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MEDRESET
A COMPREHENSIVE, INTEGRATED,
AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

Daniela Huber and Maria Cristina Paciello
Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)



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Daniela Huber and Maria Cristina Paciello¹

ABSTRACT

Euro-Mediterranean policies, as well as research on them, have been characterized by a Euro-centric approach based on a narrow geopolitical construction of the Mediterranean. Moreover, stakeholders, policy instruments, and policy issues have been defined from a European standpoint, marginalizing the perspectives and needs of local states and people, and ignoring the role played by new and powerful regional and global actors. In an increasingly multipolar world, overcoming this Euro-centric approach is key for Europe to play a more meaningful role in the region. Thus, MEDRESET aims to reset our understanding of the Mediterranean and develop alternative visions for a new partnership and corresponding EU policies, reinventing a future role for the EU as an inclusive, flexible, and responsive actor in the region. This will be achieved through an integrated research design which is in three phases: it 1) de-constructs the EU construction of the Mediterranean, 2) counters it by mapping the region on the geopolitical level and in four key policy areas (political ideas, agriculture and water, industry and energy, migration and mobility) alongside a three-dimensional framework (stakeholders, policy instruments, policy issues), which directly feeds into 3) a reconstruction of a new role for the EU, enhancing its ability to exert reflexive leadership and thus its relevance in the region. Embedded in an interdisciplinary research team, as well as in a civil society and media network, MEDRESET evaluates the effectiveness and potential of EU policies by investigating whether current policies still match the changing geopolitical configuration of the Mediterranean area. The perceptions of EU policies and the reasons for their successes or failures are assessed by surveying top-down and bottom-up stakeholders on both shores of the Mediterranean. Country-tailored policy recommendations for the EU will be given for four key countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia.

INTRODUCTION

Two decades ago, the EU and its Mediterranean partner states entered into a first attempt at forging comprehensive Euro-Mediterranean relations through the Barcelona Process. Since then, the EU, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Mediterranean relations have changed substantially. The EU has widened to the East, has deepened its treaty structure, and has gone through a profound economic crisis by which it is still affected. The enlargement process is ongoing, even though it receives less priority, notably in the case of Turkey. MENA – a region which includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and the Gulf states as well as Western Sahara, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa – has experienced the breakdown of the Middle East Peace Process, the Iraq intervention, internal uprisings, the breakdown of states, the growing presence of

¹ Daniela Huber and Maria Cristina Paciello are Senior Fellows in the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).

Islamism on the political scene, civil war, massive movements of population, and an ongoing geopolitical power struggle. Non-state actors are taking on increasing importance in MENA, including social movements, but also networks such as the Islamic State (IS) and sectarian based groups. On the global level, the power structure is shifting with external actors such as China and Russia, but also regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar driving increasingly assertive policies in the region. As EU-driven policies in the region have been largely perceived as a failure in the past, they seem even less adept to respond to the new domestic, regional, and global challenges MENA is facing today. Euro-Mediterranean relations have moved from the regionalism of the Barcelona Process, to bilateralism through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and a rather limited sectoral approach embodied in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The new attempt to revitalize Euro-Mediterranean relations in their bilateral dimension since the Arab uprisings does not seem to diverge much from old models while a new regional initiative has not been forthcoming. EU policies in the region continue to frame Euro-Mediterranean relations through a rather Euro-centric approach which is characterized by a narrow geopolitical construction of the Mediterranean and by defining actors, policy instruments, and policy issues from an exclusively European standpoint, thus marginalizing the perspectives and needs of local states and people.

A *reset* in both thinking and policy making is now more needed than ever. As policy makers are searching for new solutions, research on Euro-Mediterranean relations is currently not in a position to come forward with such solutions since it has also remained Euro-centric. While it has been critical of EU policies, this critique has remained largely within the framework set by the EU; in other words, it has tended to assess EU policies by its own standards. A relatively new literature which is questioning these standards is evolving since the Arab uprisings, but while it presents a more fundamental critique, it also fails to incorporate the different perspectives of local and bottom-up actors in the region and does not come forward with alternative policy proposals. Thus, the aim of MEDRESET is to develop alternative visions for a new Mediterranean partnership and corresponding EU policies, designing a future role for the EU as an inclusive, flexible, and responsive actor in the region.

The project's name – **MEDRESET** – captures this double objective: on the one hand, to *reset* our thinking, understanding, and definition of the Mediterranean, mapping a region which has changed substantially in terms of geopolitical dynamics and players, and including, alongside European views, the multiple perspectives from the region; on the other hand, to *reset* EU policies in the Mediterranean, developing new flexible policy instruments which include a variety of crucial actors and respond to the needs and expectations of people on both shores of the Mediterranean and to the changing geopolitical configuration of the area.

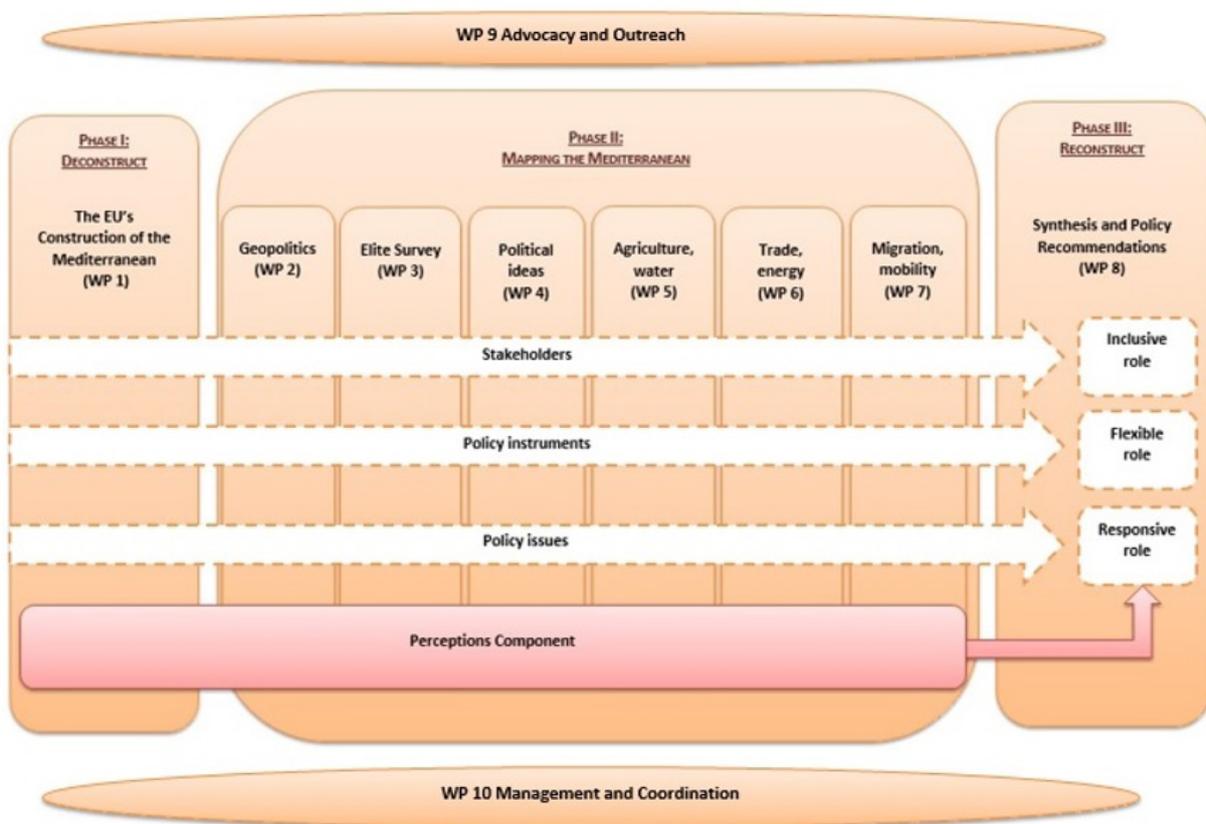
This approach is achieved through three phases:

1. The context will be set in a *first phase* in which the historical EU construction of the Mediterranean through its framing and practices from the 1970s until today is identified and *deconstructed*.
2. This is then contrasted in a *second phase* which takes stock of the region, *mapping* the Mediterranean according to how different stakeholders (regional and external players, local elites, and non-governmental actors on both shores of the Mediterranean) perceive and practice "their" Mediterranean into being on the geopolitical level and in respect to four geopolitically relevant and contentious policy areas: political ideas, agriculture and water, industry and energy, and migration and mobility. Adopting a broad geographical focus,

MEDRESET's case studies will span four southern neighbour countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia), five key regional players (Israel, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar) and three external/global actors (China, Russia, and the US).

3. On the basis of this, in the *third phase*, policy measures to reinvigorate EU-Mediterranean relations will be developed which help to *reconstruct* a new role for the EU in the region which enhances its ability to exert reflexive leadership and thus its relevance in the region.

Figure 1 | MEDRESET at a Glance



1. A NON-EUROCENTRIC APPROACH

Since the EU has initiated its Mediterranean policies, a large literature has studied this area of EU foreign policy. Both literature and policy have, however, suffered from one major gap: a Eurocentric approach which has been characterized by 1) a narrow geopolitical conceptualization of the Mediterranean space driven by European economic and security interests; 2) 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 3) the marginalization of local perspectives and human security concerns/the needs of people in the region. When the EU initiated its Mediterranean policies in the early 1990s with the Barcelona Process and strengthened them further in the early 2000s with the European Neighbourhood Policy, this

Euro-centrism was explainable: it happened in a global environment where the West called the shots, as well as in a European environment which was thriving in face of the success story of the enlargement process, hence transporting it to the South in a scaled-down version. Today, however, this picture has changed decisively. Not only is the West's unipolar moment ending, but also the EU model has been harmed by the so-called Eurozone crisis, with the EU being less able today to impose its construction on the region. Furthermore, as the region is unravelling, new political priorities make current EU policies often look irrelevant to emerging needs on both shores of the Mediterranean. Hence, to reset policy and thought, MEDRESET will rethink Euro-Mediterranean relations through a non-Eurocentric perspective, based on

1. a conceptualization of the Mediterranean which is actor- and issue-driven;
2. a constructivist, integrative research design that makes it possible to de- and re-construct EU policies based on an integrated mapping of the region;
3. a multi-actor, multi-layer, and multi-sector analytical framework which feeds into devising strategic policy options for the EU; and
4. a multi-method approach which 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.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING THE MEDITERRANEAN

Geographical definitions or claims, as the literature associated with critical geopolitics has shown, "are necessarily geopolitical, as they inscribe places as particular types of places to be dealt with in a particular manner" (Kuus et al. 2013:6). This applies also to the EU's Mediterranean policies. The concept of the "Mediterranean" has been a construction of the EU which first emerged in the 1970s and was then institutionalized in the 1990s as the result of a political process driven by European economic and security interests (Bicchi 2007), rather than identity concerns (Behr et al. 2012:16). Its narrow geopolitical construction of the Mediterranean has led the EU to engage with a small number of state actors (a group of southern neighbours) and, with its emphasis on bilateral methods, has limited its own range of action, thus seriously compromising its capacity to deal with policy issues that are strongly interconnected in an increasingly fragmented, multi-polar, and conflictual regional context (Behr 2012).

The European literature on Euro-Mediterranean relations has to a substantive degree adopted the EU's definition of the Euro-Mediterranean area, so marginalizing the multitude of contending perspectives/constructions of regional security and geopolitical views by states actors and civil society groups. Broader geopolitical dynamics which deeply influence this strictly defined Mediterranean region – including from areas such as the Gulf, Iraq and Iran, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, but also from the global level – have thus been tendentially blended out of the analysis. Importantly, this lacuna also applies to the study of EU bilateral and regional strategies which have not been contextualized in these emerging geopolitics, despite having an important bearing on their feasibility and effectiveness. While the EU is losing influence in the Mediterranean region, there is an increased competition from other international players, old and new. Notably, the literature on EU-Gulf relations has been hardly linked to the literature on EU-Mediterranean relations. There is a paucity of studies dealing with EU-GCC relations, especially with a view to Euro-Mediterranean relations, and there is a tendency to look at the Gulf from an energy viewpoint only, as well as at the Gulf as a coherent whole rather than

a number of distinct countries that have differences and rivalries (Legrenzi 2011, Colombo 2014, Nonneman 2006). In conclusion, neither EU policies nor the literature examining it are currently prepared to deal with such a complex geopolitical context that is very different from the 1990s when the Barcelona Process was created (Behr et al. 2012:11).

MEDRESET, therefore, starts from a different proposition. It considers the region as including but not being limited to the EU's definition; the Mediterranean is not a "pre-given geographical fact," but the result of interests, identity, narratives, practices, and interactions (Kuus et al. 2013). *The Mediterranean exists through the various imaginations of its stakeholders. Thus, the region may include other geographies and geopolitical dynamics which are currently excluded from the EU's construction, but are of key importance for the future effectiveness and potential of EU policies in the region.* MEDRESET will observe a range of different regional and external players alongside the EU which are deeply influencing the actual geopolitical configuration of the Mediterranean on the larger geopolitical level and in four key strategic, highly interdependent policy areas. The policy areas selected in this project are not only relevant within the current Euro-Mediterranean framework, but are of utmost importance for the future of the region and require regional or even global solutions.

The Iraq invasion and the Arab uprisings have led to instabilities on the **geopolitical level** which link Iraq, Iran, the Gulf, and key international actors such as the US, Russia, and China closely to the region the EU has defined as the Mediterranean. New conflicts in the Mediterranean do not have clear boundaries, spreading into the wider region, also causing a massive movement of population so that **migration and mobility** is becoming a cross-regional issue which transits the Gulf-Horn-Libya-Europe link. Furthermore, the Arab uprisings have led the proliferation of new **political ideas** from a variety of state and non-state actors that not only challenge domestic and regional structures, but have also led to a growing influence of Gulf countries on regional developments. Fearing the spread of new political ideas in the region, they have largely supported counter-revolutionary and military forces to take power from elected governments as, for example, in Egypt. New political ideas are not only challenging domestic and regional structures, but might also conflict, compete, or converge with the EU understanding of issues such as democracy or human rights. Similarly, the policy area of **agriculture and water** is key for the geopolitical stability of the region. It is a source of conflict, specifically as it is crucial for food security, environmental sustainability, and the everyday existence of people in the region. Southern Mediterranean countries, which are strongly dependent on food imports for their food security, not only have Europe as their agricultural geo-economic partner, but two thirds of their supply comes from Russian, Ukrainian, and US grain (Lacirignola 2014:252). In the area of water, there are links between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia on one hand, and Turkey, Iraq, and Syria on the other. Finally, **industry and energy** are key issues in the Mediterranean as they are concerned with the prospects for sustainable and inclusive development. Energy is a particularly contentious issue as energy resources are concentrated in the MENA but local energy demand is growing, which is putting pressure on the sustainability of the countries' energy models, potentially impacting future economic development, social stability, and security across the region as well as putting at risk the region's traditional role as an energy supplier for European consumers. Furthermore, a shift in power dynamics combined with the economic crisis in Europe have accelerated a trend already visible in several Southern Mediterranean countries, namely the diversification of trade partners outside the EU and particularly South-South cooperation. While progress in trade negotiations between EU and Southern Mediterranean countries has stalled, with the exception of Morocco, many Arab

countries such as Tunisia and Egypt have deepened economic relations with Gulf countries and Turkey. In Tunisia, over the last two years, Qatar has become the first foreign investor in the country to supersede France. With Europe facing serious economic hardships, Morocco is also increasingly turning toward Africa in the hope of strengthening economic ties.

These brief examples highlight the importance of a broad regional focus that acknowledges the *interconnection of different policy issues and the influence of a multitude of actors*. In order to enhance the relevance of EU policies in a divided, multi-power and conflictual Mediterranean, its geometry needs to become more inclusive in terms of a variety of relevant partners, more flexible in terms of its policy instruments, and more responsive to diverse but deeply inter-linked policy issues. To be able to assess the full obstacles and potentialities of EU policies in the region, MEDRESET therefore conceptually redefines the region through an approach which is actor- and issue-driven. It acknowledges that the Mediterranean widely defined might include besides the EU member states also its accession candidates, the Mediterranean tier states, as well as Jordan, Iraq, Iran, the Gulf states, the Horn of Africa, Sudan, and the Sahel; but rather than pre-defining the region, it will observe how its multiple stakeholders perceive the region, and talk and practice it into being on the geopolitical level and in four key policy areas.

3. MEDRESET'S CONSTRUCTIVIST, INTEGRATED RESEARCH DESIGN

Besides the limited geopolitical focus, a Euro-centric approach has also prevailed in respect to the issue priorities which have been defined largely from an EU perspective instead of from the perspective of regional states and people. Reflecting EU's security and economic interests, its policies in the region have favoured a rather artificially sectoral and hierarchical approach preventing the EU from dealing coherently and effectively with policy challenges that are strongly interconnected and, therefore, need comprehensive integrated responses. For example, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation has tended to treat areas such as political reform, agriculture, energy, trade, or migration in separate ways, even though all these issues are deeply connected. This interconnectedness became clear during the Arab uprisings which linked economic marginalization, food security, or migrants' rights to the issue of just governance. However, the EU has retained confined sectoral and security-centred approaches (or diluted into more comprehensive but formalistic and hardly influential programmes) – as exemplified by EU policies on migration and mobility, which remain securitized.

Similarly, the EU has treated its democracy and human rights policies as divorced from its migration, agriculture, or trade policies. Rather than responding to needs from the South, it has exported its own values, norms, and rules to the neighbourhood in a one-way approach (Nicolaidis and Howse 2002, Bicchi 2006, Pace 2007). While the EU has shown particular interest toward civil society actors providing them with increased financial support in the post-uprising period, it has continued to engage only with those civil society actors which are in line with its liberal model of development and democratization (Tagma et al. 2013, Teti et al. 2013). Moreover, the EU discourse on democracy shows strong continuity with the pre-uprising period, leaving unaltered the liberal model of development and democratization proposed to the region (Teti et al. 2013), and continuing to neglect the multiple perspectives/voices of bottom-up actors which might have understandings of political freedom and socio-economic development that

differ from the EU understanding. While not necessarily questioning democracy and human rights, these actors can have different views concerning the role of the state in the economy, the role of religion within the state, and the framework for rights, freedoms and citizenship (Tagma et al. 2013).

Moreover, while the EU has pursued free trade and economic liberalization in the region as a key to sustainable economic development and job creation, the Arab uprisings have pointed out the urgent need to pay more attention to existing social inequalities and the unsuitability of a purely market approach in relation to the needs of local people. Economic policies in the region have been mainly driven by EU policy makers in tandem with corrupt local elites which appropriate the few benefits coming from such reforms (Dimitrova and Novakova 2015).

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).

The literature has repeated this Euro-centric approach. It has been critical of EU policies, but within the standards set by the EU. As Beste İşleyen (2014) has pointed out, analysts have focused on "conditionality" and "compliance" rather than questioning such an asymmetrical relationship. Research has fed into the discourse of the EU (Cebeci 2012:564), constructing the EU as a model, encouraging its export, and implicitly portraying it as a standard which the other should follow. This not only displays neo-colonial tendencies, but ignores past failures which may augment in a regional context where the EU cannot call the shots alone anymore.

The literature has also reiterated the sectoral approach of EU Mediterranean policies, whereby economists have looked at economic integration, growth, and reform (Tovias and Ugur 2004); energy experts at energy and the Gulf (Legrenzi 2011); migration specialists at migration (Cassarino and Lavenex 2012); IR specialists at conflict and security communities (Adler et al. 2008); IR specialists and comparative political scientists at democracy promotion (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011, Freyburg 2012); and so on. To be sure, there has been some overlap. For example, the issues of migration and democracy promotion have frequently been studied together, since the EU's prioritization of the first has called its normative role into question (Manners 2002, Hyde-Price 2008, Seeberg 2009). Also the issue of energy/economic aid and democratization has been (over)studied in terms of the issue of rentier states or limited economic liberalization respectively (Dillman 2002:63-4). However, what has been lacking is an interdisciplinary analysis, whereby geopolitics and an array of policy issues are analysed in a synergic way in order to understand EU policy failures.

MEDRESET therefore proposes an integrated research design which makes it possible to 1) in a first phase deconstruct the EU approach; 2) in a second phase contrast the EU approach with an integrated mapping of the collective meanings which other top-down and bottom-up

stakeholders in the region have attached to it on the geopolitical level and in the four policy areas; and 3) reconstruct a new role for the EU in the region, devising strategic policy options for it. Constructivism seems particularly adequate for this specific research design. Constructivism's common ground, as Stefano Guzzini (2000:147) has argued, is "epistemologically about the social construction of knowledge and ontologically about the construction of social reality." Constructivism so defined allows us to take account of the diverse constructions of the Mediterranean region which are emerging on both shores, by state and non-state actors, and in diverse issue areas, being able to integrate multiple and area-crossing points of view. But while the general research design of MEDRESET is constructivist, this does not mean that within its single parts, no other theories including realism or liberalist institutionalism can flow. As the big paradigm debates have ended within the field of international relations (IR), it is becoming increasingly common to combine diverse approaches, especially in policy-oriented research. Each work package, therefore, follows its own theoretical approach within a general constructivist research design which integrates the following components:

In **Phase I**, which corresponds to **WP1 (EU Construction of the Mediterranean)**, MEDRESET will identify the EU construction of the Mediterranean and its own role understanding in this process. By observing its discourses and policies in the region, it will critically examine the dominant EU framing of the Mediterranean and how this has informed its approach and translated into practices in three historical stages: the 1970s to 1990, the 1990s to the early 2000s, and the mid-2000s to today. In other words, this phase will look at how the EU has perceived the Mediterranean and how it has sought to "talk" and "practice" the Mediterranean into being. A full understanding of the evolution of European discourse and action in the Mediterranean will also require taking into account both the European Union level (including different EU institutions) and the member state level (Ratka and Spaiser 2012).

This is contrasted by **Phase II (WP2-7)**, which *maps* the Mediterranean as it is today from the perspective of a broad range of top-down and bottom-up stakeholders on both shores of the Mediterranean. This phase will show how these stakeholders "talk" and "practice" "their" Mediterranean into being on the geopolitical level and in the four policy areas. It will respond to a double goal: to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Mediterranean which integrates the different and multiple views from local and bottom-up actors on both shores of the Mediterranean; and assess the effectiveness and potential of EU policies in the region in light of changing geopolitics and the issue priorities and needs of local stakeholders.

WP 2 (geopolitics) aims at assessing how EU policies still match the changing geopolitical configuration of the Mediterranean area by examining the role, influence, and impact of rising major powers (China, Russia, the US on the external level; and Israel, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar on the regional level) on the Mediterranean. These powers are chosen because of their capability (normative and/or material power) and willingness (claim to leadership) to influence the future of the region; thus, the EU has to take their policies into account when designing its own policies towards the region. WP2 identifies how these powers have been constructing, or at least attempted to construct, different geopolitical imaginations of what the EU has labelled the Mediterranean as part of their foreign policy and geopolitical considerations, and analyses which actors, methods, and policy areas they have focused on. It will thereby identify emerging dynamics of interaction and determine whether they are conflicting, competing, or converging with EU policies.

MEDRESET then moves to **WP 3 (elite survey)**, a lynchpin in the research at this point. It gauges local agency at the elite level in the region in three respects: firstly, in examining the extent to which the elites in these countries resist or adopt the EU conceptualization/construction of the Mediterranean and assess European policies in the region; secondly, in corroborating or challenging the findings of the research on geopolitical developments in the region; and thirdly, in identifying those issues which elites consider as crucial in each policy area, thereby setting the stage for the second part of the research which maps the Mediterranean region by policy areas. The elite survey will be pursued in Iran, Israel, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon. These countries have been chosen with an eye to, firstly, their geographic distribution with two representative countries for each sub-region (North Africa, Middle East, Gulf, as well as non-Arab powers) and, secondly, for their relevance, with all actors holding material or normative weight: Egypt, Iran, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are all regional powerhouses that decisively influence the course of the region in many aspects. Lebanon has become a crucial state with the Syrian civil war. Tunisia has become a key actor as the only state that is deeply transforming its political system in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, while Morocco has been an important partner for the EU ever since the beginning of its Mediterranean policies. Results of the elite survey will be then presented to EU stakeholders for feedback.

WP 4-7 (policy areas) will provide a bottom-up understanding and assessment of EU policies in the Mediterranean region across the four policy areas:

- political ideas: examining EU democracy and human rights policies,
- agriculture and water: examining EU trade and assistance policies in the area of agriculture and water,
- industry and energy: examining EU trade liberalization policies, broader energy policies, energy transition, renewable energy programmes, and industrial cooperation initiatives,
- migration and mobility: governance of labour migration, mixed flows, and short-term mobility.

The effectiveness of EU policies in each policy area will be evaluated through 1) a human development perspective which involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative data to assess their implications for people's welfare and 2) a perceptions component which relies on Recursive Multiple Stakeholder Consultations to evaluate whether the views of different civil society actors are conflicting, competing, or converging with EU policies, by investigating the following set of questions:

- How do grassroots stakeholders perceive and assess European policy in the region and in their specific policy area?
- What issues do they deem most relevant?
- How do they interact with other stakeholders on the domestic, regional, and international level?
- What are the current main geopolitical challenges in the region related to their specific policy area?

In particular, these WPs will investigate the perspectives of relevant civil society actors at the local level (e.g., trade unions, human rights groups, youth groups, Islamist movements, farmers' groups, and so on) in four target countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. These countries are chosen, firstly, to ensure comparability and synthesis between these four WPs; secondly, in terms of their importance for the EU in its Mediterranean policies with MEDRESET

being able to provide tailored policy recommendations; thirdly, by their geographical distribution with two countries from North Africa and two from the Middle East; and, fourthly, by their relevance with regard to the four policy areas, reflecting a diversified sample (for example, in the area of political ideas, Tunisia is the only state that is deeply transforming its political system in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Lebanon is a consociational democracy, Egypt a resilient authoritarian state, and Morocco a monarchy where only cosmetic changes have occurred). The results of this work will be presented to a focus group of European civil society actors (e.g., lobbies, CSOs, EU networks) during the stakeholder consultations on the European level.

On this basis, **Phase III** which corresponds to **WP 8 (synthesis and policy)** will combine the results of research and integrate them in three respects: a) assessing the effectiveness and potential of EU policies, b) mapping the key stakeholders, structures of interaction, and substantive policy issues on the geopolitical and sectoral level, and c) evaluating the research results from a gender perspective. This would then directly feed into the work package's second aim which is to devise strategic policy options to reconstruct a new role for the EU in the region, working on the regional level with all relevant (clusters of) countries and on the bilateral level with policies tailored to the policy needs of the four target countries.

4. MEDRESET'S MULTI-ACTOR, MULTI-SECTOR, MULTI-LAYER ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

MEDRESET works with a three-dimensional analytical framework which runs through all three phases of the project, so enabling a comparison and synthesis across work packages and allowing research to directly feed into developing new policies that envisage an inclusive, flexible, and responsive role for the EU in the region. The analytical framework focuses *on stakeholders (multi-actor), policy instruments/methods (multi-layer), and policy areas (multi-sector)*.

Stakeholders refers to key actors in the Mediterranean region. They can be distinguished according to level (the domestic, regional, external level) and type (CSOs, governments, IOs). The first phase will highlight which actors have been included and excluded in EU policies, whereas, in the second phase, MEDRESET will analyse the key stakeholders on the geopolitical as well as sectoral level.

Policy instruments relates to the methods by which policies are implemented. Policy instruments include unilateralism, bilateralism (and differentiated bilateralism), and multilateralism (and differentiated multilateralism). Unilateralism includes actions whereby no other state is involved in the policy making process, such as unilateral declarations or sanctions imposed by the European Council. Bilateralism (the coordinated relations between two states) can be pursued through traditional diplomacy, bilaterally agreed upon aid, or platforms such as bilateral councils or task forces. Differentiated bilateralism, as embodied for example in the ENP, goes beyond that as it fosters competition between states. Multilateralism refers to the coordinated relations between three or more states based on diplomatic platforms such as the EMP. Also multilateralism can be differentiated: the EU has for example set up the 5+5 mechanism with North Africa alongside the EMP. The issue of perception plays a

crucial role for determining what policy instrument we are observing. Firstly, while the EU might perceive a policy instrument such as the EMP as multilateral or the ENP as bilateral, the partner states have often perceived them as a unilateral imposition. Such perceptions impact on the effectiveness of a policy. Secondly, the type of interaction chosen by an actor betrays much about its perception of the interaction dynamics in a region as conflictive, competitive, or converging. The EU initiated a multilateral initiative in the Mediterranean when the Middle East Process picked up. It came forward with differentiated bilateralism when it had broken down. While the first phase of MEDRESET will examine EU policy instruments, this will then be contrasted with the policy instruments of other key actors in the region in the second phase of the project.

Policy issues refer to key challenges the Mediterranean region faces on the geopolitical level and in the four policy areas. The first phase of MEDRESET will study which policy issues the EU has focused on, while the second phase will highlight the key issues at stake in the region from a local perspective by looking at the four policy areas.

Figure 2 | Analytical Framework

	Phase I Deconstruct EU Med policies (WP 1)	Phase II Mapping the Mediterranean (WP 2-7)	Phase III Reconstruct a new role for the EU (WP 8)	
Stakeholders <i>Level: domestic, regional, external</i> <i>Type: CSOs, governmental, IOs</i>	Who has been included and excluded in EU policies?	Key actors at the geopolitical level and in the policy areas	Emerging dynamics of interaction (conflictual, competitive, converging) on the geopolitical level and in the policy areas	
Policy Instruments <i>Unilateral, bilateral, multilateral</i>	Which methods has the EU focused on? What are the dominant EU practices?	Policy instruments by other key actors on the geopolitical level and in the policy areas		The EU as an inclusive actor
Policy Issues <i>Key challenges on the geopolitical and policy areas level</i>	Which issues has the EU focused on the geopolitical and sectoral level?	Key issues on the geopolitical level and in the policy areas		The EU as a flexible actor
			The EU as a responsive actor	

Based on these three criteria, we can assess and map *the dynamics of interactions (structure)*, which can be conflicting, competitive, or cooperative. In a conflicting interaction, actors are exclusionary of other stakeholders, methods are mainly unilateral, and the goals actors pursue in various policy areas are conflicting. In a competing interaction, actors work with hierarchies

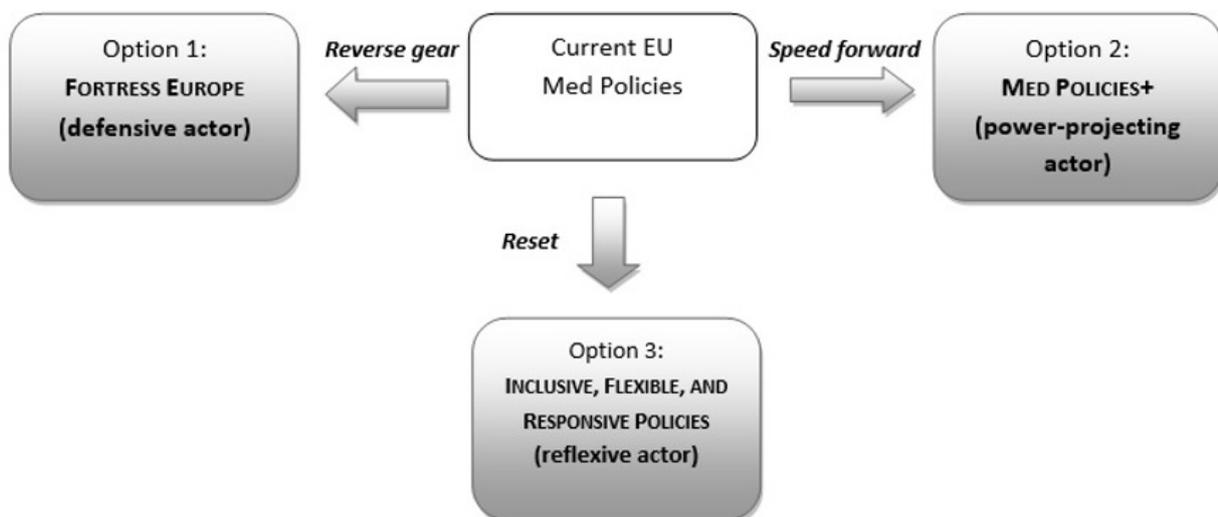
of stakeholders, methods tend to be based on differentiated bilateralism/multilateralism, and goals in terms of key policy issues are partially overlapping. Also competitive are interaction dynamics where goals are overlapping but methods are competing, or where methods are overlapping but goals are competing. In a converging interaction, actors cooperate with all relevant stakeholders, methods are complementary, and expectations are converging around overlapping goals in key policy areas. In the literature, this type of interaction has often been described as regionalism, specifically if it is institutionalized.

All this then feeds into the third phase of MEDRESET to develop alternative policies which are inclusive of the key stakeholders, responsive to key policy challenges, and flexible in terms of methods. In other words, the EU might use multilateral methods more flexibly relying on diverse clusters of stakeholders depending on the policy issue; and it might use bilateral methods more flexibly, tailored to the policy needs of the respective partner countries. This would make the EU *a reflexive actor* in a web of multi-layered and multi-actor interactions on multiple policy issues, enhancing its relevance and leverage in the Mediterranean.

5. STRATEGIC POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE EU

This analytical framework directly feeds into devising strategic policy options in WP 8 (synthesis and policy). MEDRESET stylizes three ideal types with the possibility of mixed and intermediate options. The options are put into relation to current EU Mediterranean policies as visualized in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 | Strategic Policy Options



A first option would be to put current EU's Mediterranean policies **into reverse gear** and move towards becoming "**Fortress Europe**." Faced with growing fragmentation and deepening conflictual dynamics in the region, the EU could choose a defensive attitude and concentrate its efforts on averting spill-over risks. This would imply strengthening the current barriers or

erecting new ones and minimizing engagement to a restricted number of stakeholders in a limited number of policy areas of immediate security and economic interest, such as migration or trade. The EU would mainly focus on unilateral policies, even driven by single member states according to their security needs, which means that the EU would move away from its bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation schemes. Tendencies of this could be seen before the Arab uprising as the EU not only agreed on a scaled-down version of its multilateral instrument with the Union of the Mediterranean (Behr et al. 2012:13), but also moved away from normative concerns in the Mediterranean (Huber 2015). On the positive side, this option would give the EU the opportunity to focus its energies on its internal challenges, deepening the institutional structure of the EU and investing into its own economies. On the negative side, this would bear the risk that the EU further loses its stakes in MENA, compromising its credibility and ability to influence the future of the region at its doorstep. Political, social, and economic problems might exacerbate with unpredictable challenges piling up for the EU in the future. Furthermore, in light of an increasingly multi-polar world, the EU would not only limit its political weight, but also endanger its own economic growth.

The associated role is that of a **defensive actor** with isolationist tendencies whose behaviour would tendentiously respond to some concepts and theories put forward by the defensive version of Realism, as well as the Copenhagen School in the field of Constructivism. Defensive realists like Kenneth Waltz (1979:126) argue that anarchy does not drive states to assume hegemony: "the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system." Taking this position to the extreme would mean advocating an isolationist policy (Posen and Ross 1997). From a constructivist viewpoint, the role of a defensive actor could be explained as part of a process, whereby Mediterranean relations become increasingly securitized on the political, socio-economic and cultural level. As a result, influences from MENA would be increasingly perceived as threatening to the ontological security of Europe, that is the "security not of the body but of the self" (Mitzen 2006:344), and Europe would close itself in Fortress Europe, a concept that has been widely evoked in the literature on the securitization of migration in Europe (Huysmans 2000).

The second option would be to **speed forward** through re-energized **Euromed+** policies. This option entails that the EU would intensify differentiated bilateralism and cement a hierarchy of partners (privileging frontrunners while neglecting other stakeholders), while at the same time continuing to deal with policy issues in a sectoral way which would mainly reflect EU concerns and needs. Thus, it would concentrate its efforts most effectively on front runners such as Morocco or Tunisia which would be bound progressively closer to the EU, while the others would increasingly lag behind. This has tendentiously happened since the Arab uprisings on the bilateral level with the EU intensifying its relations with frontrunners through instruments such as task forces, DCFTAs, and mobility partnerships. The ENP could be further re-energized into this direction; taken to its extreme, this policy option would entail offering membership options to frontrunners in the long term. On the multilateral level, the EU would come forward with a revamped UfM or EMP alongside cooperation, which has been effected mainly in sub-regional forums like 5+5. On the positive side, this option would try, with an increased effort, to build on past successes of EU policies, namely the enlargement process. The EU would remain engaged, even if mainly with frontrunners only. On the negative side, this would not only fail to prevent the region slipping into further chaos, but would also divide the region even further into frontrunners and laggards. It could also continue past mistakes: the EU might still act arbitrarily in projecting its norms, specifically when dealing with autocratic states on

whose cooperation the EU is dependent in terms of security issues. Moreover, the advanced partnership might prove too weak of a carrot to induce reform with the EU struggling to offer more given its hesitations in the case of Turkey. And perhaps most importantly, the EU would continue to impose its norms on partner states in a one-way process with no receptiveness to the local context and people, thus increasing feelings of resentment and frustration.

The associated role is that of a **power-projecting actor** whereby power can be materialist, as well as normative, corresponding respectively to offensive realism, as well as to diverse strands of constructivist and critical theory. Offensive realists like John Mearsheimer (2014:35) argue that in anarchy, states strive to maximize their power: "great powers recognize that the best way to ensure their security is to achieve hegemony now, thus eliminating any possibility of a challenge by another great power." In the academic debate triggered by Ian Manners' seminal article (2002) portraying the EU as a normative power, Adrian Hyde-Price (2006:226-27) has evoked offensive realist concepts when arguing that the EU has been used by its most powerful member states "as an instrument for collectively exercising hegemonic power," shaping its neighbourhood in line with their strategic and economic interests. For Hyde-Price, second-order normative concerns such as democracy and human rights have been promoted only when they do not endanger first-order security concerns. However, in line with more constructivist theories on the democratic peace, democracy promotion has also been framed as a policy to foster peace and security in international relations (Huber 2015). John Owen (2002:257), for example, has argued that democracies seek to manipulate how other states perceive the international system, seeing the power of democracies as favourable and as "no threat to their fundamental visions of societal order." This is already close to critical theory according to which democracy promotion could be a policy to create a common culture in a hegemonic bloc (Cox 1993).

A third strategic policy option would be to press the **reset** button and deeply reform the EU's Mediterranean policies in a way which takes on board the concerns of the other: it would be, firstly, more *inclusive* of all relevant stakeholders, which means diverse regional and global actors, as well as local bottom-up actors. This also implies giving more co-ownership and equal-footing partnerships. It would be, secondly, more *flexible* in terms of its instruments. Regional integration would be aimed at through a flexible mix of bilateral, subregional, and regional arrangements, working with clusters of partners in diverse policy areas. And it would be, thirdly, more *responsive* to local trends and to the needs and expectations of the region's citizens on both its Northern and Southern shores. On the positive side, such a pragmatic, but also ambitious approach would not only enhance the EU's positive image and strategic weight in the region, but the EU would also be a policy entrepreneur providing a vehicle to bring other external and regional actors on board. Without such a vehicle these actors might be pushed to move more forcefully into the region to protect their interests, driven by a fear of negative spill-overs from accelerating conflicts. On the negative side, such an initiative looks like a Herculean task in face of the enormous challenges the region is facing, as well as the need of the EU to tackle its internal challenges. This leads us back, however, to the need for becoming more inclusive, responsive, and flexible in an increasingly conflictual, multi-polar, and fragmented region where, in contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s, the EU is less able to impose its ideas and hegemony. In other words, as Richard Youngs has put it, in an increasingly plural region, rather than seeing other powers as competitors and swimming against the tide, the EU could frame them as partners, swimming with the tide (Behr et al. 2012:10).

This policy option builds on the associated role of the EU as a **reflexive actor** which transcends the inward-/outward-looking divide in being self-reflexive and other-regarding. In response to Ian Manners' above-cited seminal article, Thomas Diez (2005:614-15) has pointed out that the "normative power Europe" paradigm has constructed "an identity of the EU against an image of others in the 'outside world'" and has called for a "greater degree of reflexivity, both in the academic discussion about normative power, and in the political representations of the EU as a normative power." Reflexivity has recently been becoming an important issue in International Relations theory (Guzzini 2013), which is not only in need of contributing more to the world of practitioners, but also of enhancing its ability to analyse an increasingly multi-polar world. A reflexive actor would accept that there are many normative actors, among them emerging powers, in a world driven not only by struggles about power and norms, but also by enormous policy challenges for the solution of which all stakeholders hold responsibility and need to be brought on board.

6. MEDRESET'S METHODOLOGY

EU policies have frequently been characterized as monologues which have marginalized the perspective of the other. The literature has repeated this trend. The key concepts with which the Mediterranean region has been studied have relied on Western International Relations and Comparative Politics which have not spoken to local perspectives and perceptions (Ferabolli 2014). This trend has been cemented by the lack of engagement with the related literature which has emerged in MENA (there has been more engagement with the literature emerging in Israel and Turkey, and less with that from the Arab world or Iran). Thus, what is missing is a more reflexive methodology which identifies alternatives to prevailing structures (Hopf 1998:180). Moreover, while there is a growing literature on external perceptions of EU foreign policy in Asian countries (Chaban et al. 2013), very little is still known about the perspectives of Southern Mediterranean countries themselves vis-à-vis European policies and the European role in the region (Bayoumi 2007, Krüger and Ratka 2014). In addition, available surveys are either focused on the elite level (for example the yearly IEMed 2016 surveys of experts, actors, and policy makers measuring the progress, achievements, and shortcomings of Euro-Mediterranean policies), or look at perceptions at the citizen level through quantitative methods (for example, the Anna Lindh Foundation (2014) on Mediterranean core values, as well as the EU Neighbourhood Barometer which uses opinion polls to measure opinions on the EU and its policies in the seventeen countries participating in the ENP). Thus, perception analyses are currently missing more qualitative assessment of perceptions of the EU, EU policies, as well as the region on the top-down and bottom-up level, including not only the Mediterranean tier states, but also the broader region.

In light of this, MEDRESET will rely on a multi-method approach merging different methodologies and sources, including critical discourse analysis of policy documents, an elite survey, interviews and focus groups, and visual methods. To account for different understandings of the region through a local, bottom-up, and gender-sensitive methodology, work packages are co-led by European and Southern partners. The conceptual papers of each work package will include diversified literature reviews with a review of the literature originated in both Europe and MENA countries, with a specific eye to the grey literature often neglected in the research on Mediterranean relations. This will enable MEDRESET to identify differences and similarities

in contents and approaches between knowledge produced on either side of the Mediterranean and therefore produce background reports that incorporate both perspectives. MEDRESET's Recursive Multiple Stakeholder Consultations enable the project to reverse the ordinary approach by which perceptions and priorities of Southern shore partners are included in the picture only marginally and/or a posteriori. Inviting EU-level stakeholders to react and position themselves with reference to structured inputs coming from Mediterranean partners represents an innovative approach capable to generate fresh and innovative policy perspectives. To ensure that a gender-sensitive perspective will be integrated into all three phases of MEDRESET, a gender expert will contribute to each background conceptual/methodological paper and each final policy brief in WP1-7; the gender expert will also draft a gender-oriented conclusion report, informing policy recommendations in WP8. This multi-method approach is embedded in the research experience of MEDRESET's interdisciplinary research teams including political scientists, international relations scholars, political economists, and sociologists. Furthermore, it is also embedded in a civil society and media network from the EU and MENA, cooperating with Jadaliyya in this respect.

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مِطَا رِيست



Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
Via Angelo Brunetti 9
I-00186 Roma

Tel. +39-063224360
Fax +39-063224363

iaia@iaia.it | www.iaia.it



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