activism is one of the most effective mechanism of social activism in Egypt

The case of the Palestinian youth was also highlighted. While the Arab Spring had brought optimism to the Palestinian youth with promises of change, especially the hope that it



would lead to the emergence of a new Arab leadership more committed to solve the Palestinian issue. The Palestinian youth had launched their own movement, the 15th March Movement, which had generated a lot of expectations. Nevertheless, this movement rapidly collapsed due to divisions on the priorities to address and the targets of their anger. Moreover, the Palestinian youth quickly realised that the Palestinian issue was not on the agenda of the Arab Spring and that the Arab Spring would not bring about the expected changes. As a consequence, a phenomenon of youth radicalisation had emerged in Gaza, and an uncontrolled violent movement, perceived as a sign of a desperation, and driven by young individuals targeting Israeli soldiers or settlers, had appeared in the West Bank.

In the case of Tunisia, the discussion focused on the process of youth empowerment. Expectations of the youth were not being addressed. Youth were still underrepresented in policymaking as incentives and opportunities were lacking. Their socioeconomic situation was deteriorating, and youth unemployment rate was very high. The European Union should take the concerns of youth in Tunisia seriously and develop support programmes on social mobility and employment accordingly.

A number of policy recommendations (in particular for the EU) on supporting youth in Arab countries was formulated. The EU should continue to support programmes aiming at empowering the youth and focus on their key concerns. It was important not to consider the Arab Youth as an homogeneous group, increasingly passive and disengaged in politics. A sensitive approach had to be taken, characterised by a thorough knowledge of national and local situations. Moreover, in the current situation where actors cooperating with foreigners were discredited internally, the EU had to adopt a cautious approach when dealing with local activists.

Parallel Kick-off Meeting: **Future of Syria**

**Mensur Akgün** (Chair), Director, GPoT; **Florence Gaub**, Senior Analyst, EUISS; **Salam Kawakibi**, Deputy Director, ARI; **Sylvia Tiriyaki**, Deputy Director, GPoT; **Jordi Quero Arias**, Researcher, CIDOB

During this session, the new Working Package on the Future of Syria was presented. One of the objectives of the Research group was to present applicable policy implications for the post-conflict future of this country. The researchers acknowledged that it was difficult and highly hypothetical to think about the future of Syria as the conflict was still going on and the conditions under which the peace could be achieved were still unknown. Nevertheless, very little post-conflict thinking had been undertaken so far and the Working group would be keen to contribute to this issue.

The first contribution to the Joint Policy Study would focus on the issue of minorities in Syria. The objective would be to deconstruct some myths about minorities in Syria and to redefine the terms of the question. The Iraqi paradigm would be examined in order to compare with the Syrian case and draw lessons from this experience. Another point of the study would be the assessment of religious-based peace-building initiatives. It was argued that the Lebanese precedent showed that they were potentially the most dangerous solutions for the Syrian unity. The political exploitation of the minority issue by the Syrian regime and Western countries would also be explored. Therefore, it was recommended to put the emphasis on a real Syrian citizenship rather than religious and ethnic affiliations, and to explore decentralisation as a way to better manage local realities. In light of the dynamics in Iraq and Turkey, the Kurdish issue was also mentioned as very challenging for the unity and the structure of the Syrian state.

Three main scenarios for the future of the Syrian security sector would need to be assessed: the Bosnian scenario, the Lebanese one and the Nigerian one

Another part of the Joint Policy Study would focus on the security and military dimension of the future of Syria. The reconstruction of a regulated and depoliticised security sector was highly important to secure peace in the long-term. The study would examine previous experiences and concepts (disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, transitional justice) of post-conflict security sector reconstruction in order to draw lessons that may be applied to the Syrian case. The study would need

to look at the highly damaged institutions (in terms of physical, human, financial and moral capacities), the impunity for the violence against civilians, the widespread availability of weapons, and the high number of militias. Three main scenarios for the future of the Syrian security sector would need to be assessed: the Bosnian scenario (an external power taking over security responsibilities which allows the armed entities to regroup, demobilise and restructure), the Lebanese scenario (whereby some militias were treated differently than others and were institutionally accepted by the majority of the population), the Nigerian scenario (the national army reintegrated officers and soldiers who had joined the rebels). The condition of the creation of a stable, efficient and depoliticised security sector in Syria, ensuring first and foremost the efficiency over a quick and cheap reconstruction would be explored. Furthermore, in light of the Bosnian and Iraqi experiences, it was mentioned during the discussion that a sectarianisation of the security sector should be avoided. The case of the military involvement of Hezbollah should also be taken into account for the future of Syria.

The third dimension to be addressed by the Joint Policy Study would be state-building, political structure and legal issues in a post-conflict Syria. Possible federative or confederative scenarios would be assessed. The legal issues would necessarily include comparisons and analysis of constitutions of the Syrian history and those drafted by opposition groups since 2012. For this purpose, key concepts such as participation inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and consensus-

building would be taken into consideration.



Peace-keeping, reconstruction and development would be the last set of issues analysed by the Research Group. It was noticed that a number of international actors such as the World Bank or the Syria Recovery Trust Fund had already started to think about post-conflict reconstruction.





Thus, starting points for the study had been identified. While some degree of stability would be a pre-requisite for reconstruction efforts, it was also argued that reconstruction efforts would in turn be important to consolidate a sustainable peace. The reconstruction process would have to provide incentives such as the improvement of the quality of life that would make the use of force highly costly. The second aspect would be to identify incentives for international donors to invest in the post-reconstruction of Syria. For example, European donors would likely be keen on investing in Syria to make the return of Syrian refugees possible. A special emphasis would be placed on the Lebanese and Iraqi post-conflict experiences in order to identify the mistakes triggered by foreign patronage structures in the reconstruction dynamics and the debt traps. Moreover, critical economic sectors were outlined to carry forward the development of Syria based on two criteria: their potential impact over the general economic situation and their impact over the citizens' immediate welfare. Some argued that the hydrocarbons sector would be key for be a key source of revenue and as such important for the reconstruction, while others were expecting agriculture and water sectors to be top priorities for the post-conflict development of Syria.

Parallel Kick-Off Meeting: **Transformation in Tunisia: the First Five Years**

**Wolfgang Mühlberger** (Chair), Senior Research Fellow, FIIA; **Emmanuel Cohen-Hadria**, Head of Euro-Mediterranean Policies Department, IEMed; **Sherin Gharib**, Researcher, OIIP; **Stefano Torelli**, Research Fellow, ISPI

Another Working Package for 2016-2017 would be dedicated to the Tunisian transformation with the aim to assess where the socio-political transformation stood and to identify future prospects. This research would be based on four main pillars: Political Islam, Security, Governance-related aspects, Economy. The economic pillar of the study would focus on the economic crisis, youth unemployment in particular and the need for reforms.

Ennahda Movement would be the main object of analysis of the research chapter dedicated to the reconfiguration of the religious landscape in Tunisia. The historical roots of the party were recalled. In its present shape, as part of the governing coalition, Ennahda had to deal with a number of challenges and dilemmas, including the balance between its moderate and more conservative constituencies. Ahead of its congress, some discussions were ongoing on the



identity of Ennahda with some voices criticising Ennahda's leaders for diluting its initial ideological orientation through participation in the current governing coalition. The research would look into these internal dynamics of the party and the interactions with other political forces and would relate to academic debates such as the idea of “passive revolution” or moderation through inclusion vs moderation through exclusion. A participant suggested to go beyond Ennahda, study carefully other Islamic political forces and go beyond the stereotyped distinction between moderate and conservative Islam. Referring to academic debate on the “passive revolution”, another participant recommended the reading of a “the fall of the Turkish model” explaining how the Arab uprising had led to the fall of Islamic liberalism.

Another pillar of the research would be dedicated to radicalisation and security. The research would look into the causes of radicalisation in Tunisia, as well as internal and external factors behind jihadism in Tunisia. Four phases could be identified in the process of jihadisation of some parts of the Tunisian society between 2011 and 2015 (although a participant also recommended to look back at jihadism in Tunisia before the revolution). The first one was the ‘phase of emergence of jihadism’ with a revival of the Islamic movement after the revolution. The second phase was the ‘spread of radicalisation’ that was influenced by external factors such as the war in Libya and Syria. The third phase was the ‘urbanisation of terrorism’ and the fourth phase was characterized by direct confrontation and attacks. The fight against radicalisation would be won on the socio-economic field and through deradicalisation programmes. A participant stressed the importance to look into external interferences and in particular the financing of djihadism by external actors. Another participant invited the researchers to look into the issue of smuggling.

A declining participation of citizens in politics and a growing gap between the elite and the society are two symptoms of the malaise within the Tunisia society

The third pillar of the discussion related to domestic politics and governance issues. An analysis of the main discourses on the revolution and on the situation five years after revealed a very polarised situation and a malaise within the Tunisian society. A declining participation of citizens in politics and a growing gap between the elite and the society were two of the symptoms of this malaise. A participant confirmed that this gap was a major issue for the political life in Tunisia at this point. The research would look into the causes of this situation including a lack of political

leadership, a lack of accountability and the lagging reforms in terms of governance and in terms of consolidating the democratic system. This situation could result in the development of new forms of contestation, including the risk of political forces trying to reoccupy the political space through contestable means and in the risk of the very idea of “democracy” to be associated in the minds of the people with a regime that cannot deliver.

### Parallel Kick-Off Meeting: **Mapping Migration Challenges in EU Transit and Destination Countries**

**Erzsébet Rózsa** (Chair), Senior Research Fellow, IFAT; **Maja Bučar**, Professor, Head of CIR, University of Ljubljana; **Christian Druck**, Researcher, MEIA; **Gunilla Herolf**, Board Member, TEPSA; **Marko Lovec**, Research Fellow CIR, University of Ljubljana; **Roderick Parkes**, Senior Analyst, EUISS

During this session, the Working Package “Mapping Migration Challenges in EU Transit and Destination Countries” was presented. The Joint Policy Study would look into features and challenges of the main EU destination (with a particular focus on Sweden and Germany) and transit (with a particular focus on Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria) countries. Thereby, the study would build up on and complement the study of the first year of the project, which mainly analysed migration and refugee challenges in the Middle Eastern and Southern European states. The last chapter of the study would analyse the impact of the migration issue on the EU policy framework and the EU policy responses. All case studies would follow the same structured and horizontal approach, focusing on the following issues: the domestic challenges (political and social), the economic dimension (including the impact on the labour market), the response of the governments, including possible securitisation of the issue, the reaction of public opinion and different social groups to migrants and the cultural aspects.

Similarities and differences of the cases of Austria and Hungary were discussed. First, a sizeable migrant Muslim community was present in Austria. Also, while Hungary remained only a transit country, Austria was also a destination country for some refugees, which would call for a specific analysis of the impact on the labour market. Last, it was observed that Hungary had been characterised by a strong securitisation of the refugee issue.

Croatia and Slovenia were completely unprepared to receive massive flows of migrants and refugees

Croatia and Slovenia had been completely unprepared to receive massive flows of migrants and refugees, redirected in these countries after the closure of the Hungarian-Serbian border in September 2015. Although it was estimated that about half million people went through both countries, very few applied for asylum. Nevertheless, both countries had engaged in discussions on changing the asylum



laws. Also, a significant change in rhetoric both of the government and of the media had been noted, from a dominating humanitarian discourse to a securitisation one. Current debates in both countries related mostly to their capacity to integrate the migrants, according to the quota system designed by the European Commission.

Sweden has received more refugees per capita than any other European country

As one of the main destination countries, Sweden had a long history of accepting refugees and a general positive social attitude vis-à-vis refugees. Nevertheless, it was stressed that Sweden had received more refugees per capita than any other European country. The impossibility to cope with a significant number of refugees had led the government to introduce some specific measures and laws, such as requirement from the asylum seekers to show passport or other identification. This temporary law, to be reviewed in May 2016, had led to an immediate decrease of arrivals. It was argued that the scale of the phenomenon was such that the Swedish government was no longer capable of dealing with this issue on its own and that responses on a European level were needed.



In the case of Germany, it was observed that the constant and massive influx of refugees to the country had generated important divisions within the society. Although a positive and helpful attitude of some parts of society was noted, a growing support for right wing parties was also observed. The problem of

In Germany, the constant and massive influx of refugees to the country has generated divisions within the society

dealing comprehensively with migration issue was also mentioned, because of the German multi-level system, where some policies could be only regulated on a national level and others, such as education, on a regional level. Overall, the crisis had been rather well-handled in administrative terms, although the asylum process could still be accelerated.



In order to explain the EU policy challenges that the refugee situation was facing, a panellist reminded the positive and liberal paradigm that was dominating at the time when EU asylum policies were elaborated. The EU had believed that by liberalising trade it would liberalise and democratise neighbouring countries, thus removing the root causes of migration.

During the debate, some experts expressed concerns that the developments in Sweden, which until now had been the best practice in terms of refugees protection, might have a reflection on the EU as a whole, and could lead to sharpening the asylum laws. It was also noted that while examining the domestic impact, the question of social integration should be further analysed.

### Concluding session

Wrapping-up two days of debates, **the Chair of the EuroMeSCo General Assembly Bichara Khader** said that the chaos in Mediterranean region was unprecedented. It was materialising among other things through proxy wars, reactivation of old wars between external powers, increasing social discontent, shifting alliances and weakened nation states. While the diagnosis was shared, the discussion on the causes had shown various shades and focus on different aspects. While some had stressed the historical heritage explaining the current situation, others had insisted on the fragility of Arab nation-states, western alleged manoeuvres to control resources in the region and distraction strategies, Wahhabi ideology as breeding ground for terrorism and instability, and the unfulfilled socio-economic and governance expectations of Arab societies. Last, many participants had also highlighted the Arab-Israeli conflict, as a general matrix of resentment.

The EU should avoid looking at the MENA region only through the lenses of the presence of Daesh

The region was characterised by a security vacuum, with non-Arab powers gaining influence in the region. Furthermore, despite existing cooperation fora including the Arab League and a web of bilateral and multilateral agreements, the regional security system was dysfunctional and an overall security architecture was missing. The political and security basket of the Barcelona Process was put to rest, the Charter for Peace and Security in the Mediterranean had never taken off, the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue had not gone beyond public diplomacy, the Istanbul 2004 Initiative for Security in the Gulf had failed and the 5+5 mechanism had not succeeded in encouraging further Maghreb regional integration. Overall, an OSCE-like model was missing for the Mediterranean as a forum for dialogue and an umbrella for sub regional security arrangements.

On these premises, it was recommended to the EU to avoid looking at the MENA region through the unique lenses of the presence of Daesh that was a symptom rather than a cause of the instability in the region. Similarly, the EU would be ill-advised to consider that violence was a permanent and endemic feature of the situation in the region. The EU had to draw the lessons from the fact that the security situation in MENA had a direct cost for the European Union and accept that part of its future would be written in its southern border, hence the need for a sustained and revamped policy.



**Irène Mingasson**, Head of Unit for Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South, (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission) gave a farewell intervention. She praised the work of the EuroMeSCo network that had continued to be ranked among the best top 10 network of think tanks in the world in the 2015 Global Go

There is a broad space for the contribution of EuroMeSCo to be heard in the context of the renewed ENP

To Think Tank Index of the University of Pennsylvania. She highlighted the importance the European Union attached to encouraging fora of dialogue such as EuroMeSCo and people to people contacts. EuroMeSCo had an important potential to develop a powerful analysis and articulate policy recommendations. She argued that there was a broad space for the contribution of EuroMeSCo to be heard in the context of the renewed European Neighbourhood Policy.

Irène Mingasson presented the rationale of the ENP review as spelled out in the Joint Communication on 18 November 2015 with a renewed focus on stabilisation and a shift towards more differentiation and co-ownership. She also highlighted the main thematic priorities under the revised development: economic development, security and migration/mobility.

Ambassadors Marc Otte and Senén Florensa concluded the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference. Both noted the symbolic importance to have held the event in Brussels at this critical juncture. Both stressed the structural interdependence of the European Union and the MENA region and the responsibility of EuroMeSCo to use its assets not only to contribute to better mutual understanding but also to enlighten policy decisions.