The Political Economy of Governance in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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

Mark Furness
Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence
Freie Universität Berlin
Germany

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Abstract

The Middle East and North Africa is a security interdependent region, where governments are caught in a classic prisoners' dilemma. They are well aware that cooperation would be less costly than conflict, and yet they have been reluctant to agree formally on rules governing security interaction in the region. The inability to escape the prisoners' dilemma is usually blamed on the persistence of conflict in the region, especially between Israel and the Palestinians. This paper argues that the reasons why four multilateral institution-building efforts have not managed to bring about region-wide security cooperation go beyond persistent conflict. Regional governments have been unable to overcome historical enmities, and conflicts have served the purposes of domestic elites in pursuing their preference for preserving their domestic power. In a perfect world MENA governments would be able to overcome these differences without outside assistance. In the current political climate an external actor is needed, but the United States, the European Union and its members have yet to settle on a common position on security in the MENA region.

1. Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is home to some of the world's most troublesome security conflicts. The Middle East Peace Process, the Iraq war, international tension over Iran's nuclear programme, the long-running Western Sahara conflict, the 2006 summer war between Israel and Hezbollah, civil conflict in Palestine, terrorist attacks in Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Egypt – the list goes on. Conflicts, and the actors that start them and end them, are changing the regional balance of power in the MENA. The shape this security order will take is unclear, but as Javier Solana recently warned, there is a danger that the Middle East will remain the exception in a world where formal regional security structures are becoming the norm.[1] MENA governments therefore have a choice: they can cooperate and work towards developing institutional safeguards to reinforce their cooperation; or they can continue to let domestic and international conflict undermine their relationships and create further instability. Governments from outside the region have a similar choice: to assist in bringing MENA governments together, or to continue to use the region's divisions for their own purposes.

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

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[1] Javier Solana 'Countering Globalisation's Dark Side' *Europe's World* Autumn 2007.

The 'prisoners' dilemma' is a useful metaphor for the institutional framework for security cooperation among MENA governments. This rests on two central assumptions: first, that the region's governments are rational actors who will choose a certain action if they believe that the benefits exceed the costs of doing so. Second, the MENA region is security interdependent: an attempt by one actor to pursue its security preferences affects the security of other actors (Moravcsik 1997). This kind of zero-sum interdependence creates an environment in which the well-known 'security dilemma' phenomenon can occur. Actors fear being vulnerable to aggression from other actors if they let their guard down and compete to build military resources and political alliances. This increases the insecurity felt by other actors who in turn react in the same way. When the negative externalities of conflict are introduced, interdependence can force rational actors into a prisoners' dilemma because they cannot trust other actors not to defect from mutual commitments.

The prisoners' dilemma therefore illustrates the central problem facing MENA governments. In the prisoners' dilemma two actors can either cooperate or defect, and the best outcome for either prisoner is to defect while the other actor cooperates. The defecting prisoner walks free while the one that cooperates is punished. If both prisoners cooperate they have to give up some of their freedom – the costs are not as high as if they both defect, but cooperation is not free. The chances of mutual defection are therefore higher than cooperation because while the prisoners have an interest in cooperating, the potential payoff from defection is greater (Axelrod 1981). The prisoners' dilemma therefore creates a negative spiral in which actors chose sub-optimal, non-cooperative outcomes – ultimately leading to an inefficient Nash equilibrium when no actor can improve its situation while the other actors' positions remain unchanged (Miller 1997). In a security interdependent region, conflict among actors can be expected to constitute the normal state of relations when actors are unable to cooperate.

According to institutional international theory, the best way for actors to break the prisoners' dilemma cycle is to negotiate rules governing conduct. Developing an institutional setting for security cooperation is a step-by-step process: the first step is a basic agreement between the governments of the region on what the rules of the game are and what happens when they are broken. Everyone then knows what constitutes acceptable behaviour, systems can be set in place for reacting to breaches, and the likelihood of nasty surprises is lessened (Keohane 1984). The theory that institutions assist actors in coping with interdependence by solving cooperation and coordination problems is supported by empirical studies of regions in the world where rules-based cooperation has eased fears that wars will break out between states, especially in Europe and Southeast Asia (Buzan and Waever 2003).

The rest of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 defines the basic concepts 'security', 'conflict', 'cooperation', 'institution' and 'region' as they are used here. This section also outlines the MENA as a security region and delineates its borders. Section 3 presents data on conflicts and cooperation. This data shows that the prisoners' dilemma is particularly strong in the MENA region: conflicts exacerbate mistrust, while cooperation is fragmented. Section 4 discusses four efforts that regional and external actors have made to create an institutional framework governing regional or sub-regional security cooperation in the MENA. This section offers some explanations for the fact that to date none of the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue resembles a rules based framework that all of the region's key security actors can work within.[2] Section 5 argues that an external actor is needed to enable an escape from the prisoners' dilemma, as enmities among regional actors make cooperation highly unlikely. Section 6 concludes that external actors must work together if the political will to cooperate is to be found.

2. Regional Security: Basic Concepts

Security can be defined as the perceived risk of suffering an aggression by a hostile actor. It is an actor-oriented concept and refers to the threat that one actor *considers* posed by another. Security is about perception – it is what actors make of it (cf. Wendt 1992). When actor A considers that actor B poses a threat, actor A will take steps to remove that threat. The perceived threat level therefore determines the response, and the response creates externalities for other actors in an interdependent environment.

Conflict: this paper accepts the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's definition of conflict as 'a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory,' where 'at least one [party] is the government of a state' (Gleidtsch et al. 2006). This paper differs from the Uppsala definition in that where they define conflict as involving the use of armed force resulting in casualties; a broader view that conflict can also take place at the diplomatic level and involve the threat of the use of force by actors is taken.

Region: nation-states have divided the earth into territorial units of varying sizes. Units that lie in close proximity can be said to form a region. The borders of these regions and the patterns of membership or exclusion of actors are not decided only by geography but also by

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[2] This paper does not deal with the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation initiative, which can be considered a subset of European security policy in the MENA region. It also does not deal with the Arab-Maghreb Union, which does not have well developed security objectives.

patterns of interaction among the countries themselves. Regions are created by actors: they are political as well as geographical constructions (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002). The membership and boundaries of a region depend on the actors, their preferences and the strategies that they employ in different issue areas. An economic region can have different membership and boundaries to a security region, although in practice these usually contain the same core membership. In security terms a region is a group of geographically clustered countries with interdependent security preferences.

Institution: international relations scholars have long argued over definitions of international institutions. Robert Keohane wrote in 1988 that 'institutions are often discussed without being defined at all.' The IR literature tends to group conceptions of institutions into four categories: institutions as formal organisations with offices, staffs and budgets; institutions as the practices of the actors; institutions as rules; and institutions as consisting of sets of intersubjective norms (Duffield 2007). This paper understands institutions as defined by Mearsheimer (1994/95): 'sets of rules that stipulate ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other.' International institutions are rules that enable or prohibit actors from engaging in certain activities, whether they are effective or not. They can be formalised by bilateral or multilateral treaty and are sometimes administered by an international organisation. The rules can also be informal, tacitly agreed by actors for pragmatic purposes, but without legal status.

Cooperation: no international actor enjoys 'free security' and all take precautions to reduce the perceived risk of suffering an aggression. These include defensive and offensive military measures, including alliance building and deterrence, and/or rules based arrangements that provide actors with opportunities for negotiating their differences without resorting to or threatening armed conflict. 'Cooperation' is understood here as an actor's general agreement on the form, content and legitimacy of the rules, and the undertaking not to break them as long as they are respected by other actors. Regional security cooperation does not mean that actors must resolve the conflicts between them, or even that they participate actively in making and implementing rules (Jones 1998). Rules governing interaction do not transform hate into love. Rather, regional security institutions are created to manage these differences in ways that reduce costly externalities – cooperation can be said to be occurring when actors recognise and adhere to the rules of the game.

The MENA Region: Any effort to build regional security institutions must settle on the area to be 'secured.' Geographically, while the MENA's edges are blurred, most characterisations include all of the countries between Morocco in the west and Iran in the east. Politically,

while there is consensus about the region's 'core' states, definitions of the MENA's membership vary. One 'track two' study sponsored by Canada and Denmark proposed that the MENA be defined by different 'layers' – a core level consisting of all members of the League of Arab States, Israel and Iran; a 'proximate' level consisting of states that border the region, including Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the EU; and a third layer consisting of states outside the region which play a role, including the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Japan (Jones 1998).

This paper defines the MENA more narrowly as 21 states and territories whose national borders were established between World War I and the withdrawal of Britain and Spain from (most of) North Africa and the Persian Gulf in the 1970s. The MENA is comprised of three 'sub regions' – the Maghreb in North Africa (Morocco and Western Sahara, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya); the Levant (Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Syria) and the Persian Gulf (Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Oman). Turkey is also a MENA country in security terms, as its security preferences and restrictions are interdependent with those of other MENA actors, especially its neighbours Syria, Iran and Iraq.[3]

3. Security Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa

The following tables show that the MENA prisoners' dilemma has proved inescapable in the post-Cold War era. The large number of conflicts, their variety in terms of causes and intensity, and their tendency to involve state and non-state actors all indicate that the region's governments have not been able to develop mutual trust. The prevalence of conflict also presents significant challenges to any efforts to develop rules-based cooperation, given that many of the actors involved are not governments or states.

Table 1 shows that while militarised inter-state disputes have declined in number in recent years, the Iraq war marks a new level of intensity. Table 2 shows that conflict in the MENA region is multi-dimensional. It involves state and non-state actors and in some cases has been subject to intervention by actors from outside the region. MENA conflicts spring from a variety of issues deeply rooted in the political and cultural history of the region. Many concern the role of Islam in politics and are as much a fight about the organising principles of

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[3] Mauritania, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Comoros are members of the League of Arab States but are not considered MENA countries for the purposes of this paper. The Darfur and Somalia conflicts involve mostly sub-Saharan actors and would not come under the purview of a MENA security institution. Conflict over the status of Northern Cyprus involves Turkey but is dealt with in the European context.

the Muslim world as a contest for material power and territory (Gause et al 2007). The challenges for institutional cooperation are therefore significant for a plethora of security actors with their own agendas, some of whom do not have a clear mandate for dealing with security issues that are deeply entrenched in the afflicted societies.

Table 1 Militarised Interstate Disputes in the MENA 1992-2003[4]

Year	Start Date	End Date	State A	State B	Level of Hostility
1992	10/07/92	01/02/94	Iraq	Kuwait	4:4
	08/02/92	01/17/93	Kuwait	Iraq	4:4
1993	03/03/93	07/15/93	Iran	Iraq	4:3
	04/06/93	12/18/01	Israel	Lebanon	4:4
	07/01/93	07/04/93	Iraq	Saudi Arabia	4:1
	07/12/93	07/07/01	Israel	Saudi Arabia	4:4
1994	08/02/94	10/09/95	Kuwait	Iraq	3:3
	10/23/94	01/27/94	Saudi Arabia	Yemen	4:4
	11/06/94	11/06/94	Iran	Iraq	4:1
1995	03/20/95	07/10/95	Turkey	Iraq	4:1
1996	06/96	06/96	Syria	Turkey	3:3
	06/26/96	06/26/96	Turkey	Iran	4:1
	07/27/96	01/97	Iran	Iraq	4:3
	09/05/96	02/17/99	Turkey	Iraq	4:1
	10/09/96	09/25/97	Kuwait	Iraq	4:4
1997	06/97	07/19/98	Saudi Arabia	Yemen	4:4
	09/09/97	04/09/98	Iran	Iraq	4:4
1999	06/10/99	06/10/99	Iran	Iraq	4:1
	07/18/99	07/18/99	Turkey	Iran	4:1
	09/29/99	09/29/99	Turkey	Iraq	4:1
	10/22/99	10/22/99	Egypt	Iran	3:1
	10/22/99	10/22/99	Jordan	Iraq	3:1
	10/22/99	10/22/99	UAE	Iraq	3:1
2000	07/25/00	01/01	Turkey	Iraq	4:1
	09/04/00	08/24/01	Iraq	Saudi Arabia	4:4
2001	08/25/01	08/26/01	Turkey	Iraq	4:1
2002	07/11/02	07/18/02	Spain	Morocco	3:3
2003	03/19/03	05/01/03	US led coalition	Iraq	5:5

Source: Correlates of War Dyadic Militarised Interstate Disputes Dataset 3; UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset 4-2006

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[4] The level of hostility is the highest reached by States A and B across all incidents in the dispute. 3: a state placed armed forces on alert, fortified its border or violated another state's border. 4: a state imposed a blockade, seized or occupied territory or clashed with the armed forces of another state. Level of hostility 4 also includes formal declarations of war. 5: side A or side B engaged in or joined an interstate war.

Table 2 Internal and Internationalised Internal Conflicts 1990 - 2006

Year	Government	Non-State Actor	Type
1990	Lebanon	Lebanese Forces (supported by Syria)	Internationalised
	Israel	Fatah, Hezbollah	Internationalised
1991	Iraq	SCIRI	Internal
	Iraq	DPK, PUK	Internal
	Israel	Fatah, Hezbollah	Internationalised
1992	Turkey	PKK	Internal
	Israel	Fatah, Hezbollah, PIJ	Internationalised
1993	Turkey	PKK	Internal
	Algeria	GIA, MIA/FIS	Internal
	Israel	Hamas, Hezbollah	Internationalised
1994	Turkey	PKK	Internal
	Algeria	GIA, MIA/FIS/AIS	Internal
	Arab Republic of Yemen	Democratic Republic of Yemen	Internal
	Israel	Hamas, Hezbollah	Internationalised
1995	Turkey	PKK	Internal
	Algeria	GIA, MIA/FIS/AIS	Internal
1996	Turkey	PKK	Internal
	Algeria	GIA, MIA/FIS/AIS	Internal
	Israel	Hamas, Hezbollah, PNA	Internationalised
1997	Turkey	PKK	Internal
	Algeria	GIA, MIA/FIS/AIS	Internal
	Israel	Hezbollah	Internationalised
1998	Algeria	GIA	Internal
1999	Algeria	GIA, GSPC	Internal
	Israel	Hezbollah	Internationalised
2000	Algeria	GIA, GSPC	Internal
2001	Algeria	GIA, GSPC	Internal
	Israel	Fatah, Hamas, PFLP, PNA	Internal
2002	Israel	AMB, Fatah, Hamas, PIJ, PNA	Internationalised
2003	Israel	AMB, Hamas, PIJ	Internationalised
2004	Iraq (supported by international coalition)	Al-Mahdi Army, Jaish Ansar Al-Sunna, TQJBR	Internationalised
	Israel	AMB, Hamas, PIJ	Internationalised
2005	Iraq (supported by international coalition)	Al Jaysh al-Islami fi Iraq, Jaish Ansar Al-Sunna, TQJBR	Internationalised
	Israel	Fatah, Hamas, PIJ	Internationalised
2006	Israel	Hezbollah	Internationalised

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset 4-2006

Table 2 presents data from the UCDP/PRIO dataset on internal and internationalised internal conflicts in the MENA between 1990 and 2006. The dataset defines internationalised internal conflict as taking place 'between a government of a state and one or more opposition group(s) with intervention from other state(s)' (Gleidtsch et al 2006). Due to the large number of internal conflicts, only those where more than 1000 fatalities were recorded have been included. The table includes all conflicts that involved the crossing of an international border by either actor. It also includes the worst conflicts that were confined to a single state's territory according to casualties.

Internal conflicts in the MENA are fought between governments and two main types of opposition group: ethno-nationalist, and Islamist. Fighting between the Turkish military and

Kurdish nationalists caused over 1000 casualties every year from 1992 – 1997, and has continued at a lower level since. The UCDP/PRIO data also shows lower level conflict between Kurdish nationalists and the Iranian government in the early 1990s and again in 2005 (not captured by table 2). Conflict between governments and Islamist organisations in Algeria started when the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé) began a violent campaign after the military government refused to accept the victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in the December 1991 elections. The GIA attacked civilian and government targets, and assassinations, bombings and the military response caused over 1000 casualties each year from 1993 – 2001.[5] Some conflicts between governments and opposition groups combine ethnic nationalism with Islamist ideology. In the central conflict between Israel and its various opponents, several groups – especially Hamas and Hezbollah – are motivated by philosophies that are both nationalist and Islamist.

Table 2 suggests that domestic conflict in MENA countries easily acquires an international dimension. Kurdish nationalism has always had a trans-national element as Kurds are an ethnic minority in four MENA countries. Recent military and political developments in Iraq and Turkey have raised fears that international conflict over Kurdish nationalism may escalate, with wider destabilising effects for the region. Turkey has built up its military presence along its border with Iraq, and its parliament has given the army permission to pursue Kurdish rebels into Iraq.[6] Conflict between Islamists and MENA governments can also involve diaspora and international terrorist activity. In 1995 the Algerian GIA was held responsible for a nail bomb attack on the Paris Metro. In 1996 the GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), an offshoot of the GIA, was established, reportedly with links to international Islamist extremist groups.[7] While conflict between Israel and Palestinian groups has an international dimension almost by definition, the 2006 summer war with Hezbollah was a major escalation and its uncertain conclusion led to an increase in the involvement of external actors, especially through the United Nations peacekeeping force UNIFIL.

Domestic and internationalised conflicts in the MENA are linked by the activities of some state actors. Due to widespread support for the Palestinian cause in the 'Arab street,' the Arab/Israeli conflict affects the whole region and is cited as inspiration by opposition groups in several Arab countries. Domestic opposition to Zionism has contributed to mistrust at the

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[5] The violence in Algeria has since continued at a lower level – i.e. with less than 1000 killed each year. Another lower level conflict between a MENA government and Islamist opposition took place in Egypt between 1993 and 1998.

[6] BBC News 18 October 2007.

[7] BBC News 14 May 2003.

international level among Arab governments wary of cooperation with Israel. The Egyptian and Jordanian governments faced not only domestic opposition to their peace treaties with Israel, but also opprobrium from other Arab governments who were themselves under domestic pressure from groups expressing anti-Israeli sentiment (Gerges 1995). Conversely, some MENA governments find non-state actors useful: Iran exercises its influence through militant organisations in several Arab countries, including Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran has been accused of supporting Shi'a opposition to the Saudi Arabia and Bahrain monarchy governments, potentially fuelling conflicts in the Gulf as well as the Levant (El-Hokayem and Legrenzi 2006). Syria and Libya have also been accused at various times of supporting non-state actors in conflicts against governments.[8]

A third factor revealed by tables 1 and 2 is that parts of the MENA region are not affected by conflict. The security situation in the GCC countries, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya is very different to that in the Levant and Algeria. While Algeria has been seriously affected by conflict with Islamist groups, the other Maghreb countries have been relatively peaceful. Although the long running conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front independence movement in Western Sahara has not been settled to the satisfaction of both parties, there has been no major outbreak of violence since 1989 (Gleidtsch et al 2006). The Tunisian and Libyan governments have not been involved in major internal or international conflict since 1990. The monarchies of the Persian Gulf have been similarly peaceful, with a few exceptions. Saudi Arabia was involved in militarised disputes with Yemen and provided military and logistical support to American led coalitions in the 1991 and 2003 wars with Iraq, while Kuwait was invaded by Iraq in 1991. But the six GCC members have not engaged in conflict with each other and, aside from periodic terrorist incidents in Saudi Arabia, have experienced virtually no internal conflict. The existence of regional 'hot spots' has led some commentators to warn of 'two Middle Easts forming' (Gause et al 2007).

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[8] The US State Department has designated both Libya and Syria as 'state sponsors of terrorism.' Libya was removed from this list in May 2006; Syria remains part of a select group that also includes Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Sudan. See www.state.gov/s/ct/c14151.htm. Accessed 15 November 2007.

4. Regional Security Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa

The institutional framework for formal security interaction in the MENA region is marked by lack of trust and does not resemble an environment that may enable actors to escape from the prisoners' dilemma. Some governments do not maintain diplomatic relations (see table 3). Rules-based security cooperation is based on an incomplete set of peace treaties, and on partial cooperation with a few multilateral agreements (see table 4).

Table 3: Diplomatic Exchange among Key MENA Countries 2005.[9]

	EG	IR	IQ	IL	JO	LY	MA	SA	SY	TR
EG		No	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full
IR	No		Partial	No	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full
IQ	Full	Full		No	Full	No	Full	No	No	Full
IL	Full	No	No		Full	No	No	No	No	Full
JO	Full	Full	Full	Full		Partial	Full	Full	Full	Full
LY	Full	Full	No	No	Partial		Full	Partial	Full	Full
MA	Full	Full	Full	No	Full	Full		Full	Full	Full
SA	Full	Full	No	No	Full	Partial	Full		Full	Full
SY	Full	Full	No	No	Full	Full	Full	Full		Full
TR	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	

Source: Correlates of War Diplomatic Exchange Data Set 2006.1

Table 3 shows that diplomatic exchange, the basic standard of sovereign recognition and cooperation in international politics, is incomplete among the key governments of the MENA region. Egypt does not maintain diplomatic relations with Iran. Libya has only partial relations with Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Egypt and Jordan are the only Arab countries that maintain relations with Israel. Turkey is the only regional actor that maintains diplomatic relations with all other MENA governments.[10] On the other hand, Table 3 shows that disagreements over political and security issues do not necessarily mean that formal cooperation must cease. Saudi Arabia and Iran maintain full diplomatic relations, and Egypt and Jordan are able to exchange ambassadors with Israel.

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[9] Selection as a 'key country' for this table has been made according to the author's bias.

[10] Iraq's diplomatic exchanges with other Arab governments were also incomplete in 2005, although this is most likely due to delays in establishing foreign representation following the forced change of government in 2003 – 2004.

Table 4: Membership in Formal Multilateral Security Cooperation Initiatives 2007

	Arab League JDEC	Gulf Coop. Council	NATO Med. Dialogue	EuroMed Partnership
Algeria			X	X
Bahrain		X		
Egypt	X		X	X
Iran				
Iraq	X			
Israel			X	X
Jordan	X		X	X
Kuwait		X		
Lebanon	X			X
Libya				
Morocco			X	X
Oman		X		
Palestinian T.				X
Qatar		X		
Saudi Arabia	X	X		
Syria	X			X
Tunisia			X	X
Turkey			X	X
U.A.E		X		
Yemen	X			

Sources: League of Arab States, Gulf Cooperation Council, NATO, European Commission.

Table 4 shows that there is little consistency of membership in regional multilateral security institution-building efforts, whether local or sponsored by external actors. The Arab League's JDEC is the only effort to include members from the Persian Gulf and the Levant. Neither NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue nor the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership extend to the Gulf, although both NATO and the European Union have expressed a desire to institutionalise security cooperation with the GCC and its members[11]. While no regional government is a member of all four agreements, Jordan and Egypt maintain strong ties with Saudi Arabia alongside their Arab League commitments and participation in NATO and EU-led efforts. None of these efforts appears likely to result in a region-wide agreement on rules governing security interaction among MENA countries.

The Gulf Cooperation Council

The GCC was formed in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman. While the GCC is primarily a free trade area with economic and cultural objectives, it also has a security function that builds on earlier bilateral security pacts between the Gulf monarchies. Traditional balance of power and military threat perceptions lie behind the GCC. The Gulf sub-region has been the scene of three major international wars since 1980 and the fear of military attack by another state remains a core concern for GCC governments

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[11] European Council '17th GCC-EU Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting (Riyadh, 8 May 2007) Joint Communiqué. CE-GOLFE 3503/07 (Presse 100)

(Gause III 2007). GCC members have developed integrated military cooperation, including a joint air defence system and a small joint multilateral defence force – Peninsula Shield – created in 1984. The perceived threat of domestic destabilisation is also a major factor. The creation of the GCC came soon after the Islamic Revolution in Iran and reflected the fears of the Gulf monarchies that they could be the next targets of Iranian supported Islamist insurgencies and terrorism. Arab Gulf states do not believe that this security threat has dissipated in the wake of the Iraq War (El-Hokayem and Legrenzi 2006). GCC leaders consider Iran to be the main beneficiary of the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, and are worried about Iran's nuclear weapons programme which, if successful, will lessen the options available to GCC governments for responding to Iranian aggression.

Following the change of government in Iraq the GCC seems likely to remain in place and may prosper at the sub-regional level because the preferences of the six Gulf monarchies are similar. They all want to remain in power, profit from their oil reserves and contain Iran, goals that the United States is prepared to support through arms sales and political backing. However it is unlikely that the GCC will expand beyond its current membership, nor that it will develop a multilateral strategy for dealing with the security concerns of the entire Persian Gulf, let alone the MENA region. Notwithstanding recent signs of cooperation between Levant and Gulf countries over the Middle East Peace Process, there remain significant divides between the oil-rich Gulf monarchies and the rest of the Arab world. [12]

The GCC members are themselves divided on several issues, especially relations with Washington. Some GCC states opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003, while others provided bases for the coalition forces. In recent years the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, has attempted to use its influence to bring the Arab-Israeli conflict to a conclusion. In 2007 the GCC revived an Arab League peace initiative that offers normal diplomatic relations to Israel in return for Palestinian statehood and the ending of the military occupation of territories captured in the Six Day War of 1967. Saudi efforts were instrumental in bringing about a short-lived national unity government in the Palestinian Territories in early 2007, and the GCC pledged billions of dollars for reconstruction in southern Lebanon. GCC leaders have expressed disappointment with Washington's less than wholehearted support for these initiatives, especially the insistence that the 2002 offer to Israel be changed to rule out the right of return for Palestinian refugees (Mattair 2007).

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[12] In January 2007 the foreign ministers of Egypt and Jordan met with their counterparts from the GCC in Kuwait City and declared their countries' commitment to the 'GCC Plus Two,' an American sponsored initiative aimed at securing stability in Iraq and a two-state solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict. See www.kuwait.usembassy.org. Accessed 15 November 2007.

Although the GCC is more of a security alliance rather than a regional security institution, it nevertheless provides an example of the benefits in terms of stability that formal multilateral cooperation can bring, especially in terms of linking security with economic cooperation (Bearce 2003). The GCC is an important multilateral initiative that would form a cornerstone of any wider formal regional security framework for the MENA. For the GCC to spread its benefits to the Levant and the Maghreb, a much higher level of trust needs to emerge at the regional intergovernmental level. There appear to be areas in which important signals can be sent: as a senior Jordanian official recently noted, MENA leaders would like to see change in the Gulf monarchies' policy of investing petrodollars in Western markets rather than in other Middle Eastern countries.[13]

The Arab League

The League of Arab States was established in 1945 and is therefore older than the treaty of Rome and the European Union. The Arab League's aims are to foster political, economic and cultural cooperation between its members, and its membership is decided on a cultural, rather than geographical basis.[14] The Arab League has security priorities as well: it began to develop a framework for security cooperation following the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 (Acharya 1992). Between 1950 and 1952 Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt and Yemen signed the Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty Between the States of the Arab League. The JDEC declared the signatories' intent to maintain security and peace according to the principles of the Arab League and the United Nations and to provide the means for welfare and development in their countries. Article 1 expressed the signatories' desire to settle disputes by peaceful means, both among themselves and with other powers. Article 2 declared that an act of armed aggression against one signatory to be an attack on them all and promised military assistance if such an attack were to occur. Articles 5 and 6 established a Permanent Military Commission, made up of staff officers from the member states, and a Joint Defence Council comprised of foreign affairs and defence ministers. Decisions were to be taken on a two thirds majority basis and would be binding on all members.

Despite these lofty intentions the Arab League has not been robust enough to cope with regional tension, and the JDEC has foundered on divisions among its members, especially concerning relations with Iran and Israel. Mostly, the Arab League has struggled to cope with

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[13] El Hassan bin Talal 'How Europe could be a force for good in the Middle East' *Europe's World* Autumn 2007.

[14] See www.arableagueonline.org.

what Michael Barnett terms 'the defining issue of inter-Arab politics': the existential debate over nationalism and pan-Arabism. Barnett describes how this debate has receded in recent years as the possibility of Arab political unification has become less likely. Since the 1970s pan-Arabism has been usurped by individual sovereignty as the organising principle of the Arab world, with consequences for the ways in which states have responded to regional security problems. In signing separate peace treaties with Israel, the Egyptian and Jordanian governments broke with pan-Arabist tradition. They instead indicated to other Arab states that their national interests are paramount, and that recognition of Israel as a regional actor is a core aspect of their national security (Barnett 1995).

The Arab League remains a key forum for the discussion of security issues where preferences converge. The most prominent example of this concerns non-state threats to national security, a worry that most Arab governments share. In April 1998 interior ministers from the 22-member Arab League signed the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism. The agreement covers the extradition of wanted fugitives and called upon Arab governments to pressure other countries (including in the West) to extradite Islamist extremists.[15] MENA governments also cooperate informally on non-state security threats, although such cooperation tends to be bilateral: defence and intelligence officials from most MENA countries meet on an ad hoc basis to work on solutions to specific security problems involving non-state actors. Recently Iraq and Jordan have agreed to establish a technical team of experts from the security and intelligence services of the two countries to work on border cooperation and anti-terrorism.[16]While these initiatives have contributed to the development of confidence among Arab governments, in the absence of a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians the deeper issues dividing the Arab League are likely to continue to undermine the development of trust and cooperation.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The EU has responded to regional security problems by adopting a common position encouraging selected MENA governments to work cooperatively and multilaterally (Perthes 2004). In 1995 ten MENA governments signed up to the most ambitious effort to date to establish rules-based cooperation in a number of linked issue-areas: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.[17] Under the Barcelona Process, the EU and MENA partners have attempted to strengthen dialogue and exchange leading to more formal cooperation under the Euro-

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[15] BBC News 7 January 1998.

[16] Middle East Times 15 August 2007.

[17] Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability (EC 2000). The Charter has the long term aim of developing multilateral instruments for conflict prevention and cooperation, but was shelved in 2000. The official line from the EU is that the Charter was suspended because of stalemate in the Middle East Peace Process, and that it will be resurrected once conditions allow. But its final remit is far from clear as there has been some disagreement among EU member states over its content and the security issues it should address (Balfour 2004).

The greatest disagreements over the Charter came from the south Mediterranean governments. Few MENA countries perceive a security threat originating in Europe and most believe that the EU can contribute more to their economic development rather than their security. They consider the Mediterranean to be an extension of the MENA rather than a security region with its own dynamics – especially as some Arab governments are excluded from the Barcelona Process (see Table 4). For Arab countries the EU is an economic, rather than a security actor, and the 'soft' security focus of EU policy cannot deal with the 'hard' security issues they face. The United States, rather than the EU, is for most south Mediterranean governments the key external actor in the region (Soltan 2004). Moreover, Europe's emphasis on the human rights and democracy aspect of regional security does not sit comfortably with the authoritarian practices of many MENA governments.

The MENA does not present a traditional security threat to Europe. In its 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), the European Council expressed its concern about the potential for instability in the MENA and the effects this could have on Europe. Apart from stressing the danger of WMD proliferation, the ESS did not focus on military threats from the MENA but on non-traditional security issues such as illegal migration, international crime, terrorism and environmental degradation (EC 2003). European security interests in the MENA region are predicated on fears that tension and violence involving state and non-state actors in the MENA will create negative externalities for Europe's energy security, generate refugees and contribute to the radicalisation of expatriate Muslim communities in Europe (Monar 2007). Aside from the Gulf wars in 1991 and 2003, the only time that European and MENA governments have come close to violent conflict was when Morocco and Spain took turns to occupy Parsley Island, a rock near the Moroccan shore of the Straits of Gibraltar, in the summer of 2002 (Gillespie 2006).

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership provides an institutional setting within which discussion of political and security issues can take place. There is a widespread acceptance of the Barcelona Process framework among MENA governments willing to remain engaged with the European Union for the material and financial benefits that cooperation brings (Attina

2003). Meetings are continuing to take place on a variety of issues, including at foreign minister level, and security concerns are discussed in detail (Landau and Ammor 2006). A lack of trust remains, especially as Arab suspicion has been aroused by the development of joint military capabilities under the European Security and Defence Policy (Albioni et al 2006). Nevertheless, the EU is regarded by most of its Mediterranean partner governments as a relatively honest broker with legitimate interests in the region and the technical, financial and human resources to facilitate the development of rules and the building of relationships. The EU's ability to engender trust among MENA governments and other regional actors depends on the commitment of EU member states to the Union's common goals. The Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability is a long-term strategy for encouraging stability in the MENA region, and while it has the potential to provide a basis upon which rules based cooperation could develop, significant political hurdles remain.

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue

Several EU member states are also involved in a second Western-led effort to develop regional security cooperation that competes with the EMP in some areas and suffers from similar weaknesses. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue was launched in 1994 after Spain and Italy expressed concerns that the post-Cold War focus of the transatlantic alliance was too heavily concentrated on Eastern Europe (Lesser et al 2000). Its aims are to encourage cooperation and confidence building and to dispel misconceptions about NATO in seven MENA countries.[18] The Dialogue is meant to 'mutually reinforce and reinforce and complement other efforts' in the region including the OSCE's Mediterranean initiative, the Middle East and North Africa summits, the Five Plus Five initiative, and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Musu 2006). The Dialogue does not attempt to deal with the security concerns of MENA governments, but is a tentative and informal step to encourage modern forms of governance and behaviour in selected Arab countries (Talbott 2002). In 2004 NATO decided to elevate the dialogue to the level of 'partnership' and to reach out to other interested MENA countries starting with the members of the GCC.

NATO's comprehensive security objectives and its varied approaches go well beyond those of a traditional military alliance. Nevertheless, NATO is not a regional security institution that can easily be expanded to the MENA. The Mediterranean Dialogue has been more valuable as a public relations exercise than as a vehicle for security institution building. Some dialogue partners have been more willing than others to engage with NATO: representatives from

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[18] Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

Egypt, Jordan and Israel have had discussions with NATO officials, especially regarding terrorism. Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have participated in NATO operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. The remaining southern partners have been more reluctant to cooperate with the historically hostile military alliance, and are wary of an initiative that may attempt to portray the Mediterranean as an area for potential NATO intervention (Lesser et al 2000).

European NATO members are also divided on the Dialogue's usefulness. Southern European member states Spain, Italy, Malta and Greece want to prevent illegal migration across the Mediterranean, and support an initiative that provides resources for this task. Conversely, France is unwilling to invest seriously in an initiative that may weaken its traditional influence, especially in North Africa. Northern European states that do not have significant security interests in the MENA are wary of NATO shifting focus away from relations with Russia. But the most significant weakness in the Dialogue is the ambivalent attitude of the United States.

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue is unlikely to proceed beyond its public relations and confidence-building functions without the full commitment of its most powerful member government. United States Near East policy is built around the American preferences of supporting Israel, protecting US economic interests in the MENA, prevailing in Iraq and preventing Islamist terrorists from striking at American citizens and targets in the United States and elsewhere. Washington provides significant military and political support to the governments of Israel, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco. The other side of American strategy is based on isolating and containing Iran, Syria and Libya, and the non-state organisations supported by Iran and Syria in Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq. The United States does not share the southern European concern with the Mediterranean nor the concept that the Mediterranean is a distinct security region. Its focus is both narrower (the Arab-Israeli conflict) and broader (Iraq, Iran and the broader Middle East) than the view of MENA security held by the EU and most of its member states.

5. Escaping the Prisoners' Dilemma: The Need for an External Actor

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

Disagreement among regional governments means that security cooperation in the MENA must be guaranteed by an external actor if it is to be stable (Miller 2001; Press-Barnathan 2005). In keeping with the prisoners' dilemma metaphor, an external actor influences proceedings as might a 'lawyer' who is introduced into the jail. A good lawyer can provide the prisoners with information about the other that each can rely on, and can advise as to the potential consequences of the prisoners' decisions. The problem is that most lawyers are not neutral actors: problems arise if they supply misinformation for their own purposes, or if there is more than one lawyer with different interpretations of the statutes. A second influence an external actor can have is more akin to the role of the court in domestic proceedings. A strong external actor can guarantee that the outcome will be stable by promising to send anyone that breaks the peace back to jail. The problem with this role arises when prisoners do not recognise the court or the external actor's right to enforce its provisions.

External actors do not have a record of encouraging unity among MENA states and societies. British and French policy after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I was to divide the Arab world in an attempt to control it (Ismael and Ismael 1999). More recently, external

actors have been united on the need for stability in the MENA, but divided over the best means for achieving this. An example of the uneasy cooperation between the US, the EU and Russia can be seen in their divergent approaches to dealing with Iran's nuclear weapons programme. All the external powers share a common interest in preventing an arms race in the region but have different strategies for preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons capability.[19]The EU has repeatedly stated that it is committed to a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear weapons issue, and to working through the United Nations Security Council.[20]Russia does not consider Iran to be a strategic threat and has repeatedly supported the International Atomic Energy Agency's position that there is no evidence that Iran is building nuclear weapons.[21]The United States has taken a different approach, announcing its support of the EU's efforts while at the same time refusing to rule out unilateral action, including a military strike, should Iran's non-compliance continue. In late July 2007 the US government announced that it would provide a $60 billion arms package for its MENA allies Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Egypt. Iran responded by warning that its weapons are able to target any vessel in the Persian Gulf, where the US maintains a naval presence.[22]

6. Conclusions

The externalities of violent conflict are high and rational actors enter into rules-based security institutions to reduce the likelihood that they will need military force to resolve conflicts. The purposes of security institutions are therefore to reduce perceptions of threat and engender a state of relations where non-violent resolution of disputes is the norm. Security institutions do not seek to take away the sources of conflict entirely – expecting that governments can live in peace under any circumstances is to set an unrealistic standard for security cooperation. Every country in the world maintains military forces to some extent, and the use of force is not unthinkable anywhere, even in Europe. Formal multilateral agreements set out the basic rules upon which regional security cooperation and crisis management can be based. In this way they engender the development of trust among actors, providing an escape from the prisoners' dilemma. The central conundrum is that some degree of trust needs to exist before formal cooperation can take place.

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[19] See *Economist* 'Nuclear Succession' 22 September 2006.

[20] Council of the European Union Conclusions on Iran, COMEM 103 19 June 2007.

[21] *Time* 15 October 2007.

[22] *Washington Post* 19 August 2007.

Since the end of the Cold War MENA governments have not been able to reduce the risk of violent conflict among them by erecting institutional barriers against it (Heller 2003). The MENA is one of the world's best examples of a security-induced prisoners' dilemma with multiple players: while it is clear that rules based cooperation would benefit the states and societies of the MENA in the long run, short term mistrust among regional elites interested in preserving their autonomy has undermined this. MENA governments are prepared to work together when necessary, informally or even secretly if need be. However this does not extend to committing formally to regional security initiatives that may develop in ways that curb their ability to take unilateral action.

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

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