

# MED RESET

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## DECONSTRUCTING THE EU'S DISCOURSE ON THE MEDITERRANEAN

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## DECONSTRUCTING THE EU'S DISCOURSE ON THE MEDITERRANEAN

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### ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the conceptual and methodological guidelines for research in MEDRESET Work Package 1 (WP1). It also aims to provide some shared guidelines for Work Package 2. The theoretical approach to be used in our research is critical constructivism with a slight bend towards poststructuralism which also makes it compatible with the methodology that we will be using, notably critical discourse analysis. Our task is to deconstruct the EU's discourse on the Mediterranean to reveal how it constructs the region (as conflictual, threatening, etc.) and its own identity (as peaceful, post-modern, etc.) in a specific way and designs and legitimizes its policies through such rhetoric. We will fulfil this task by inquiring into the co-constitutive relationship between EU discourse and its practices. This paper provides the detailed framework for such analysis, encouraging our partners to inquire into the argument that the EU pursues a securitized, depoliticizing and technocratic approach towards the Mediterranean.

### INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean is a constructed space. Social constructions are inherently unstable and contested. The construction of the Mediterranean as a region has also been contested and the meanings ascribed to it have changed over time. Once constituting the centre of the world for the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean is now represented by Europe as its periphery. The EU's construction of the Mediterranean has also varied over time, mainly due to systemic shifts and/or changes in the international and regional contexts. The definition of the Mediterranean by the EC during the Cold War was different from the EU's definition during the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), also known as the Barcelona Process, and a new conception emerged after the September 11 attacks – to be followed by the Istanbul, Madrid and London attacks – mainly based on security concerns. Today, the Mediterranean is again redefined with a different security focus, this time based on threat perceptions related to the refugee crisis and ISIS.

On the other hand, the Mediterranean as defined by Europeans shows not only temporal variation, but many European actors also conceive of it in different terms. For the Member States of the EU, which are located in the Mediterranean space, it is part of their identity – although some continue to see its southern shores in terms of the self-other dichotomy. On the other hand, for some non-Mediterranean EU Member States, even the EU's southern Member States represent Europe's periphery and the latter have sometimes been subjected

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to an othering discourse, mainly because of their cultural, social and economic characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

The MEDRESET project looks into how the EU, and by extension its Member States, have constructed the Mediterranean thus far, with a view to first deconstructing and then reconstructing it on different lines to provide the EU with new policy options for dealing with the region. Furthermore, it also inquires into the alternative constructions of the Mediterranean by other actors to juxtapose them with that of the EU and see the policy implications, not in terms of a rivalry between them – which would repeat the geopolitical approach to the region – but in such a way as to reflect on how the EU discourse overlooks, “excludes or silences its alternative[s]” (Milliken 1999:243) – and to reveal how/whether this forms a hegemony of meaning (Diez 2014:321). Another crucial task of the MEDRESET project is to display whether and how the EU’s construction of the Mediterranean space is countered by actors, supposedly possessing discursive powers, from within that space.

Our major argument is that the EU’s discourse on the Mediterranean is constitutive of, and legitimizing, its geopolitical, securitized, depoliticizing and technocratic approach to that space. Studies on the EU and its southern neighbourhood have so far had a Euro-centric focus<sup>3</sup> which enhances and nurtures the Union’s approach in this regard. Thus, the MEDRESET project aims to unsettle this Euro-centric approach through offering an integrated, inclusive and flexible approach to the Mediterranean which puts the emphasis on the local and corresponding needs and demands. The theoretical framework for defending this argument and fulfilling the research aims listed above is critical constructivism with a slight bend towards its poststructuralist variant. This choice is justified in that it facilitates a better understanding as to how the EU’s specific construction of the Mediterranean leads to the drawing of boundaries (mental maps), produces and reproduces the European self vis-à-vis (mostly against) its Mediterranean other and silences or excludes others’ discourses whilst simultaneously legitimizing its own policies in the region. The methodology that we adopt in this regard is critical discourse analysis based mainly on Milliken (1999) and Wodak (2001). Our intention here is not only to look into the structures of meaning created by the EU regarding the Mediterranean but also to elaborate on how the EU discourse is productive/reproductive of subjects, objects and policies – especially identities and difference – and how its dominant/hegemonic discourse legitimates its own policies. Extensive literature reviews, semi-structured interviews and elite surveys are only some of the techniques to be employed to achieve these research aims. This paper proceeds with a definition of the theoretical framework and the concepts employed in this research first and then moves on to a description of its methodology, providing the guidelines for the research that will be pursued by WP1 (and WP2 as well as WP3, to a certain degree). Finally, it looks into how the gender perspective can be enshrined into our research framework.

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2 For a similar argument see, for example, Dobrescu et al. (forthcoming). It should be noted at this point that we refrain from making our own definition of the Mediterranean because it is our task to find out how the Mediterranean has been constructed by the EU and Europeans from the 1970s until today and we intend to avoid constraining our research by our own preconceived notion of the Mediterranean.

3 On the Euro-centric focus of European Studies and studies on the Mediterranean/Middle East, see Cebeci (2012), Bilgin (2016), Onar and Nicolaïdis (2013), Ferabolli (2014).

## 1. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The MEDRESET project is based on the argument that geographical areas are determined and borders are drawn politically and that "[t]he Mediterranean exists through the various imaginations of its stakeholders" (Huber and Paciello 2016:6). It pursues a critical constructivist approach to look into how the Mediterranean is constructed by the EU and also how European identity is constructed against its Mediterranean other. Constructivism is a useful analytical framework as it emphasizes the link between identities and interests/policies (Jepperson et al. 1996), underlines the collective meanings attached to subjects and objects and shows us that the world we live in is socially constructed through communication and interaction (Wendt 1999). Its emphasis on the ideational basis of social facts is crucial for understanding the cognitive processes in the constitution of social structures that order our behaviour and shape our relationships. Nevertheless, this post-positivist ontology and positivist epistemology may not always fit well with understanding the co-constitutive relationship between discourse and practice and how our constructions of the world are unstable and contested. A critical – and especially poststructuralist – variant of constructivism thus fits better with our analysis as we aim at revealing the relationship between foreign policy and identity through all the boundaries that this relationship draws, the exclusions that it entails, and the legitimacy that it provides to certain actors whilst subjugating others. Critical constructivists put the emphasis on difference/differentiation in the construction of collective identities and draw attention to the relationship between the self and its others (Campbell 1998, Neumann and Welsh 1991, Neumann 1998, Weldes et al. 1999). They underline the co-constitutive relationship between foreign policy and identity, emphasizing that representations of identity form foreign policy and in turn foreign policy, as the major practice of drawing boundaries, produces/reproduces identities (Hansen 2006:1). Thus, critical constructivism offers a useful theoretical framework to inquire into how the Mediterranean is constructed by the EU as a fluid, contested concept (Pace 2006:117). Furthermore, it would also be helpful in inquiring into various and mostly diverse constructions of the Mediterranean not only by its two shores but also by actors which have a stake in the region.

An important part of such a critical constructivist approach to EU-Mediterranean relations is looking into the discourses that shape them and that produce and reproduce identities. The MEDRESET project inquires into the co-constitutive relationship between discourse and practice. This forms a crucial aspect of deconstructing the Mediterranean as defined by the EU especially because identities are "discursive, political, relational and social" and as such they are "constitutive" of foreign policy (Hansen 2006:5). What is more, it should not be forgotten that the discursive construction of identity is in turn a product of foreign policy (Hansen 2006:23). Campbell (2013:234–35) defines discourse as "a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible." It is within discourse that subjects and objects are created – in other words, discourses are "performative" (Campbell 2013:235). More importantly, "discourse constructs meaning [especially, identities] through difference" (Diez 2014:321) and this mainly refers to "a political project" (Tonra (2011:1193). Producing/reproducing identities through difference is also at the heart of the interplay between identity and foreign policy.

The MEDRESET project was initially designed and aims to unsettle the EU's (at both literature and policy levels) "narrow geopolitical conceptualization of the Mediterranean space driven by European economic and security interests;" "the application of European concepts and values to the Mediterranean, manifested also in a sectoral (instead of integrated) approach to deeply linked policy issues;" and "the marginalization of local perspectives and human security concerns/the needs of people in the region" (Huber and Paciello 2016:4). In other words, it has a claim to go beyond Euro-centric accounts of the Mediterranean and offers a non-Euro-centric perspective which is to be based on an actor- and issue-driven conceptualization of the Mediterranean; a constructivist, integrative research design to de- and re-construct EU policies through an integrated mapping of the region; a multi-actor, multi-layer and multi-sector analytical framework that feeds into devising strategic policy options for the EU; and a multi-method approach that takes into account the different perspectives of multiple stakeholders on both shores of the Mediterranean, from state actors to bottom-up groups in a comprehensive as opposed to sectoral approach (Huber and Paciello 2016:5). This conceptual and methodological background paper takes this approach a little further, *arguing that the EU has been devising a securitized, depoliticizing and technocratic approach towards the Mediterranean* which arises from the EU's construction of the region as described in the MEDRESET document and which needs to be tackled by other work packages to offer sensible policy options.

A *securitized* approach to the Mediterranean as taken up in this study refers to a conception of the region based on geopolitical considerations and threat perceptions, as well as exceptional measures. Securitization, as defined by Waever (1995), refers to a process which starts with a speech act – the definition of something as a threat – and requires the acceptance of an audience (a group of people) to become successful. This is then followed by a rhetoric of emergency which serves to mobilize the people and make them accept certain exceptional measures that they would not accept under "normal" conditions. Lastly, it requires, and thus leads to, the final use of extraordinary measures which usually involve the breaking of "normal" political rules of the game, including limitations on fundamental rights and freedoms. This is exactly why Waever (1995:57) would consider security a negative concept and offer desecuritization (taking issues out of the security realm and starting to deal with them through normal political rules of the game) as a "better" strategy. Securitization refers to the state of exception where everything else is subordinated to the logic of security. In the case of the Mediterranean, such a securitized approach to the region through the rhetoric of the threat of terrorism, illegal immigration, energy disruption, the rise of extremism, economic instability, or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, surely prioritizes security over concerns with regard to democracy, human rights, gender equality and socio-economic needs of the locals. On the other hand, it automatically produces the identity of the southern Mediterranean partners as conflictual/threatening while underlining the EU as a source of peace and stability: i.e., through the employment of the security speech act with regard to the Mediterranean, the EU "puts itself at the centre of such spaces of security and stability, and in doing so it feeds into notions of the self and delineates the borders that separate the self from the other(s)" (Schumacher 2015:385).

Another important consequence of securitization is *depoliticization*. In many cases, depoliticization is part of the state of exception where the securitized issues are "removed from public debate" (Edkins 1999:11). Instead, what happens is that those issues become technologized, in other words, "[d]ecisions about them" start to be "taken in technical terms"

(Edkins 1999:11). In securitized situations, interventions of foreign actors are usually based on "an abstract technical analysis of the situation" which overlooks the "political reasons or motivations" behind such actions (Edkins 1999:10). The EU's securitized approach to the Mediterranean is depoliticizing because it means imposing the EU's measures on target societies without letting them "politically" decide on their own lives and/or futures. Rather, it makes them agree on a set of standards, benchmarks, etc. imposed on them by the EU and/or its Member States.

On the other hand, depoliticization is not only limited to the realm of securitization but can happen in various issue areas such as democratization, transport policy or immigration, to name but a few. However, it is rather difficult to distinguish between issues which are securitized and thus become depoliticized, and those which are depoliticized mainly due to a technocratic approach. For example, the EU sees democracy promotion as part of its agenda to bring security and stability to its partners (especially ENP partners) – and thus promote its own security interests. Depoliticization mainly refers to a technocratic approach which is based on standards, benchmarks and measures with regard to a variety of issue areas – all determined by the foreign interveners, mostly lacking political analysis and consideration of economic, cultural, social and security needs of the locals in target societies.

Kurki (2011:219-20) criticizes the EU's *technocratic approach* in democracy promotion, arguing that it is a depoliticized one, which is more about technical solutions, programmatic schemes and technical cooperation in areas such as, for example, "finance, environment, border controls or transport policy" than about democracy.<sup>4</sup> In her view, technocracy refers to "a discursive set of ideals for governance, which emphasise the virtues of depoliticisation, harmonisation, rationalisation and objectification of policy-making and evaluation, and which promotes the role of technical experts in policy-making over substantively 'political' or 'democratic' public actors" (Kurki 2011:216). In other words, the EU's depoliticized/securitized approach produces/reproduces neoliberal subjects who are more interested in the technical aspects of their everyday lives and do not question the policies imposed on them by the EU.<sup>5</sup> The benchmarks in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and thus the Action Plans, the Strategy Papers and Progress Reports issued by the European Commission to measure "progress" of the ENP partners – are the major documents in which the EU's technocratic approach can be most visibly identified.<sup>6</sup> For example, Kurki (2011) analyses the European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper of the European Commission issued in 2004 to elaborate on the EU's technocratic approach.<sup>7</sup>

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4 This is especially significant for the MEDRESET project because it also aims to show how the sectors that the EU addresses in its relations with the Mediterranean partners are interrelated, and a technocratic approach to these sectors remains inadequate in terms of designing comprehensive policies.

5 For a similar argument, see İşleyen (2015).

6 The EU's benchmarks also have the effect of representing the EU as the example to be followed and the "other" as backward. We would like to thank Daniela Huber and Maria Cristina Paciello for this remark.

7 There are relatively few studies that inquire into the EU's technocratic approach, and those that exist tend to do so mostly with respect to accession countries. See, for example, Kochenov (2004) and Raik (2004). Santiso (2003), on the other hand, refers to the EU's technocratic approach also with regard to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, drawing attention to the geographically compartmentalized nature of this approach and criticizing its emphasis on administrative and managerial aspects of international development, which falls short of a holistic political view. Also, studies on network governance and European foreign policy offer a different but explanatory framework for looking at the EU's technocratic approach (see, e.g., Lavenex 2008, Freyburg et al. 2015).

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Tracing securitization, depoliticization and the technocratic approach in the EU's policy in addressing the Mediterranean would provide this study with the analytical tools to balance theory and policy suitably, allowing us to reveal the interplay between the EU's constructions of the Mediterranean and of the self and its multiple policies towards the region. On the other hand, this would require a reflexive methodology.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The MEDRESET project bases its primary methodology on discourse analysis, process-tracing, semi-structured interviews and elite surveys as well as infographics. WP1 and WP2 are mainly responsible for the first three of these methods. Among them discourse analysis forms a crucial part. Although there is no common definition of discourse or discourse analysis, the latter can be simply defined as the analysis of the patterns within which language is structured through people's utterances and which, in turn, shape social structures and events (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:1). "Discourse analysis is characterised by a plurality of disciplinary, theoretical and methodological approaches" – all of which are internally fragmented themselves; especially between narrow and broad interpretations (Carta and Morin 2014:3). The narrow interpretation looks at discourse as it is, ignoring its performative function in shaping structures and practices, whereas the broad interpretation takes discourse as practice – constructing identities, defining social relations, etc. (Campbell 2013:234-35). In either form (narrow or broad) discourse analysis is a useful analytical tool because it provides the lens through which language, dialogue and communication can be brought into the study of international politics. In this regard, it not only "[completes] our understanding of the process of policy change" (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004:184), but it also helps us grasp the interplay between power, identity and foreign policy.

On the other hand, discourse analysis does not constitute a mainstream approach in studying the European Union. It was only after Diez's call for studying the speech acts in European Integration in 1999 that European Studies scholars started using discourse analysis in their work, although such studies still remain rather limited in number.<sup>8</sup> Studies which adopt social constructivist and discursive approaches in analysing European foreign policy also reflect the fragmented nature of approaches to discourse analysis and while some adopt a narrow approach focusing more on the EU's actorness and/or certain policy processes in European foreign policy and the role of discourse within such a framework (e.g., Sjursen 2002 and 2006, Howorth 2004), others adopt a broader approach attempting to address European foreign policy critically and reveal the interplay between discourse and practice and the co-constitutive relationship between European foreign policy and European identity (e.g., Nicolaidis and Howse 2002, Diez 2005, Aydın-Düzgüt 2012, Cebeci 2012). This study also takes discourse analysis in its broader form to look into the co-constitutive relationship between the European discourse on the Mediterranean and the EU's practices regarding the region.

As discourse cannot be separated from practice, critical discourse analysis is the appropriate research strategy "to denaturalize dominant forms of knowledge and expose to critical questioning the practices that they enable" (Milliken 1999:236). It helps us not only to see

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8 For Diez's call see Diez (1999). For an overview of social constructivist and discursive studies on European foreign policy, see Aydın-Düzgüt (2015).

how the Mediterranean is constructed by the EU but also to elaborate on how the interplay between EU discourses and practices enables and privileges certain actors, and silences or excludes others – legitimizing certain acts whilst rendering others unacceptable or disqualified. Milliken (1999:236) calls this discourse productivity. In her view, “analysing how policies are implemented (and not just formulated) means studying the operationalization of discursive categories in the activities of governments and international organizations, and the ‘regular effects’ on their targets of interventions taken on this basis” (Milliken 1999:240). Thus, analysing discourse productivity provides us with a thorough understanding of the EU’s exclusionary and sectoral approach to the Mediterranean space. It also facilitates policy analysis on our end, especially in other Work Packages, in establishing the link between theory and EU practice. Such an approach which takes discourse and practice as co-constitutive would also make deconstructing the EU’s conception of the Mediterranean and reconstructing it in such a way as to offer policy recommendations more meaningful.

We also propose to utilize Hansen’s (2006:23) and Wodak’s (2001:72-3) critical discourse analyses and to ask several research questions in order to inquire into the discursive strategies of the EU/Europeans regarding the Mediterranean and EU-Mediterranean relations, as well as the EU as a foreign policy actor/an actor in the Mediterranean itself. This will be a crucial stage in the deconstruction of the EU’s constructions of the Mediterranean and offering ways to reconstruct it through a more inclusive approach.

*Deconstruction*, as understood by this study, merges the frameworks offered by Derrida and Foucault in that it not only employs a second reading based on the differences/dichotomies a text (here the EU’s constructions of the Mediterranean) entails, but it also enquires into how those constructions legitimize certain acts while excluding or silencing certain actors, discourses and practices. The Derridean deconstruction is about finding the tensions, contradictions, exclusions and silences in a text and addressing the dichotomies that it produces. It tries to inverse (upsetting/unsettling the hierarchy in those dichotomies) and displace them (showing that the two sides of the dichotomy cannot be defined without each other; i.e., they cannot be thought of as separate from one another and they cannot operate without each other) (Zehfuss 2009). It is crucial for the analysis in MEDRESET to deconstruct how the EU defines the Mediterranean and to look into the dichotomies that this definition involves. While constructing the Mediterranean in a specific way, the EU also constructs its own identity and this pertains to a continuous process of production and reproduction as the identities are never stable or fixed, and are produced and reproduced within the set of continuous co-constitutive relationships composed of discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is also crucial to elaborate on how such constructions legitimize certain policy practices, help discipline Europe’s others and feed into power relationships. This refers to a Foucauldian approach which would reveal how the EU’s construction of, and policies on, the Mediterranean are contested, how the imposition of its norms on its Mediterranean partners can be read as hegemonic, and how those practices are legitimized by discursive operations. This would further help us reflect on the correlations between discourse and practice, providing insight into the layers of practice through which the EU’s policies are designed and implemented, rather than searching for causation.

Jef Huysmans (1997:364) refers to two ways of analysing scripts on poststructuralist lines: first, analysing “scripts and their relationship to power in a historical way, interpreting the origins and displacements of discourses-texts” (i.e., doing genealogy), and, second, approaching “discourses-texts in a more structural way,” that is, revealing “how particular scripts draw



boundaries and create identities and binary differences." In this sense, the MEDRESET project takes the second track, offering a more structural analysis which traces the EU's construction of boundaries and identities in the Mediterranean and which also fits well with its policy-oriented dimensions. Thus, MEDRESET only refers to power relations when and where necessary, without entering into a purely Foucauldian genealogical analysis which would go beyond the scope of this project.

## 2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions merge Hansen's (2006) and Wodak's (2001) critical discourse analyses with that of Milliken (1999). It should be noted that these are sets of questions to guide our research partners so that each one of them can choose the questions which correspond the best with their respective analysis.

- How does the EU discursively construct the Mediterranean as a neighbouring region? (following Hansen 2006:23). How are the Mediterranean, the eastern and southern Mediterranean peoples, the EU and the Europeans referred to? (following Wodak 2001:72). How are subjects in the region categorized/tagged ("we," "them," "we-like," "kin," "the enemy," "the other," etc.)? (These questions might provide us with evidence of the EU's securitized approach to the region.)
- How are these subjects represented/labelled/predicated (conflictual/peaceful, progressive/backward, normative/interest-driven)? Are there any specific characteristics with which these subjects are associated? (following Wodak 2001:72). (These questions might provide us with evidence of the EU's securitized approach to the region.)
- How are these representations "normalized"/"naturalized" or legitimized? What are the arguments that are used to justify these representations and the exclusions and discriminations that they entail? (following Wodak 2001:73).
- How are these representations intensified or mitigated? What is exaggerated/magnified, repeated/underlined, minimized/trivialized and/or omitted/deliberately ignored in the language used for these representations? (following Wodak 2001:73) (This is again very much related with securitization because it usually involves a dramatization of the issue or magnification of the threat in order to mobilize the peoples; i.e., to make them accept the EU's policies and thus legitimize them.)
- How do those representations produce/reproduce and legitimize the EU's existence? (following Hansen 2006:23).
- How do these representations feed into the EU practice? How are the mental maps of the Mediterranean produced and reproduced?
- How do the European research communities convey these representations and help the production and reproduction of those mental maps? Are there privileged/dominant texts and/or silenced texts produced by researchers?

- How does European policy on the Mediterranean (and the corresponding social science research on it) produce and reproduce European and eastern and southern Mediterranean identities? How do those identities feed into and legitimate EU foreign policy? How does the EU render logical/proper its conditionality (interventions) in the Mediterranean? (following Milliken 1999:229). (These questions might provide us with evidence of the EU's securitized approach to the region.)
- Which groups are silenced or excluded through the EU's policy practices? How does the EU practice restrict/limit authorities and experts to some groups and not others? How does the EU interact with the silenced and/or excluded groups? What are the factors that determine the nature of the relation with silenced and/or excluded groups? What "common sense" does the EU convey and endorse? What does this make meaningless/impracticable, inadequate or disqualified? (following Milliken 1999:229). (This is very much related with securitization and depoliticization, as well as the technocratic approach.)
- How do silences and exclusions in the EU texts<sup>9</sup> feed into the constructions of the Mediterranean and European identities and help legitimize the EU's policies?
- How does the EU frame the four policy areas (political ideas, agriculture and water, industry and energy, and migration and mobility) with regard to the Mediterranean? How are priorities set and when are they bargained for and on what premise?<sup>10</sup> (These two questions are crucial in finding out the depoliticizing and technocratic approach of the EU.)

All the above questions should be investigated through a gender perspective. For example, how are gender issues tackled in these sectors and how are women engaged in mainstreaming policy-making and practices? Is the EU consistent in addressing gender issues within its policies in these sectors? Does the EU discourse promote the advancement of women's rights and/or gender equality?<sup>11</sup>

Following Milliken (1999:230, 243) we propose that WP2 can use the following research questions in alignment with our theoretical and methodological framework and inquire into how other stakeholders in the Mediterranean construct the Mediterranean, to reveal if there are any similarities and differences in their definition of, and practices on, the Mediterranean when compared to those of the EU. They can also look into how they construct the EU and evaluate its role in the Mediterranean. We believe that it is very important not to repeat/reproduce the EU's geopolitical approach in the analysis on other stakeholders in the region. Thus rather than approaching them as rivals (potential rivals) to the EU, WP2 can attempt to see the differences and overlaps in how the Mediterranean is constructed by those countries, and in the silences and exclusions that they entail when their constructions are compared with those of the EU.

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<sup>9</sup> Here, silences and exclusions in the texts mean whether the texts deliberately ignore certain points, do not mention them at all or exclude them in an open statement. For example, does the Action Plan of a country remain silent on a specific issue whereas that same issue is underlined in the Action Plans of other countries?

<sup>10</sup> We would like to thank Hala Ghosheh (ASI-REM) for her valuable contribution with regard to the last question.

<sup>11</sup> We would like to thank Hala Ghosheh (ASI-REM) for her valuable contribution with regard to these questions. For more detail on the gender perspective, see the section below.

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A set of questions that WP2 can employ in their analysis is as follows:

- How do alternative discourses construct/predicate the Mediterranean – perhaps in resistance to the dominant knowledge produced by the EU? (following Milliken 1999:230).
- What are the oppositions, exclusions, and silences that their discourses/practices regarding the region entail? How can they be compared to those of the EU?
- How do their discourses regarding the Mediterranean overlap with each other and with those of the EU? How can their discourses/practices on gender issues in the Mediterranean be compared to those of the EU? <sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The MEDRESET project aims to employ several research techniques for an in-depth analysis of the EU's constructions of the Mediterranean and of itself, and its policies regarding that space. The research techniques that we propose for WP1 are:

- An analysis of all the official documents of the EU on the EMP/UfM, the ENP, the Arab "Spring" (e.g., declarations, communications, common strategies, Action Plans and Strategy Papers), and the sectors that the project has specified: political ideas, agriculture and water, energy and industry, migration and mobility; all the speeches by the President of the European Council, the High Representative, the President of the Commission, the Commissioners (responsible for the ENP/UfM and the sectors the project specifies), the European Council Presidency Conclusions, the European Parliament (its resolutions, reports, debates and its President's speeches); as well as speeches of governmental leaders of "key Member States" such as, for example, France's former president Sarkozy or German chancellor Merkel. For CIDOB and Cairo University, as they will be looking into the history of relations, memoirs of certain leaders might also be helpful.
- An extensive literature review of relevant scholarly books and articles in journals/special issues on the Mediterranean, Euro-Mediterranean relations, the ENP, the Arab "Spring" and the EU, as well as of the documents that are produced by think tanks which also help the EU shape its policies or which criticize the EU, notably the EU-ISS, CEPS, EPC, CIDOB, IAI, Carnegie, Egmont and others. The selection method for the sources is left to the Work Package partners as they might need to specify their own method due to the temporal difference in our corresponding researches. However, the method used in this regard should be stated openly. For example, regarding journal articles some might prefer to look only at H-Index scholarly articles, although such an evaluation mechanism might not be available for the 1990s.
- Only CIDOB and the College of Europe-Natolin (CoE-N) will do semi-structured interviews with MEPs, Commissioners, EEAS staff, personnel of Member States' representations, or other relevant stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews are conducted by asking open-

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12 We would like to thank Daniela Huber and Maria Cristina Paciello for their contribution regarding this question.

ended questions which leave space for the interviewer to ask additional questions to obtain more information from the interviewee as necessary. However, they are still structured in the sense that they are conducted according to a predetermined set of questions and an interview guide to show the interviewer where it would be possible to intervene and ask further questions to open up the subject (Bernard 2006:212, Lamont 2015:84). In our semi-structured interviews, each partner will have its own interview guide as we are looking at different periods. We propose that both CoE and CIDOB ask some common questions regarding how the Mediterranean is defined by the interviewees and also how they see it as defined by the EU – refraining, however, from questions which might direct the interviewee to give certain answers, such as “Do you think that the Mediterranean is a conflict zone?” Instead, we need to look into how the interviewee defines the Mediterranean herself and see whether she uses the security speech act with regard to the space.

- We will also conduct process tracing in a way that will enable us to see the correlation between the EU's constructions of the Mediterranean and its policies. In other words, we will look into how discourse and practice feed into one another and reproduce one another. We will not be looking for causation but correlation – a complex and mutually constitutive relationship. In process tracing, causation constitutes an important part of the research process (Lamont 2015:127). However, in our case, because our main approach is critical and based on discourse analysis, this does not fit well with our approach. Because process tracing was involved in the initial document of MEDRESET (2015), we have to include it in some way. Thus, we offer to take a middle-of-the-road stance and conduct process tracing to the extent that it helps us establish the co-constitutive relationship between discourse and practice. Looking into contractual practices such as Association Agreements, Action Plans, mobility partnerships, etc. and observation practices such as issuing progress reports would serve this purpose; it provides us with the interplay between the discourse which constructs the Mediterranean and Europe in a specific way and also legitimizes or normalizes the EU's securitized, depoliticized and technocratic approach towards the Mediterranean space.

### 3. INTEGRATING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN OUR WORK

The MEDRESET project description paper (Huber and Paciello 2016:8) openly refers to the gender perspective, stating:

Finally, this one-way approach has also applied to EU gender policies. Gender research has pointed out that in the past decade Western policies in MENA have used normatively loaded gender policies to delimit boundaries between the “civilized West” and the “backward Arab world.” Maryam Khalid (2015) has shown how Western discourse towards MENA has focused on the victimization of marginalized gender groups, so denying their agency. Furthermore, Petra Debusscher's research on EU policy practices in the neighbourhood has highlighted how the EU has focused in an imbalanced way on women, indicating that one sex has been taken as the norm (men), while the other sex has been considered as problematic (women), instead of for example problematizing the over-representation of men in politics and business (Debusscher 2012).

We propose to follow this perspective and interpret the research questions provided above through this lens as well. For example, we can ask a specific question related with the gender perspective: "How does the EU represents itself (as superior/as a model, etc.) with regard to gender issues (e.g., women's/LGBT rights) in its relations with the Mediterranean partners?" Although not covered in the project statement above, we can also ask: "Is there a gendered relationship between the EU and its Mediterranean partners?" Such a question might provide a critical look into the othering, hierarchical, neo-colonial or Orientalist tendencies of the EU in this relationship. Kunz and Maisenbacher's (2015) article on the EU's gender equality promotion through the ENP would be a good source to guide our research. Also as far as providing a broader framework on how the EU constructs femininities and masculinities in its own integration process and in its foreign policy is concerned, we recommend Kronsell (2016). It is of utmost importance here that we ensure that voices in this regard are diverse and representative. Women's voices should also be included, especially because women's political representation is generally low and an active approach is needed in this regard.<sup>13</sup> It is crucial that we also pay attention to the language that we use in terms of the femininities and masculinities that we unintentionally produce/reproduce in our research.

## CONCLUSION

The MEDRESET project aims at comprehensive and integrated research which covers various theoretical approaches and methodologies. The conceptual and methodological framework that we propose in this paper for WP1 and for WP2 (as guidelines) represents one of those ways of approaching the EU's constructions of the Mediterranean and its policies in that space. Our Work Package involves extensive research through various periods. Therefore, the framework that we have proposed here is specifically designed in such a way as to reveal the disruptions and continuities in the EU's construction of, and approach towards the Mediterranean through the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s.

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