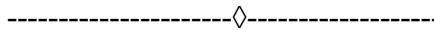




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Workshop 16

The EU and the GCC in the Mediterranean

Workshop Directors

Dr. Tobias Schumacher

Centre for Research and Studies in
Sociology
Lisbon University Institute
Email: tobias.schumacher@iscte.pt

Dr. Geoffrey Edwards

Department of Politics and International
Studies
University of Cambridge
Email: gre1000@hermes.cam.ac.uk

Workshop Objectives and Rationale

There has been growing political and economic activity on the part of GCC states, i.e. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman, in the Arab Mediterranean Countries (AMCs) – at a time when the EU found its activities increasingly frustrated and frustrating. On the part of the countries of the GCC, the capital surpluses that resulted from the last oil boom and the vast sovereign wealth funds led them all, together with numerous Gulf holdings to adopt highly pro-active trade and investment strategies towards the AMCs. This may have been slowed with the financial crisis of 2008 but not seriously. Certainly the crisis has not undermined the new sense of political awareness on the part of especially the smaller Gulf states such as Qatar and Kuwait, that they have an opportunity to transform their economic clout into a sub-regional political role. For their part, the EU and at least some of its member states, sought to try to re-invigorate their role in the Maghreb and Mashreq through the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean, a French initiative only later brought within the framework of the EU's Mediterranean approach.

Whereas the EU has frequently spoken about democracy promotion in the context of both its Mediterranean policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy, GCC states have refrained from utilizing their increasingly close ties to advance political reform. This is not surprising, given the similarities of governance structures of GCC states and those of the AMC. There is little incentive either to challenge or question the legitimacy of each other's regimes. Rather, the political relationship has been used primarily to open the AMC to GCC trade and investment. The result has been an increase in interregional trade by some 700 percent in just eight years and Gulf businesses have become along with European enterprises the most important sources of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the region. On the other hand, Gulf investment has tended to focus on AMC transport, construction, tourism, telecommunications, the real estate sectors, and increasingly in the banking and finance sector. This is in contrast to EU investment which has been largely in cement, petrochemicals, automotive industries industries, and in the banking sector as well.

At the same time, the GCC states have little direct interest in some of the more pressing politico-security issues between the EU and the AMCs such as migration even if there is common cause in the need for effective governance on the part of the AMCs in terms of terrorism. Both the EU and the GCC though have common or seemingly compatible views on the need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If the EU is both a part of the Quartet that

has sought to mediate and, through its High Representative, an autonomous actor trying to win the trust of both sides, its already incomplete 'actorness' has sometimes been made even less effective due to the often incompatible bilateral efforts of particular Member States. Again, on the GCC side, there have been a number of different levels of engagement whether through the Arab League, the GCC or individual Gulf states. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have invested particularly strongly in the resolution of the conflict. At the same time, Iran has also been active creating further tension for both the EU and the Gulf states in the Mediterranean and the Gulf and complicating the relationship of both with the United States. Rarely however has there been any attempt on the part of the EU or the GCC states to look and act strategically together at these inter-related issues.

Against this backdrop, this panel invites submissions of papers that address from an empirical and/or conceptual-theoretical perspective the following issues:

- (i) the factors that have led to the seemingly myopic view of the EU to ignore the GCC states economically in terms of the Mediterranean. Are, for example, their investment patterns complementary or too distinct from each other, useful in encouraging a more cooperative approach or simply irrelevant?
- (ii) Understanding better the politico/cultural dimension of the Gulf-AMC relationship and its implications;
- (iii) In terms of the political dialogue between the EU and the GCC, what factors are important that lead each to talk past each other rather than to each other?
- (iv) Insofar as both the EU Member States and the individual states of the GCC remain keen to maintain close bilateral relationships, what factors underlie this and with what lasting implications?
- (v) The EU and the GCC and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- (vi) The role of the US. Is the US seen by GCC countries and EU member states as a mere competitor in the AMCs or is there potential for synergistic cooperation with a view to contribute coherently to economic modernization in AMCs?
- (vii) What is the role of Iran in the Arab Mediterranean?
- (viii) The role of NATO in the Arab Mediterranean. Is there potential for a coordinated EU-NATO and possibly EU-NATO-GCC cooperation vis-à-vis the Arab Mediterranean in the field of both hard and soft security? If so, which factors need to be taken into account, and how would such a framework have to be

designed in terms of structure and contents? Are the security interests of all actors compatible at all?

- (ix) To what extent would more coordinated EU-GCC efforts in the AMCs contribute to political development and, thus, political reform in the AMCs and the GCC countries themselves?

Bios of Directors

Dr. Tobias Schumacher

Tobias Schumacher is a German political scientist and an expert on Euro-Mediterranean affairs, foreign policy and Middle Eastern Politics. After having studied Political Science, Sociology and Business Administration at the Universities of Freiburg, Basel, Edinburgh and Mainz, Schumacher received his M.A. and Ph.D in 1998 and 2002 respectively from the University of Mainz. Schumacher held research and teaching positions at the University of Mainz, the Florence-based European University Institute, the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo) and the Lisbon University Institute. He was awarded numerous scholarships and was a Jean Monnet Fellow and a Marie Curie Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in Florence, where he also worked as Research Fellow and Scientific Coordinator of its Mediterranean Programme. He is currently a Senior Research Fellow in Political Science at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES) at the Lisbon University Institute (ISCTE-IUL) in Portugal. He is the author of more than 80 books, book chapters and articles in academic journals and a regular media contributor. Since May 2010 he is the co-editor of the IPRIS Maghreb Review published by the Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS) in Lisbon.

Dr. Geoffrey Edwards

Dr. Geoffrey Edwards is a Reader in European Studies in the Centre and holds a Jean Monnet chair in Political Science. He is a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he is also a Graduate Tutor. He has held research posts at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a number of other institutions including the Federal Trust and Chatham House. He specialises in the European Union, its institutions and its foreign and security policies. In the Centre he teaches courses on European Security and Foreign Policy and on the Politics of European Integration. He has also taught on the papers on European integration and British politics at undergraduate level. His recent publications have focused on the EU's foreign policy with articles on European security culture, the EU's foreign policy and the impact of the new Member States, on the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, on EU-Gulf relations and on the EU Counter-terrorist policies - the last in a special issue of the Journal of Common Market Studies due in January 2008.