Supporting the Transitions in North Africa: The Case for a Joined-Up Approach

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Supporting the Transitions in North Africa: The Case for a Joined-Up Approach

Hélène Michou, Eduard Soler i Lecha, and José Ignacio Torreblanca

The EU’s response to the Arab Spring is seen as one of its biggest missed opportunities. It has been unable to bring together its different tools of foreign, development and security policy into a strategic joined-up approach. The interconnectedness of the socio-economic and political demands of the popular uprisings across the north of Africa represented a unique opportunity to implement such a joined-up approach. The EU’s ambitious rhetoric and pledges to promote ‘deep democracy’ have not been matched at policy level in the fields of money, market or mobility. Whilst certain member states have sought to overcome the different operating logics of the development, diplomatic and security communities in their regional Arab Partnership programmes, a number of structural and circumstantial factors limit the effectiveness of these attempts, at both the EU and member state level.

Keywords: Arab Spring, EU foreign policy, joined-up approach, development

In 2005, just a few years before the Arab uprisings, Kofi Annan spearheaded a reflection process in the United Nations which would lead him to proclaim, “We will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights [...] Unless all these causes are advanced, none will succeed”.¹ This speech had a profound impact on the development community, and indeed, beyond it. Issues of development, security and democracy have traditionally been subject to “acute ring-fencing”,² pursued by distinct administrative departments of government.

²Maxwell, How Development and Foreign Policy Connect.
often reluctant to work together and more used to competing for resources than exploiting synergies. This article makes the case for overcoming these “broken links” as a more effective way of doing foreign policy and a more strategic way of doing development cooperation. An attempt is made to narrow the gap between academic discourse and policy practice regarding a joined-up approach at three levels: conceptual, institutional and practical. For the latter, the Arab Partnerships of three EU member states are taken as examples of development agencies incorporating a strategic dimension into their regional programmes. What is advocated is a joined-up approach to supporting the transitions in the north of Africa, where volatile environments demand coherent, comprehensive and flexible policies from the EU and its member states.

The events of the Arab Spring and the interconnectedness of the socio-economic and political demands of the protesters across North Africa represent a unique opportunity for the EU and its member states to articulate this joined-up approach. Yet few countries or international institutions have succeeded in effectively tackling these challenges to integrate elements of different administrative cultures and operating logics. The security community continues to overlook the importance of democracy and economic development in guaranteeing a basic level of stability; the development community, for its part, is wary of being sucked into the security logic of the military or the geopolitical approach that dominates diplomacy; and democracy promoters are uneasy with issues of conditionality behind support for human rights and civil society.

This article briefly examines whether the revision of the EU Neighbourhood Policy and the programmes developed by certain members states as strategic partners with the region are following this line. Given the article’s limited scope, only three examples are analysed – Denmark, the UK and Spain – selected for the comparative differences in the timing, resources and ambitions of their programmes. Finally, as a contribution to bridging the gap between academic debate and policymaking, the article identifies specific obstacles to be surmounted and five areas for an improved joined-up approach at EU and member state level.

The conceptual debate: restoring the links between development, diplomacy and security

There have been frequent calls in international development for the joining up of aid to other areas of policy – namely trade, finance, migration – and, most

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3The term “broken links” was first used by Ana Palacio in her article, “The Arab Spring and Europe’s Turn”, Project Syndicate, June 2011, [http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-arab-spring-and-europe-s-turn](http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-arab-spring-and-europe-s-turn).

4The scope of this article does not allow for an exhaustive review of each of these elements, thus there is no pretence to engage with the conceptual debate with the same academic rigour as others have done.
frequently, foreign policy and defence. The debate surrounding holistic government at the end of the 1990s criticised the concept for being merely “high-minded aims” and “easy sound bites lacking in solid fibre”. More recently, the security-development nexus has been criticised as “a more inward-looking approach to foreign policy, more concerned with self-image than the policy consequences.” Yet the whole-of-government approach continues to be a recurring theme in the new development agenda of global public goods and global deal-making, as well as foreign policy agendas in a globalised world where challenges range from climate change to natural resource access. In policy terms, a concrete example of joined-up thinking is ‘Policy Coherence for Development’ (PCD), whereby the EU aims to integrate development objectives into a whole range of other external policies. There is also a degree of overlap with ‘triple D thinking’ or the ‘3D approach’, coined under former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to refer to the three pillars of foreign policy – democracy, defence, diplomacy – and their streamlining towards short-term political and security objectives.

Given the conceptual overlap between the above semantic terms, the joined-up approach will be dealt with specifically as a means of integrating the elements of development, diplomacy and security, worked out as part of the respective member states’ toolkits, in a more effective European foreign policy. The conceptual debates surrounding the 3Ds have generated broad consensus on the need for comprehensive, strategic action where each of the three pillars of foreign policy reinforces the other. Institutionally, integration of these pillars is a complex task at national member state level, and all the more so at a European-wide level, given Brussels’ own disjunctions and internal complexities. In practice, joined-up action is even more difficult to achieve. Policy-wise integration supposes not only theoretical and

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5See, amongst others, Lancaster, Foreign Aid; Woods, “The Shifting Politics of Foreign Aid”; and Maxwell, How Development and Foreign Policy Connect. The term ‘joined-up thinking’ overlaps with the term ‘comprehensive approach’, used primarily by NATO to refer to joint civil-military handling of conflict situations, and the term ‘whole-of-government approach’, used primarily by the OECD to refer to government departments coming together to effectively manage crises in fragile states. For more, see respective literature from both organisations, http://natolibguides.info/comprehensiveapproach and http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/37826256.pdf.

6Christie, Implementing Holistic Government. For other critiques of the joined-up approach, see Schraeder et al., “Clarifying the Foreign Aid Puzzle”.


8S. Lehne, “Promoting a Comprehensive Approach to EU Foreign Policy”, Carnegie Europe, February 2013, http://carnegiecouncil.org/2013/02/21/promoting-comprehensive-approach-to-eu-foreign-policy.html. See also Smith, European Union Foreign Policy; and Fitz-Gerald, “Addressing the Security-Development Nexus”.

9The commitment to policy coherence is embedded in the European Consensus on Development adopted in December 2005. In 2009, the EU agreed to make the PCD agenda more operational and to focus coherence efforts on five priority areas for achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals: trade and finance, climate change, food security, migration and security.

10Syed, “The 3 D’s of Foreign Affairs”. See also Clinton, “Leading through Civilian Power”.

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in institutional flexibility, but also a political willingness to tackle political issues such as conditionality.

Prior to the popular uprisings across the north of Africa, the EU’s foreign policy democratic muscle was so out of shape that it failed to interpret the message which the first mass demonstrations in Tunisia sent out to the world. Hesitant statements and on-the-fence declarations ensued and, in some cases, rather than silence, there was explicit support for the former regimes until autocrats opted for exile.\textsuperscript{11} The EU has since recognised these \textit{faux pas} and made an effort to recalibrate its policy towards the region. This was reflected in the 2011 revision of its Neighbourhood Policy, in which a \textit{mea culpa} was sounded with regard to the errors, contradictions and inconsistencies of past actions.\textsuperscript{12} Henceforth, affirmed the European Union, support for democracy and human rights would not be blinkered by a securitisation agenda, but instead would form the basis of a “deep democracy” bolstered by “more flexibility, stricter conditionality”.\textsuperscript{13}

The problem with this \textit{mea culpa} is threefold: first, it seems to have been extended only to countries undergoing transition, whereas those under authoritarian rule struggle to perceive the consequences of this new approach. Second, and equally problematic, the EU continues to demonstrate limited political will and ability to apply conditionality in its southern neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{14} Finally, and more interesting for the purpose of this article, is the question of whether the design and implementation of the revised ENP has sought to tackle the broken links between democracy, security and development. Do the ‘3Ms’ of money, mobility and markets equate to a joined-up approach? In terms of putting it all into practice, do instruments such as task forces effectively combine different tools for foreign policy in a coherent way?

The 3Ms, as the central pillars of this policy revision, succeeded to a certain extent in going beyond the classic EU approach to foreign aid by proposing politically-tailored support to countries in transitions. Yet, since the ambitious rhetoric was not matched by meaningful action in terms of opening markets for competitive products from the southern Mediterranean, lifting mobility restrictions on immigrants and refugees, or quantitative disbursements to accompany developments on the ground, the EU failed to live up to these pledges. Meaningful action

\textsuperscript{11}If one episode stands as an example of Europe’s blinkeredness, it was the historic mistake of France’s former Interior Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, who, at the height of the popular uprisings in Tunisia, approved the export of police equipment and crowd-control devices to Ben Ali so that he could bring the protests under control. For more, see “French Foreign Minister Urged to Resign”, \textit{New York Times}, 3 February 2011, \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/04/world/europe/04france.html?_r=0}.

\textsuperscript{12}High Representative, “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid. “Deep democracy” includes: “Free and fair elections; freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media; the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial; fighting against corruption; security and law enforcement sector reform (including the police) and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces.”

\textsuperscript{14}Balfour, \textit{EU Conditionality after Arab Spring}. 
on these three fronts would have required the participation and coordination of various EU Commission departments (Directorate Generals) above and beyond development cooperation, from trade and agriculture to enlargement and budget. As the expert Jan Techau argues, “Ironically, the three Ms would have probably had the strongest impact in Europe itself.”

On markets for instance, abolishing trade barriers in sectors where the countries in transition have competitive advantages would have led to tough discussions during the budget negotiations for the 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework. On mobility, decisions between member states regarding national quotas, free movement, work permits, etc, could have produced “the kernel of a truly Europe-wide immigration policy”. On money, a large spending programme would have activated a debate on the short- and long-term goals of strategic investment, and would have required deep coordination between the EU institutions and member states.

Indeed, the money aspect of the 3Ms is not exempt from criticism. Whilst ‘money’ is arguably the easiest of the above to deliver on, as the SPRING €350 million umbrella programme launched in 2011 and other financial packages demonstrate, facilitating ‘mobility’ and opening ‘markets’ will require greater political backing. As Rosa Balfour has argued, one of the weaknesses of the translation of conditionality from development cooperation and enlargement into the ENP lies in “the absence of the final carrot”. While developing countries are more dependent on EU aid, and accession countries are rewarded for opening chapters towards final membership, the EU has much less to offer the MENA countries. Only by taking brave, possibly uncomfortable decisions on areas such as trade barriers and immigration quotas will the EU be able to maximise the second chance it has been afforded by the interlinked political, social and economic transformation underway in the MENA region. An EU Court of Auditors Report on aid spending to promote key areas of governance in Egypt released in June 2013 found that “the ‘softly-softly’ approach has not worked; the time has come for a more focused approach which will produce meaningful results and guarantee better value for the European taxpayers’ money”. In its intention to become a key player rather than merely a key payer, the EU will have to overcome fragmentation of polices and internal tussles as examined in the next section, in order to bring together its various instruments and assets in a coherent fashion and build a more comprehensive approach to foreign policy in its neighbourhood.

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16Ibid.
17Ibid.
18Balfour, EU Conditionality after Arab Spring.
Learning from past mistakes and adapting policies to a new context is therefore one of the challenges in restoring the link between development, diplomacy and security in such a way that each reinforces – rather than undermines – the other. Key to this, for example, is achieving a level of “basic security” in partner countries which allows for the development of “good enough governance”, including reforms of the justice system and the creation of employment.  

Both national and international actors can subsequently build on this basis to implement further reform efforts. As the World Bank’s 2011 World Development Report points out, the success of transition policies is entirely linked to the capacity of reformers to achieve concrete results on the ground. There is an urgent need for tangible progress in the countries in transition in North Africa to demonstrate to local civil society that their efforts and courage have not been in vain.

As the EU’s Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean has said, the region itself is telling us that we need to focus on integrating elements of development, diplomacy and security at the same time: “reality is complex”, insists Bernardino León, “so policies have to be complex and solutions have to be complex as well”. Solutions must take into account the varied rhythms and differentiated processes of political transition in the north of Africa. It is clear that a coherent and joined-up approach to the new Mediterranean reality must go beyond mere financial and instrumental support to include political, diplomatic and security instruments, albeit without returning to the securitisation paradigm. The task forces created under the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Affairs, Catherine Ashton, as a “new form of diplomacy” represent laudable attempts to bring together European institutions, international financial institutions, and actors from the region to develop tailor-made solutions.

During visits to the countries in transition, the focus of meetings is multi-sectoral, including commercial ties, economic cooperation, tourism, political reform, asset recovery, human rights, governance, infrastructure, ICT and science. Bolstered by task force funds, this comprehensive focus allows the EU and its member states to better channel relations with individual countries and to improve coordination with international and national actors.

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22 Badia and Saranisadas, Europe Must make an Effort.
Institutional complexities: common goals, different operating logics

The European Union is often presented as the actor with the greatest ability to develop and enforce the joined-up approach. It is “more than a foreign ministry”.24 The Lisbon Treaty’s merger of three jobs bestows on the EEAS capacities in development, diplomacy and security. The service combines support for the rule of law with development aid, as well as military and civilian operations that tackle not only the symptoms of the problems but also the underlying causes of crises. Given the relatively limited period of its operations since the adoption of the Council Decision establishing the EEAS,25 the main achievement is, arguably, its mere existence; as Catherine Ashton herself has recognised, “We have gone from not having a service to a service that is functioning”.26 Yet, certain questions regarding the structure and operation of the service remain unanswered, leaving doubts as to its ability to deliver on the promise of coherent, efficient and visible EU foreign policy. The argument put forward here is that these questions are all the more salient given the incoming leadership of EU institutions in 2014 and the ongoing review of the EEAS.27 Coherence between foreign policy and development policy objectives will require a greater role for the EEAS in defining the strategic orientation of external financial instruments (amongst others).

For some EU analysts, the EEAS is still “the unloved child” in the complicated relationship between the EU’s member states and its Brussels-based foreign policy service.28 While cooperation between member states and the European Commission (whose external relations portfolios include trade, development, neighbourhood policy, enlargement and humanitarian aid) is a much practiced, decades-old enterprise, the relationship between national capitals and the EEAS is still young, lacking in trust and depth. More committed buy-in from member states would in part help overcome the limits of established EU foreign policy methods. This could be encouraged, for instance, by mandating specific missions to foreign ministers of the member states, allowing them to contribute in this way to the collective impact of the EU’s positions and its ability to deliver in core areas.

Together with the EU, its member states – especially those which have maintained close bilateral relations with North Africa – are carrying out their own policy reviews and reorientation processes with regard to the region. Three of these will be outlined in the next section. Brussels seems to have assigned itself the role

24C. Ashton, speech delivered at Forum Nueva Economia, Madrid, 13 June 2013.
27The EEAS Review of 2013 addressed issues of organisation, functioning and performance. What internal changes, modifications to legal texts, or other wider issues will be considered as part of the institutional transition this year remain to be seen. For full document, see EEAS Review, July 2013, http://eeas.europa.eu/library/publications/2013/3/2013_eeas_review_en.pdf.
of ‘good cop’ in its southern neighbourhood, preaching deeper democracy and strengthened association agreements, whilst member states have been left struggling with what increased migration (including refugees and asylum seekers fleeing regional instability) might entail and what the results of stricter conditionality might mean for energy interests. Furthermore, the need for strategic action comes in a challenging context of introspection at a national level due to the economic crisis and severe budget cuts affecting non ring-fenced areas including development spending and foreign affairs budgets.

Upping their quantitative and qualitative responses to the new reality in the region is a complex task which requires profound changes in the way different administrations think and work, both at EU and at member state level. The rationales for engaging may differ between organisational cultures, and indeed even at a horizontal level within them. For instance, differences abound between the institutional cultures of development ministries of individual member states. Whereas the UK retains an independent Department for International Development (DFID), led by a minister of cabinet rank, many other EU countries have merged the budgets and tasks of foreign affairs departments and development departments in the same ministry. Spain’s development agency is embedded in its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, run by a secretary of state. France has a Minister for Development within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the technical functions are embedded in a Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships, which includes work on business support and international economics. In other countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, development is also closely linked to trade; the latter has a minister of cabinet rank for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation within the MFA. Germany for its part is considering two options: a Ministry for Global Issues covering issues such as food security, technology, poverty, resource management and agriculture; or a strengthening of international departments in all the relevant sectoral ministries. In today’s globalised world with interconnected challenges, the advantages of structures which facilitate a joined-up approach arguably outweigh the benefits of having a stand-alone development ministry.

As prominent development expert Simon Maxwell asks, should development ministries like DFID become ministries of global affairs and, in the event, where does it leave ministries of foreign affairs?29 Furthermore, given that development is about much more than aid, where then do the boundaries between ministries lie in terms of constituencies, mandates and responsibilities? Do development ministries deal with aid and non-aid issues only for low income countries and fragile states or for some wider group, and if wider, how to define it? Resolving these institutional

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complexities is an ongoing debate within the development community which this article does not aim to cover, but which should be addressed further by actors from the relevant administrations.

Making it operational: responses from the member states

The responses of only three member states to the events of the Arab Spring are analysed here: Denmark, the United Kingdom and Spain. These three actors have all implemented specific regional programmes that demonstrate a willingness to overcome different institutional cultures and operating logics. Yet, there are significant differences in the timing, resources and ambitions of each.

The forerunner: Denmark’s Arab Partnership

The Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), 2003, has become a central pillar in Danish foreign policy in the region. It stands as an example of the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA) incorporating a variety of instruments from across government into five political and strategic priorities for its development cooperation.\(^{30}\) Prior to the Arab Spring its thematic focus was framed by the Arab Human Development Report. Since then, it has demonstrated flexibility in responding to changes in the region by incorporating dimensions of economic growth and job creation in countries undergoing democratic transition and increased its budget (from DKK 100 million to DKK 275 million [€37m] per year). The DAPP has country, regional and multilateral programmes and focuses on professional cooperation, exchange of knowledge and sharing of experience. Regional programmes, for example, are developed and driven entirely by non-governmental/civil society organisations from Denmark and their partners in the region. Denmark recognises the challenges of carrying out development cooperation programmes in a highly volatile region, and admits that “results are not easily achieved, and a high level of risk-taking is necessary”.\(^{31}\) The DAPP is designed as a high-risk endeavour in a context characterised by high levels of insecurity, deeply rooted antagonisms and, in some cases, dramatic political changes unfolding at an unprecedented pace.

The objectives of the DAPP and the subsequent Strategic Framework Document for 2013-16, laying out key challenges facing Denmark’s bilateral relations with the region, are regularly subjected to scrutiny and review, essential to any effective

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development strategy. Stakeholders in partner countries are systematically included in evaluations of aid programmes by DANIDA, thereby allowing greater local buy-in and dovetailing of priorities. The Council for Development Policy, an invaluable body which provides strategic advice to the Minister for Development Cooperation, has also carried out a revision of the DAPP in which it comments on the unpredictable processes of political transition (as in Tunisia and Egypt) and the challenging security environments (as in Libya and Yemen), and asks how the DAPP can best ensure that partnerships and interventions remain sufficiently flexible. Apart from the self-critical nature of this assessment, the identification of the challenge of building relations beyond the usual suspects in practice (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations – QUANGOs, etc) is essential for guaranteeing a broad and inclusive outreach in the MENA region.

**The good pupil: the UK’s Arab Partnership**

In May 2011, as part of the Deauville Partnership, a financial and policy framework through which G8 countries work with MENA countries and the international donor community, the UK launched its Arab Partnership (AP) as a strategic approach to the events unfolding in the region. With a preliminary package of £110 million (€132m) over 4 years, the AP is a joint initiative between DFID and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), a key area of joined-up collaboration between these two essential government departments. Recognising the historic opportunity presented by the popular uprisings of 2011, the AP seeks to contribute to the UK’s long-term vision of a stable, prosperous Middle East and North Africa region based on the building blocks of democracy, with greater social, economic and political participation of its people. Whilst the limited quantities available under the AP prevent it from being a game changer, it is a clear example of British soft power projection in a region sensitive to foreign meddling. The projects approved to date are modest, bilateral initiatives which complement multilateral initiatives launched by the EU. Further action will require clear strategic vision and sustained political will backing development commitments.

Evaluation exercises for the period 2011-13 have shown that the Arab Partnership represents a strong model of interdepartmental coordination. Within the overall strategy, there is a clear division of labour between the FCO and DFID, based on individual comparative advantage. DFID resources have been used to boost FCO delivery capacity. This has included DFID’s contribution of £20 million to

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34For a full list of past and current projects, see [https://www.gov.uk/arab-partnership-participation-fund](https://www.gov.uk/arab-partnership-participation-fund).
the Arab Partnership, staff secondments and transfers and the provision of advisory staff as needed. These collaborative structures are all the more impressive considering that they were created in a situation of considerable urgency. A report by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) concludes that, “The two departments have shown a commendable willingness to innovate and to adjust their ways of working as necessary.”

Some experts question whether it would not be better for DFID to implement all programmes – it has much better capacity and experience than the FCO and in some ways than the British Council. “Would this not guarantee better joined-up thinking?”

A further example of the UK’s joined-up approach to foreign policy can be found in the Conflict Pool, an interdepartmental instrument established by the DFID, the FCO and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to combine their respective expertise in development, diplomacy and security into a coherent UK approach to conflict prevention. The tri-departmental nature of the Pool works well, according to the National Audit Office, which reviewed the Conflict Pool in 2012. It found clear high-level common objectives for all parties and a structure which promotes joint working at the top. The Arab Partnership Fund is also currently undergoing a 14 month-long private evaluation to assess its effectiveness in delivering its planned outcomes, and the relevance of these outcomes to the needs of the countries in transition.

**The catch-up strategy: Spain’s Masar programme**

Spain, labelled the catch-up case for the timing of its strategic partnership ex-post, has also attempted to convert its normative rhetoric into strategic action: at the end of 2012, it launched its own Arab Partnership programme under the name of **Masar** (meaning ‘path’ in Arabic). In line with its British counterpart, Masar is a joint initiative between the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAEC) and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID). As a strategic tool of foreign policy, it also aims to contribute to the Spanish trademark or **marca España** in the region. With an albeit limited initial budget of €5 million for the period 2012-13, the programme focuses on two main pillars: strengthening public institutions and, in parallel, empowering civil society actors. In both cases, elements of a joined-up approach are evident in the involvement of Spanish

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38For more details, see “Documentación de Planificación”, Programa Masar, [http://www.aecid.es/ES/d%C3%B3nde-cooperamos/norte-de-%C3%A1frica-y-oriente-pr%C3%B3ximo/programa-masar/formulaci%C3%B3n](http://www.aecid.es/ES/d%C3%B3nde-cooperamos/norte-de-%C3%A1frica-y-oriente-pr%C3%B3ximo/programa-masar/formulaci%C3%B3n).
ministries such as Justice, Interior, Treasury and Public Administrations, Health, and others. Trade unions, political parties and think tanks are also involved at various levels.

It is too soon to judge if the Masar programme will be successful or whether the expectations it has raised are excessively ambitious. Yet the very process of designing, implementing and coordinating Spain’s response to the Arab Spring is almost as important as the results themselves. The economic crisis and subsequent political decisions regarding cuts to development aid may hamper Spain’s ability to fund as many projects as its northern counterparts, but it can nevertheless take bolder actions in other areas such as markets and mobility, especially given its proximity to the region. This position will require substantial political will and may entail unpopular decisions or short-term sacrifices in a difficult economic context. In the long term however, such actions would contribute to a strategic vision and greater policy coherence across areas of government.

As of November 2013, Spanish development cooperation boasts a bi-annual evaluation plan which recognises “[e]valuation should be a major element in any public policy as it is essential to promote learning and continuous improvement and to drive change and accountability”.39 An evaluation exercise is currently underway for the first stage of the Masar programme and the projects it has funded to date. The administration is frank in recognising that Spain still has a significant way to go before it can be on a par with its northern counterparts, both in terms of implementation and evaluation. In terms of implementing a joined-up approach, the Masar programme stands as an attempt to make development cooperation a more strategic tool of foreign policy, complementing action carried out by other Spanish ministries towards the region.

As examined in the three cases above, evaluation mechanisms are fundamental exercises which make it possible to identify several elements conducive to the success of a joined-up approach: a clear cross-government strategy, a strong model of interdepartmental coordination, an effective interdepartmental board, specialised multidisciplinary in-country teams, and ultimately, political willingness of administrative cultures to cooperate in order to adapt more flexibly to changing circumstances on the ground.

**Putting it into practice: obstacles to be overcome**

Any effective cross-cutting approach at member state level and at Brussels level comes up against a series of structural and circumstantial challenges. Effective implementation of joined-up solutions will require a major rethink of the tradition-

ally compartmentalised and often defensive mentalities which foster turf wars both between departments at national level and between governments at the multilateral level. A rethink is also required regarding the allocation of resources to the best effect – with a new focus on prevention and anticipation rather than merely reactive policies. These possible shifts in operational culture would also require an accompanying revision of how to measure outcomes holistically rather than being hampered by narrow definitions of efficiency.

40 See for instance, Sjursen, “Understanding the Common Foreign and Security Policy”.
41 See for instance, Jørgensen, “The European Union in Multilateral Diplomacy”; as well as Schumacher, “The EU and the Arab Spring”.
42 For one critic, a focus on efficiency “suggests that we care more about whether we have joined-up policies than we care about the overall impact of our policies on poor people and poor countries”. See O. Barder, “Policy Coherence is a Hobgoblin”, Centre for Global Development, 26 September 2013, http://www.cgdev.org/blog/policy-coherence-hobgoblin.
43 In the Horn of Africa, for example, the EU combined various CFSP instruments including crisis management tools, the anti-piracy Operation Atlanta, deployment of training missions for the naval forces of the countries in the region, development cooperation instruments and political influence. See Soliman et al., “The EU Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa”, and K. Georgieva, “Horn of Africa Crisis: One Year on”, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/hot_topics/horn_africa_one_year_on_en.htm.
46 See for instance, Dworkin and Michou, “Egypt’s Unsustainable Crackdown”.

Even in the best case scenario, where efforts at integrating a whole-of-government focus have contributed to strategic policy planning, the effectiveness of results on the ground will always be subject to local conditions. Joined-up thinking in practice has been seen most clearly to date in the EU’s comprehensive approach to crises in the Horn of Africa, where various Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) instruments have been deployed with a degree of coherence. The same cannot be said of the Sahel region where, despite a strategy document laying out the inseparable nature of development efforts and security restoration, the EU’s response to the Mali crisis was blinkered, reticent, and a missed opportunity to deploy the much-lauded ‘battle-groups’. In the neighbouring MENA region, the international community is witnessing how transition processes can be hijacked by spoilers in the form of polarisation, power grabs, and lack of inclusivity in the constitutional reform process, to name but a few.

Among other circumstantial factors are the growing political paralysis of certain transition processes, and the appearance of radical movements in countries where regimes have been unable or unwilling to satisfy the demands of the popular uprisings of 2011. The unpredictability of events in Tunisia and Egypt, and the different ways in which they are tackling political crises, should prompt the EU to view them from a longer-term perspective and craft a set of policies which emphasize that fundamental elements such as political stability, economic development and...
security are only likely to emerge if the national authorities pursue a course that encompasses a political vision for (re)integrating local societies into the dynamics of transition.

Structural factors at EU level, however, threaten to undermine any reorientation of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Among the structural factors that stand out are the persistence of self-centred bureaucratic cultures between DGs, lack of coordination among the pillars of the EU structure, and tensions between the civilian and the military which all contribute to institutional inertia. The lack of coordination at Brussels-level between the Commission and the EEAS and other institutions often hinders the EU’s ability to be a key player in the region. The overlap between new and existing initiatives for the MENA area, including the Civil Society Fund, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) has yet to be fully resolved and has been the subject of numerous comprehensive assessments. Recurring problems of coordination among the principal institutional donors, including poor coordination among EU member states themselves, further aggravates this.

At member state level, apart from the differences in operating logics and administrative cultures of government departments addressed earlier in this article, the economic crisis is taking its toll. Particularly with regard to the countries of southern Europe, severe government cuts to foreign affairs and development cooperation budgets limit the political will and ambition of relations with their Mediterranean neighbours. The impact of this crisis is clearly visible in the shrinking international aid budgets of some member states, of which Spain is the clearest example with over 70 percent cuts suffered over the last two years. In addition, the downturn is forcing Europeans to centre efforts on resolving internal problems, relegating foreign policy to the back burner.

Conclusions

The Arab Spring was seen by many – the EU first and foremost – as a second chance to promote, rather than undermine, synergies between security, democracy and development. Realpolitik towards the region – both at European and at

48 "The problem of Europe is not that it lacks power, soft or hard, but that it is fragmented and, consequently, ineffective." See Torreblanca, *La fragmentación del poder europeo*.
51 For more, see Whitman and Juncos, “The Arab Spring, the Eurozone Crisis”.
52 Ibid.
member state level – had until then prioritised short-term concerns, such as security, energy and migration, over longer-term ideals of democracy, human rights and genuine stability. Realpolitik is now increasingly threatening a return, as seen in clampdowns on migrants by southern European countries, continued arms sales to authoritarian regimes throughout the Middle East, and the pursuit of commercial diplomacy agendas by member states. But a return to the comfortable status quo of bilateral relations with authoritarian regimes which occasionally indulge in cosmetic reforms will not satisfy the needs of the population nor consolidate democratic transitions. Calls for inclusive political processes, accountability, economic improvements and other aspects of longer-term stability have not been met by interim authorities in transitioning countries. By making these demands their own, the EU will find greater receptiveness from North African societies, whose calls for change were directed not only at their own governments but also at the international community that liaised with them. Reorienting current policies towards the region entails, in the case of the EU and its member states, a more joined-up approach in five areas.

The first area is security: It is essential not to confuse the minimum security conditions without which it is difficult, if not impossible, to move forward in consolidating processes of political transition with a return to the securitisation paradigm. Basic security is an intermediate stage and not an end in itself. A minimum level of security is indispensable, both for the local population to feel safe in their transition process and for international development actors to implement programmes in the field. This includes safeguarding NGOs from predatory government instincts, such as those witnessed in Egypt. Yet for international aid to be truly effective as part of a joined-up approach, its ultimate objective should not be the maintenance of basic security. Instead it must be channelled via programmes which contribute to the consolidation of the democratic transition by laying the groundwork for sustained (and sustainable) economic development which will in turn contribute to greater social cohesion and stability.

The second is cooperation: the actors responsible for democracy promotion, development cooperation and security must cooperate to the greatest extent possible. They cannot operate from airtight compartments, but instead must work towards common objectives, maximising the range of instruments and capacities available to them. For instance, development agencies should not be included as an afterthought in policy planning processes or merely as an element of soft power; their input should be sought from the outset. This is where the whole-of-government approach acquires importance, characterised by the involvement of different executive branches through institutionalised mechanisms that favour interdepartmental coordination. In this way, member states can respond more effectively to ongoing changes in the formal structures and internal balances of power of countries undergoing transition. The EU, for its part, should incorporate thematic ‘silver
threads’ across the board, such as Ashton’s pledge for human rights to run through all areas of foreign policy. The EU’s task forces and special representatives, useful cross-cutting initiatives per se, should be wary of being undermined by national capitals pursuing bilateral deals regarding energy, immigration, or indeed, arms exports. Regarding the latter, European Council conclusions should be binding and not left open to the interpretation of individual member states (as was the case with Egypt).

The third is the definition and implementation of conditionality. The EU must work towards a common definition and implementation of conditionality. Prior to the uprisings of 2011, European policy regarding the principle of conditionality was relatively toothless. Since then, the European Union has promised not only “more for more” but also “less for less”. Yet, it has not set out clear red lines as guiding principles for its relations with new governments of the region nor – just as importantly, if not more so – with the autocrats who remain in power in neighbouring countries. Taking into account past practices (weak or non-existent support for political change from the EU), it is natural that many recipients resist accepting conditionality that does not include elements of sufficiently ample reciprocity. Support programmes and specific measures can be more effective if they are the result of a transparent process leading to a shared diagnosis, in which not only the European Union and the governments of the region participate, but actors from civil society as well.

The fourth is national development agencies. They must be more strategic in their regional cooperation programmes. The Arab Partnership programmes of various EU member states, such as those of the UK, Denmark and Spain discussed earlier, are clear examples of the necessity to offer support both at the civil society level and at the institutional capacity-building level. This change of course will test the willingness to equip development policy with a broad strategic vision, serving both the interests of recipient countries and the moral obligations of donor countries in their official development assistance commitments. Therefore despite, or indeed precisely because foreign action is all too frequently posited as a dilemma between efficient action and the principles and values that ought to guide such actions, the transition processes in North Africa remain a unique opportunity to reconcile and rebuild these elements.

The fifth involves resources. Existing resources must be maximised through an integrated policy vision. In some EU member states, the sums allocated to international aid, and foreign policy in general, have suffered severely over the last few years as the economic crisis in Europe has made itself felt in all policy areas. In

53EEAS, “Human Rights at Heart of External Action”.
54It is worth noting that the EU’s ban on sales of ‘repressive’ equipment left plenty of room for interpretation: the guideline paper was by no means exhaustive and fixed no date or preconditions for expiry of the ban. Council of the European Union, “Council Conclusions on Egypt”, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138599.pdf.
addition to financial difficulties, other shortcomings of an endemic nature must also be noted, namely in planning, coordination and implementation. Many administration departments suffer their own institutional and administrative inertias, which in turn make for a traditionally fragmented and not overly strategic external action. In this context, many decisions and actions can be attributed more to inertia or attempts to muddle through a set of circumstances than to consistency with a specific policy line. Nor are they later reviewed or assessed for their relevance and efficacy. This is unsustainable and therefore the integration of diplomatic, developmental and defence instruments under a leadership which makes this coordination systematic is required. At EU level, the case for a joined-up approach should take the form of a series of genuinely cross-cutting geographic and sectorial strategies, subject to strong parliamentary scrutiny regarding the spending of aid money.

Improvements in these five areas would allow the EU and its member states to talk of a more strategic response to the challenges of the southern Mediterranean region. This article has argued that the complex, interrelated challenges of countries in transition must be matched by an ambitious, multidisciplinary joined-up approach across areas of diplomatic, security and development policies. Whilst a series of structural and circumstantial factors make it difficult for member states to overcome bilateralism and national strategic interests, broad support for the implementation of EU policy revisions is key to consolidating a coherent and comprehensive approach to the North African countries in processes of transition. Deploying carefully packaged combinations of coordination instruments may address some causes of non-joined-up behaviour, but until the EU and its member states are prepared to take politically difficult decisions and stick by them, strategic policy making is likely to remain tantalisingly out of reach.

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