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Sub-Regionalism in North Africa and the Middle East:
Lessons Learned and New Opportunities

Adrià Albareda and Oriol Barba

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CONTENTS

Sub-Regionalism in North Africa and the Middle East: Lessons Learned and New Opportunities

Adrià Albareda* and Oriol Barba**[1]

Introduction

Sub-regional processes in North Africa and the Middle East are still an unresolved matter despite the development of several initiatives in the region during the last thirty years. The evolution of these processes conditions broader cooperation at regional level, which is currently in a period of stand-by. Hence, the success or the failure of sub-regional processes may be a conditioning factor for processes of regional cooperation or integration.

The recently born initiative involving Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon called the Quartet Cooperation Council (QCC) proves that sub-regional processes in North Africa and the Middle East are still today a topical subject which requires the attention of researchers and policy-makers. In order to provide some useful recommendations, the paper studies and analyses three processes of sub-regional cooperation in the region: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the QCC.

Leaving apart some necessary and sufficient conditions for any process of regional cooperation, the paper understands that there are four key elements that may affect and determine the evolution of any sub-regional process. These elements are: institutions, leadership, agenda and external factors. In this respect, the paper finds that these variables may determine the evolution of a cooperation process and the possibility of achieving a lasting cooperation project in the sub-region.

The main thesis of the paper shown through the analysis of the three cases are that: 1) a low degree of institutionalisation, especially at the first stages, is better in order to achieve tangible results; 2) a clear leadership in the sub-region facilitates and enhances the development of sub-regional cooperation; 3) economic oriented, technical, practical and progressive cooperation can boost sub-regionalisms; 4) external common threats may foster cooperation between the states of the region.

The paper proceeds as follows: the first part frames regionalism and describes four basic concepts for the understanding of regionalism. The second part analyses two cases of sub-regional initiatives in the region, namely the AMU and the GCC; and it also studies a new cooperation initiative promoted since 2010 by Turkey, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan commonly referred to as the QCC.[2] Through the analysis of the three cases, the paper is concluded by setting out some lessons learned on sub-regionalism in North Africa and the Middle East.

The current context in North African and Middle Eastern countries adds uncertainty to all future development in these sub-regions. However, it also obliges researchers and policy-makers to draw up possible future scenarios. This is the case of this paper, which seeks to contribute to the debate on how sub-regionalism could be structured in a new regional context. This will definitely be a hot topic in the coming years.

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2. The Quartet Cooperation Council is also referred to as the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council.

Framing Regionalism:
Institutions, Leadership, Agenda and External Factors

Regionalism started to be relevant and studied under the international relations perspective after the Second World War. Nevertheless, in the last decades of the 20th century, some factors enhanced the growth of regionalism and sub-regionalism throughout the world, becoming a major characteristic of the international system. These factors are the process of decolonisation, the end of the Cold War, the new world order and the process of globalisation.

Regarding North Africa and the Middle East, it was during the eighties when countries of this region started to cooperate to improve their economic situation and their relative power in the international scene. The paradigmatic examples of this trend are the GCC (1981) and the AMU (1989). However, there are many examples that prove how regionalism and sub-regionalism are still today an issue at the top of the agenda for countries all over the world. The recently born initiative which involves Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan and the GCC's attempt to create a common currency prove that regionalism is a highly topical subject in the sub-regions studied. But what are the main factors that drive these countries to enhance their cooperation? What kind of preconditions must exist in a region for the success of sub-regionalism? Which factors determine the success or failure of sub-regionalisms? The analysis of the three case studies explores these inter-linked questions.

It is worth starting by pointing out that "any general explanation of integration cannot rest on a single approach, but must rest on a multi-causal framework that orders a series of more narrowly focused theories."[3] In this respect, the paper leaves aside theoretical frameworks and focuses on four explanatory factors that affect regionalism's development: institutions, leadership, agenda and external factors.

Three necessary and sufficient conditions for defining a regional subsystem cannot be overlooked: general geographic proximity, regularity and intensity of interactions, which can be associated to interdependence, and shared perceptions of the regional subsystem as a distinctive theatre of operations. Furthermore, Andrew Hurrell points out that regionalisms have also been determined by social cohesiveness (ethnicity, race, language, religion, culture, history and awareness of common heritage), economic cohesiveness (trade patterns and economic complementarity), political cohesiveness (regime type and ideology) and organisational cohesiveness (formal regional institutions).[4] Nevertheless, attempts to define and delineate regions and regionalism scientifically produce few results; there are no natural regions and definitions of regions may vary according to each case studied.

Region, regionalism and regionalisation are three more concepts that should be clarified. The first implies a group of states that share the same region which is delimited by natural physical barriers and marked by ecological characteristics. But countries of any region also have to share some

3. A. Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht,* London/Ithaca, NY, UCL Press/Cornell University Press, 1998.
4. A. Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective", in L. Fawcett and A. Hurrell (eds.), *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

characteristics that make them interdependent and a cooperative community.[5] On a second level, region can also imply social, economic, ethnic, and historical and idiomatic homogeneity.[6]

Regionalism as a political project is a top-down process by which a group of states that share a region start to promote shared goals and try to enhance economic and political cooperation. Thus, regionalism is usually associated with a policy programme (goals to be achieved) and a strategy (means and mechanisms by which goals should be reached), and it normally leads to the creation of regional cooperative enterprises (organisations or institutions).[7]

Finally, regionalisation is a bottom-up process mainly driven by markets and society. It entails concentration and interaction at regional level of any human activity, such as trade, people, ideas or conflicts. While regionalism can be understood as a de jure process, regionalisation is a de facto process. Regionalisation can precede or cause regionalism; it means that a concentration of any human activity may end in an agreement between governments in order to coordinate their strategies in the region. At the same time, the creation of regional cooperation "from above" may cause an increase of regionalisation.

As has been depicted, the four deciding concepts used by the authors when dealing and explaining both the success and the failure of sub-regionalism are institutions, leadership, agenda and external factors. Institutions are those formal agreements, organisations, bodies and rules created for the running of any regional process. At its lower level, a process of regional cooperation can avoid the creation of institutions and develop their cooperation through governmental meetings. On the other hand, it can be highly institutionalised if it creates many agreements, thematic organisations, bodies, rules and norms. At its higher level, institution would mean a sovereignty transfer of the member states to the regional organisation which becomes an international actor as its decisions may affect all member states and relations with neighbour countries and regions.

Leadership is understood as the capability and intentionality of one of the countries in the region to lead the process. Two kinds of factors are taken into account when dealing with leadership: objective factors such as economics (GDP, trade, imports and exports) population and territory, and subjective factors that cannot be measured by numbers but by declarations and acts, which is the intention of one country to lead the region and exert its influence on the regionalism process and its agenda. Leadership can also be associated to regional power disparities[8] or asymmetry understood as size-related differences in terms of demography, economic power, human resources, and so on. Two theories stand out when there is a regional power disparity: the first one states that beneficial regional cooperation is only achieved when there is a benevolent regional leader to provide cooperation,[9] while the second one stresses that powerful regional states can structure the choice of regional institutions in such a way that weaker states

5. L. Fawcett, "Regionalism in Historical Perspective", in L. Fawcett and A. Hurrell (eds.), op. cit.

6. P.J. Katzenstein, "Regionalism in Comparative Perspective", *Cooperation and Conflict,* Vol. 31, No. 2, 1996, pp. 123-159.

7. C. Yi, *Emergence of Regionalism: About State Preference Formation,* "Polis Working Paper", No. 23, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, 2007.

8. S. Cooper and B. Taylor, "Explaining Regional Cooperation in the Persian Gulf", in F. Laursen (ed.), *Comparative Regional Integration: Theoretical Perspectives,* Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing Libraries, 2003.

9. W. Maltti, *The Logic of Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

have little choice but to join the initiative, even though they would be better off with the status quo.[10]

The agenda is the themes or issues-areas to be dealt with by governments, or regional institutions. The scope of the agenda can vary substantially between two different regional cooperation processes. The paper pays attention to whether a sub-regionalism focuses and is based on technical and practical cooperation or endeavours to cooperate with what is known as high politics. Furthermore, it is also necessary to take into account how this agenda evolves and how the process introduces new topics while it develops or it attempts to deal with many issues-areas from the beginning.

Finally, the paper bears in mind the importance of external factors which can work as federators and enhance the creation and consolidation of a process of regional cooperation. External federators can exert their influence positively by promoting the development of the process, or negatively, through external threats that stimulate the process. When an external threat becomes a common threat for all the states in the region, then the regionalism can be explained under the "regional security complex" theory, defined as a group of states whose primary security concerns link sufficiently closely so that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another.[11]

10. Ll. Gruber, *Ruling the World: Power Politics and the Rise of Supranational Institutions,* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2000.
11. B. Buzan, "People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security", *Studies in the Post-Cold War Era,* New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Sub-Regionalism in North Africa and the Middle East

The following section deals with three processes of sub-regional cooperation in North Africa and the Middle East. Concretely, the AMU, the GCC and the QCC are studied and analysed in order to learn some lessons and draw some final conclusions and recommendations. The AMU and the GCC have been selected in order to provide different perspectives of sub-regional processes. It has been considered appropriate to study these cases so as to learn lessons and provide some recommendations to the recently born initiative led by Turkey and involving Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Bearing in mind the internal and regional differences of these processes, it is considered that due to the fact that the AMU has failed to achieve its goals and the GCC has, at least, developed and progressed in many areas of cooperation, these are two examples that can provide complementary information to learn some lessons for the QCC.

Arab Maghreb Union

The AMU was created by Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia in 1989 mainly as a consequence of the favourable sub-regional context. The Western Sahara conflict was in a period of détente and it was one year before Morocco and Algeria re-established their contacts after twelve years of nonexistent diplomatic relations. Moreover, Libya and Tunisia had good political relations after the destitution of President Habib Burguiba in 1987. In this context, on 17th February 1989 the five heads of state signed in Marrakech the agreement by which the organisation was formally constituted with the aim of guaranteeing cooperation at different levels. The AMU endeavoured to promote economic and social progress, inter-state peace, free circulation of persons and goods, and free transfer and movement of capital throughout North Africa.[12] As the institutional treaty stresses, the union aims to reinforce the fraternal links, achieve progress and prosperity, contribute to the preservation of peace, pursue a common political policy in different domains and work towards the progressive realisation of the free movement of persons, services, goods and capital.[13]

Regarding the common political policies, the treaty defines four basic domains: international affairs, which aims to promote diplomatic cooperation founded on dialogue; defence, based on safeguarding the independence of each member state (the treaty also states that any aggression against one member state will be considered as an aggression against the other member states); economics, which aims to promote industrial, agricultural, commercial and social development of member states; and cultural affairs, bearing in mind the importance of Islam and the Arab identity.

The foundation and institutionalisation of the AMU can be understood as a top-down process or a regionalism "from above", where the government are the central actors. In this respect, it established agreements, rules and institutions in order to reduce the transaction costs and shape behaviours. Despite the good will of the organisation and common identity factors (the five countries share common heritage, history, language, culture and religion), sub-regional conflicts and competition between two sub-regional leaders have affected and impede the advancement of the process.

12. B. Hettne, "Beyond the New Regionalism", *New Political Economy,* Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 543-571, 2005.
13. Treaty establishing the Arab Maghreb Union.

The treaty establishing the AMU also created different bodies which makes this organisation highly institutionalised. It is constituted by a General Secretariat in Morocco, a Secretary General from Tunisia, a Consultative Council in Algiers, a Court in Mauritania, financial institutions in Tunisia and an Academy of Sciences in Libya. On the other hand, the Presidency Council, which is composed of the heads of state, is the only one to "have the right to make decisions" and "the decisions shall be made unanimously,"[14] which represents a constitutional obstacle to efficient decision-making. Following this supreme body, there is the Council of Foreign Ministers, which has to prepare the session of the Presidency Council and examine the questions submitted by the Monitoring Council and the Specialised Ministerial Commission. The Consultative Council, composed of thirty delegates from each country, is also supposed to work for the Presidency Council, giving its advice on any decision project. Finally, it is worth noting that the duties of both the General Secretariat and the General Secretary, also depends on the Presidency Council. Therefore, a block of the Presidency Council meetings not only impedes the decision-making process, but also the advancement of the AMU's institutions.

Despite being the supreme body of the organisation, since 1994 there has not been any Presidency Council because of the border closing between Algeria and Morocco. The disputes between these two countries and their competition for leading the sub-region and the sub-regional process have represented a permanent block to the development of the AMU. Since 1994, the Western Sahara conflict and political rivalries between Morocco and Algeria have impeded any advance of the AMU. Furthermore, one cannot obviate the Algerian civil war and the international sanctions to Libya as a cause of distrust and instability in the sub-region. Political rivalry between Algeria and Morocco for the leadership of the sub-region is a block for any kind of sub-regional cooperation. Algeria and Morocco have a population that constitutes 77% of the sub-region and a GDP three times higher than the combined GDP of Mauritania, Tunisia and Libya.[15] As Kindleberger argued, "leadership is needed if international public goods are to be provided, while in absence of leadership, these goods will be under-produced, due to the free-rider problem."[16] Some analysts have stated that the only hypothetical change on the leadership problem would be the acceptance of Egypt, which would appear as a natural hegemon of the sub-region.[17] However, despite being an organisation open to new members, the AMU refused Cairo's application for membership in 1994. During 1999, the region entered into a new period of détente favoured by the election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algeria and the accession of Mohammed VI to the throne of Morocco. Nonetheless, this period did not lead to a re-launch of the AMU.

The AMU has economic cooperation as a priority issue-area. In fact, when created, the AMU envisaged reaching a customs union by 1995 and it was supposed to accomplish the single market by 2000.[18] This cooperation, however, has not been increased during more than 20 years of exis-

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14. Ibid., Article 6.

15. World Trade Organization Statistics Database: http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFView.aspx?Language=E&Country=DZ,LY,MR,MA,TN [last visited: 24th April 2011].

16. Ch.P. Kindleberger, "International Public Goods without International Government", *American Economic Review,* Vol. 76, No. 1, 1986.

17. B. Moller, *Africa's Sub-Regional Organisations: Seamless Web or Patchwork?,* "Working Paper", No. 56, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2009.

18. C. Brunel, "Maghreb Regional Integration", in G.C. Hufbauer and C. Brunel (eds.), *Maghreb Regional and Global Integration: A Dream to Be Fulfilled,* Washington, DC, Peterson Institute, 2008.

tence. The main facts that show the failure of this cooperation are intra-trade between the five countries, which is still around 3% of their total trade, and intra-Maghreb trade, which represents less than 2% of the sub-region's combined GDP.[19] On the other hand, their trade with the European Union is around 60% of the total sub-region's trade. Despite being bound by a common heritage, the five North African countries are economically diverse; they are at different stages of economic development and present diversity in endowments of natural resources. They can be broadly classified into three groups: major oil producers (Algeria and Libya), a low-income country that recently became an oil producer (Mauritania), and two emerging market countries (Morocco and Tunisia).[20] Moreover, high barriers to trade, logistical bottlenecks and lack of production based on diversification added to some other political considerations can be understood as the explanatory factors of the low trade.

In conclusion, the main obstacle to North African integration seems to be the unwillingness of rulers to achieve it added to political differences and rivalries, protectionist commercial policies, ineffectiveness of bilateral trade agreements, proximity to the EU trading bloc, negligible absorption capacity of southern Mediterranean markets and the supply structure of these countries, which is more competitive than complementary. Despite these obstacles, the absolute benefits that could be obtained if the barriers to trade were eliminated would be worth 4.6 billion dollars annually,[21] which represents a deprivation of 2% to 3% of the annual GDP of North African countries. According to Mohamed Bousset, one of the solutions to boost intra-regional trade is the dismantling of tariffs. Thus, for Algeria, "a cut of 50% or 100% in taxes on farming imports from Morocco and Tunisia would lead to a progress of 20.9% and 47.9%, respectively, in trade with these two countries […] with regards to industrial trade it would amount to an increase in trade of 34.4% and 84.9%, respectively."[22] In conclusion, although there are many absolute benefits that should promote sub-regionalism, this process seems to be more affected by the states' interests.

Apart from economics, the AMU is also supposed to deal with three more common policies: international, defence and cultural affairs. At international level, member states are supposed to establish diplomatic cooperation based on dialogue but maintaining state sovereignty.[23] Until today, however, the AMU has only made one common declaration, which was during the first Gulf War (1990-1991). The declaration asked for an Arab-led negotiated solution which should include the withdrawal of the Iraqi and foreign troops in the region.[24] Defence affairs have also been dealt with by the AMU. Specifically, terrorism was brought to the agenda at the end of 1992, at the AMU summit in Nouakchott; where the chiefs of state committed themselves to fight against terrorism

19. S. Akhtar and M. Rouis, *MENA Knowledge and Learning*, "World Bank Quick Note Series", No. 33, 2010.

20. L. Allain and B. Loko, "Fresh Impetus towards Maghreb Integration", *IMF Survey Magazine,* 2007.

21. M. Hernando de Larramendi, "Las relaciones intermagrebíes. Entre el mito unitario y los intereses nacionales", in Y.H. Zoubir and H. Amirah Fernández (coords.), *El Magreb. Realidades nacionales y dinámicas regionales,* Madrid, Síntesis, 2008.

22. M. Boussetta, *Espace Euro-méditerranéen et coûts de la non intégration sud-sud : le cas du Maghreb – Maroc, Algérie et Tunisie,* Marseille, Femise, 2003, pp. 21-43.

23. B. Chourou, "An Integrated Maghreb as a Party to the EMP: Problems and Prospects", in S.C. Calleya and M.A. Heller, *Sub-Regionalism Cooperation within the EMP,* EuroMeSCo Report, No. 18, 2002, pp. 15-23.

24. D. Seddon, "Europe, the Maghreb and the New Regionalism", in J. Grugel and W. Hout (eds.), *Regionalism across the North-South Divide: State Strategies and Globalization,* New York, Routledge/ECPR Studies in European Political Science, 1999.

viewed as a product of religious fanaticism. At first, AMU countries, aware of the possibilities and consequences of the spread of fanatic Islamism, strengthened their cooperation in security matters, such as information exchanges and border surveillance. Nevertheless, throughout the nineties, the threat of Islamism has fuelled mutual suspicions between the AMU countries, especially between Morocco and Algeria and between Libya and the others.[25] Since 9/11 terrorist attacks and the rise of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in the Sahel, the AMU countries' interests to collaborate on defence matters have increased, but again, with few concrete results.

Energy has also been an issue included in the AMU's agenda. However, cooperation and agreements on energy issues have also been very few. The main achievement in this field was the inauguration in 1996 of the West Gas Pipeline which connects Algeria with Morocco. The passage of time has proved how this achievement is not sufficient for improving relations between the two sub-regional leaders; relations that are mainly determined by the Western Sahara conflict and the mutual mistrust.

The main external factor that has indirectly promoted the AMU is the European Union and its success. The structure and the goals of the AMU can be understood as an emulation of the EU. Another interpretation is that the creation of the AMU is a defensive reaction to the success and the enlargement of the EU. However, the EU has not promoted the cohesion and the development of the AMU as a whole but has established bilateral agreements at different levels depending on its interest in a specific country. Nonetheless, it can be worth noting that, since 1990, the AMU countries plus Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta have been developing a process of cooperation based on dialogue called 5+5 Dialogue. Re-launched in 2002, the 5+5 Dialogue has succeeded in bringing together the AMU countries with the five EU countries in order to deal with issues such as security, migration, social affairs, tourism and transport. Despite including the AMU countries, the 5+5 Dialogue has not been enough to boost North African cooperation, but it is worth noting that the last AMU foreign affairs meeting, held in 2009, was one day before a 5+5 meeting, and the AMU ministers of foreign affairs travelled together to the 5+5 meeting as a political gesture to the efforts and interest of this forum to boost North African integration.

The Gulf Cooperation Council

As stated, the eighties was a flourishing decade for the promotion and expansion of regionalism. North Africa and the Middle East were not an exception in this regard. In 1981, the heads of state of Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait met in Abu Dhabi to draw up a cooperation framework to enhance "coordination, integration and inter-connection […] in order to achieve unity."[26] This cooperation framework was called the GCC and one of its main goals was to formulate similar regulations in various fields including "economic and financial affairs,"

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25. M. Hernando de Larramendi, op. cit.
26. Foundation Charter of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Article 4.

"commerce, customs and communications" and "education and culture."[27] These quotes show that the organisation had economic cooperation as a priority.

Before entering into the scope and evolution of the GCC, some remarks about its membership as well as the context in which it was created may contribute to a better understanding. The GCC was created after the Iranian revolution of 1979, which is a milestone in Iran's growth of influence in the region. This could be considered as an external factor reinforced by the nature of all members: Sunni dynasty-ruled countries of the Gulf, the reason why Yemen was excluded from membership even though it is geographically a Gulf state. Despite its exclusion, ad hoc cooperation with this country has been developed since. On the other hand, the exclusion of Iraq would be explained by its domestic political system under Saddam Hussein's regime. Despite being a Sunni-ruled regime, its competition with Iran for exerting its influence in the region was contrary to the status quo guarantee approach that led to the creation of the GCC. Hence, the instability created by the conflicts between Iraq and Iran was one of the factors that the creation of the GCC wanted to fight in order to avoid the spill-over into the Arabian Peninsula. Here, the external factors affected the domestic situation of the member states. Concretely, the Iranian revolution provoked an internal unrest against the Sunni-led regimes, especially in Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, where the percentage of Shiites exceeds 30%. The external factor and its domestic repercussions seem to be determinant to the construction of a regional security complex between the states of the Arabian Peninsula.

The GCC's will to promote a Gulf identity vis-à-vis the failure of pan-Arabism, particularly after Sadat's mandate and later assassination in 1981, has also been considered when explaining the creation and expansion of the GCC. Even if GCC officials have carefully dealt rhetorically not to juxtapose Arabian versus Arab dynamics, it seems clear that since its creation an identity dimension has had a unifying function among the GCC countries.[28] Although common identity factors are not the main reason for the creation of the GCC, the fact that these countries share similar political and cultural identities cannot be overlooked.

In terms of institutions, organisations, norms and rules, the GCC is structured giving particular relevance to interstate forums, and creating few supranational institutions with effective sovereignty transfer. Article six of the foundation charter defines three main bodies, namely the Supreme Council (annual meetings of heads of state), the Ministerial Council and the General Secretariat to which sub-agencies or commissions can be attached. Since 1981, numerous intergovernmental committees and sub-committees have been established at various levels.[29] Some have seen this institutional framework as an EU-like model,[30] even if parliamentary and supranational bodies seem to be considerably weak or nonexistent.

At a practical level, the Supreme Council has been leading the organisation. This has turned into a high level rhetorical discourse through final declarations of the summits. Yet, the low empowerment of

27. Ibid.

28. M. Legrenzi, "Did the GCC Make a Difference? Institutional Realities and (Un)intended Consequences", in C. Harders and M. Legrenzi (eds.), *Beyond Regionalism? Regional Cooperation, Regionalism and Regionalization in the Middle East,* MPG Books, 2008.

29. M. Sturm and N. Siegfried, *Regional Monetary Integration in the Member States of the GCC,* "Occasional Paper Series", No. 31, European Central Bank, 2005.

30. L. Guazzone, "Gulf Co-operation Council: The Security Policies", *Survival,* Vol. 30, No. 2, 1988.

the General Secretariat has meant serious difficulties for the implementation of those agreements reached within the Supreme Council or its subsidiary bodies. On the other hand, technical negotiations have been developed in a quite effective way achieving consensus documents and generating both a wide range of reports and implementation plans. A good example is the "Long-Term Comprehensive Development Strategy for the GCC States (2000-2025)", in which specific goals and means to achieve them are described from a general and holistic perspective. Again, the main problem is the lack of empowerment of the GCC institutions for the implementation of these agreements.

The final composition of the GCC would respond to the will of Saudi Arabia to promote sub-regionalism under its influence with a group of countries with no capability of discussing its leadership, in terms of political initiative, economically or demographically. This asymmetry can be observed today with some indicators: Saudi Arabia has 76% of the population of all GCC members and its GDP represents 55% of the sub-regional GDP. In terms of foreign trade, Saudi Arabia exports amount to 57% and its imports 61%.[31] Regarding political influence, Saudi Arabia is also seen internationally as a regional power with a key role in the world economy as it is one of the main oil producers. As a result of this, it has been included in new international forums such as the G-20. The undisputable leadership of one of the countries seems to reduce conflict among member states while the evolution of the organisation is reduced to the capability and will of the leader to enhance cooperation. This asymmetry in size must not be confused with differences in the internal structure of these countries. All GCC member states have similar characteristics in their economic structures and this favours common strategies on shared challenges. These common features are mainly high dependency on hydrocarbons, a young and rapidly growing national labour force and the heavy reliance on expatriate labour in the private sector.[32]

Cooperation has been reinforced after an initial ideological-based strategic union to a common cooperation coordination model through a functional model, which have been possible thanks to the similarities between economic structures of the members. However, diversification policies developed during the last years are likely to introduce disparities in structural convergence. This introduces a challenge for GCC member states since convergence will not come "alone" anymore due to common economic structures and will have to be guided by the strengthening of common strategies and policies. Moreover, diversification is seen as a possible solution to negative distributive and social effects of excessive oil-dependent economies. Nevertheless, this sub-regional process has been based on practical cooperation and on an incremental process of issues-areas of cooperation. Thus, the countries agreed on technical matters which can improve their relative power, but they have not sought to create organisations and bodies to control the GCC's evolution.

The flourishing of Gulf business actors has not been followed by actions from governments. This creates dualities between sub-regionalisation and sub-regionalism. At a time when Gulf companies have

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31. World Trade Organization Statistics Database: http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFView.aspx?Language=E&Country=BH,KW,QA,SA,OM [last visited: 24th April 2011].

32. M. Sturm et al., *The GCC Economic Structures, Recent Developments and Role in the Global Economy,* "Occasional Paper Series", No. 92, European Central Bank, 2008.

increased their key role as investors in the Arab world, particularly after the increase of oil prices in 2003, coordination between governments has been insufficient. This has been particularly relevant in the last decade where intra-GCC trade increased four times from 13,472 million dollars in 2000 to 60,916 in 2009.[33] However, some goals have been too ambitious and this has given a relative feeling of frustration. Objectives like the establishment of a monetary union by 2005 (finally achieved in 2008) and single currency by 2010 (rescheduled for 2013) have proved to be too optimistic. Monetary stability should be understood as a political rather than a technical challenge since five of the currencies are linked to the dollar and there is free movement of capitals. These two factors have provided strong stability in exchange rates among GCC member states during the last few years that should facilitate the establishment of a central bank. However, the world economic and financial crisis has not helped to achieve such goals on schedule since domestic central banks have realised that an important part of their efforts were to be addressed to guarantee solvency of their states, which at first were thought to be immune to this crisis due to their oil-based revenue structure. Furthermore, the creation of a central bank seems to be a long process. Since the creation of a Monetary Council in December 2008, enabled to carry out coordination tasks and to be substituted by a Central Bank "as soon as the arrangement related to the establishment of Central Bank is finalised,"[34] little success has been achieved. Once again, it seems that the unwillingness to pool sovereignty impedes the advancement and development into a deeper union. Other technical initiatives have been more successful. The Gulf Investment Cooperation, created in 1982, is one of the most active agencies of the GCC. It assesses common projects for funding before their implementation. It is quite independent despite the governments' pressure to get approval for projects.

Interesting results can also be seen in terms of professional and education mobility. While the number of GCC citizens working in the private sector of other GCC member states has doubled in the last decade, student mobility has remained relatively constant and it still remains very modest (5,796 people in 2009). This would reinforce the idea that regionalisation is moving faster than cooperation among governments. The over-dependence on foreign workers (ex-pats) has also limited the development of solid education and training systems and GCC policies have not been effective enough to make this happen.

In other fields, the inrush of GCC forces to maintain stability after Bahrain's protests in March 2011 seems to be a new step in some defence coordination, a policy characterised by non-intervention in domestic affairs since the creation of the organisation. This could open a door for the GCC as a guarantee of the status quo and stability in the region but it is still too early to assess how current riots could affect the peninsula in the near future. In any case, this would be an "intra-GCC status quo" guarantee since its military capability is considerably below the other two regional leaders, namely Iran and Iraq. In a challenging context in North Africa and the Middle East, the "Gulf dilemma" defined by Legrenzi seems to have full force: if GCC member states continue with a paternalistic ap-

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33. Secretariat General of the GCC, Data Center 2010, http://sites.gcc-sg.org/Statistics/Files/1291550130.pdf [last visited: 28th April 2011].
34. Statute of the Monetary Council of the GCC (Article 2).

proach as in the last 50 years in a decreasing resources context, the future is not clear. But if they open up with new institutions and less control, the domestic power systems risk collapse.[35] Bahrain could have been a starter for what could be seen in the coming years leading to a reshaping of what the GCC has been so far.

As has been described in this section, the GCC has defined a relatively solid cooperation path over the years. It has structured a coherent strategy and fixed objectives both in the short and long term. This has been parallel to a remarkable regionalisation process, particularly after the raising of oil prices in 2003, which has led to diversification and to the increasing of Gulf economic and financial influence in the world economy. However, the GCC has been unsuccessful so far in significant sovereignty-transfer processes. This is seen through the modest weight of a low empowered Secretariat and a delay in achieving key milestones such as the Monetary Union and establishing a single currency.

Quartet Cooperation Council

The following section deals with the recently born initiative of sub-regional cooperation in the Middle East, which includes Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. The interest of this initiative is its newness and the fact that it is currently being built up and developed. Furthermore, the Middle East is a region that, until today, has had very few processes of regional cooperation, and there is no precedent for sub-regionalism involving the territories of the QCC countries, which makes this process even more remarkable.

Before analysing the process, it is necessary to point out that this initiative must be understood as a product of Turkey's new foreign policy based on the premise of "zero problems with the neighbours." The change of the Turkish foreign policy can be explained by its acceptance as a candidacy member by the EU in 1999 and the following economic liberalisation and internal democratic reforms. On the other hand, there has been an increase of the role of Turkey in regional policies because of the intensification of intra-Arab divisions and the emergence of a vacuum of power in the Middle East.[36] Nonetheless, any of these shifts cannot be fully understood without mentioning the rise to power in 2002 of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) and the political figures of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Furthermore, as Larrabee states, the decline of the military's influence has facilitated both a broadening and a "softening" of Turkish policy.[37] Hence, since 2000 Turkey has become a "trading state"[38] and this economy-oriented "new activism" has prevailed over the security activism of the 90s.[39] As a result of this policy shift, accompanied by the disappointment towards the EU and the accession process, Turkey has increased its trade with Middle Eastern countries. Concretely, in 1996, the share of the EU in Turkey's trade was 56%, a share that in 2008 dropped 12 points; on the other hand, the share of Turkey's trade with Middle Eastern countries increased from 9% in 1996 to 19% in

35. M. Legrenzi, op. cit.

36. M.B. Altunisik, *Turkey's Changing Middle East Policy,* "UNISCI Discussion Papers", Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2010.

37. S.F. Larrabee, "Turkey's New Geopolitics", *Survival,* Vol. 52, No. 2, 2010, pp. 157-180.

38. K. Kirisci, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State", *New Perspectives on Turkey,* No. 40, 2009, pp. 29-57.

39. R. Kadri Kaan, "Turkey's Neighborhood Policy: An Emerging Complex Interdependence", *Insight Turkey,* Vol. 13, No. 1, 2011, pp. 89-108.

2008.[40] Trade volume reached 28.8 billion dollars by the end of 2009 while in 2002 the volume was 7 billion dollars.[41]

A paradigmatic example of this change in Turkish foreign policy is its new relations with Syria. The ties between these two countries started to strengthen as a result of the end of Syria's tolerance with factions and leaders of the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) in its territory at the end of the 1990s. This was partly a result of Turkey's threat to enter into Syrian territory to combat PKK factions in the north. Once cooperation on this matter started, Turkish-Syrian relations strengthened rapidly. This led to the establishment of a Syrian-Turkish High Level Cooperation Council and a Free Trade Agreement in 2007. Since then, trade among these countries has more than doubled, reaching 2 million dollars in 2008.[42] In terms of security and defence issues, Turkey acted as a mediator in indirect talks between Syria and Israel before the Gaza war in January 2010. As a result of all this, it seems reasonable to argue that the reinforcement of Syrian-Turkish relations has been a key element in the establishment of the QCC. It is important to bear in mind that these two countries hold 90% of the population and territory of QCC countries.

Before analysing the different key concepts (institutions, leadership, agenda and external factors), it is worth noting that the QCC has been established by taking advantage of previous bilateral agreements. Thus, the establishment of a Free Trade Area between these countries is a result of a series of bilateral Free Trade Agreements, most of them signed and coming into force during the last few years (see table bellow). The only remaining bilateral agreement and last step for the current Free Trade Area was the agreement signed in November 2010 between Turkey and Lebanon.

Bilateral Free Trade Agreements between QCC Countries (Implementation Date)

	Turkey	Syria	Lebanon	Jordan
Turkey	——	January 2007	November 2010*	March 2011
Syria	——	——	March 2002	March 2002
Lebanon	——	——	——	March 2002
Jordan	——	——	——	——

*Signing date. To be implemented.

Source: Own production based on data from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among others.

Regarding the QCC as a sub-regional organisation, it is worth pointing out that, in contrast to the AMU and the GCC, this is a recent initiative that still has to be defined. Since 10th June 2010, after the 3rd meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab-Turkish Economic Forum in Istanbul, the QCC has been taking shape. After the conference it was stated that the four countries would establish a cooperation council to develop a long-term strategic partnership and would also create a free trade zone completed with a visa-free travel regime for the nationals of the four countries. At the press con-

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40. M.B. Altunisik, op. cit.
41. S. Öztürk, "Increasing Trade with Muslim Countries Becomes Turkey's Economic 'Oxygen'", *Today's Zaman,* 30th January 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=233904 [last visited: 30th April 2011].
42. M.B. Altunisik, op. cit.

ference following the meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria, al-Moallem, said: "This cooperation is an economic space to the benefit of peoples of the region, it brings back the common history and geography between Turkey and the Arab world." For his part, Prime Minister Erdogan added that the four countries not only share the same geography, breathe the same air and live in the same region, but they also have common history, feelings and culture. This first step shows the good will of the countries to enhance their cooperation. Both politicians underlined the relevance of history and culture as promoters of the mutual understanding between the countries. Nevertheless, until now, this process has not been based on common identity factors. It was not until after the General Assembly of the United Nations when the foreign ministers of Syria, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon agreed to create a high-level QCC in order to enhance a long-term strategic partnership.

The QCC has not established institutions or bodies in order to deal with different issues-areas. In fact, there is no treaty detailing the cooperation structure or any official agreement. It seems that cooperation is being structured through a progressive basis and formal bodies will be established according to the needs and scope of common development strategies. Nevertheless, after the meeting in New York, the four ministers approved the holding of ministerial meetings on the following areas: petroleum and energy in Syria, transport in Jordan, tourism in Lebanon, and economy and trade in Turkey.

The region is clearly led by Turkey, not only in terms of absolute values but also because it has shown the intention and the will to create this cooperation process. Regarding the objective data, Turkey leads all possible rankings: territory and population represent 73% and 70% of the region; in terms of GDP, it has a percentage of 85%; and its share in both imports and exports exceeds 70% of the region.

As has been stated before, the QCC aims to deal with four issues-areas: energy and petroleum, transport, tourism and economy and trade. The first issue-area dealt with by the four countries at its highest level has been transport. Nevertheless, before that ministerial meeting one technical meeting on industry and trade was held in Amman with the intention of drawing up a working plan for the coming phase within the free trade agreement. The transport ministers' meeting – held in Amman on 6th January – aimed to establish a commercial and economic cooperation partnership council. The ministers also called for intensified cooperation in the transport sector, which will help to foster trade relations. Experts in charge of the committee established after the meeting will discuss transport issues such as: customs, flow of goods and passengers and visa requirements. Six days later, on 12th January, a tourism ministers' summit was held with the aim of generating further investment in the sub-region, increasing the quality of services in tourism sectors and creating common quality standards and devising a common promotion strategy for tourism in the four countries. Being aware of this sector's potential – as Syrian Tourism Minister, Saadallah Agha Al-Kalaa, said, there are 110 million people that can benefit from more intensified cooperation in tourism sectors[43] –, the quartet meeting

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43. T. Qiblawi, "Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Turkey Mull Ways to Boost Tourism", *The Daily Star Lebanon,* 12th January 2011.

worked in one direction: to solve the issue of border visas modifying the border crossing points in order to facilitate internal tourism movement. This technical cooperation can be reproduced in other fields and areas and enhance relations at various levels leading to economic integration.

As for the external factor, the role of the EU in shaping the new Turkish foreign policy has been indirect but more than relevant. When Turkey was granted candidacy status by the EU in 1999, free trade and democracy became the main pillars of its policy.[44] However, as has already been stated, this stage was followed by Turkey's disappointment towards the EU and the permanent blockage for accepting Turkey as an EU member. Thus, while insurmountable walls between Turkey and the EU are multiplying, they are tumbling down with countries in the Middle East and North Africa.[45] However, it seems risky to claim that Turkish promotion of the QCC is an alternative strategy to the shortcomings of the EU integration process. In terms of trade, the EU still represents more than 40% of Turkey's total share for imports and exports, which doubles Turkey's trade with Middle Eastern countries.[46] Thus, the Turkish initiative to constitute a sub-regional process in the Middle East will be seen complementarily rather than as an alternative to EU integration. As Turkey has repeatedly stated after the start of the QCC, it is still determined to become a full member of the EU. Nonetheless, the new Turkish foreign policy and this initiative have launched a debate confronting pro-Europeans and pro-Arabs. The former stress the persisting problems, animosities, the protracted conflicts in the region and the fact (emphasised by Professor Hüseyin Bagci) that Turkey is good at bilateral relations, but it fails to bring nations together;[47] while the latter focus their attention on the absolute benefits of regional cooperation and the disappointment with the EU.

In line with the creation of the QCC, on 3rd December 2010, business organisations from Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon formed the Levant Business Forum and adopted an action plan to carry out joint projects on the integration of these economies. This process of sub-regionalisation can enhance the sub-regionalism process increasing their mutual interdependence and boosting prosperity and economic stability in the region. On 22nd March, 2011, an agreement on the main goals of increasing trade, investments and economic ties and developing joint initiatives to create jobs and stimulate investments in tourism, industry and energy was signed by the Turkish-Lebanese, Turkish-Jordanian and Turkish-Syrian Business Councils. This interaction of the businessmen from the four countries can promote the process of cooperation at its official level.

As was stressed at the beginning of this section, this sub-regional cooperation process is at an early stage and will probably evolve in the coming months. This section has tried to present its origin and its first achievements and to understand what has led to the launching of such a project among these countries.

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44. R. Kadri Kaan, op. cit.

45. S. Öztürk, op. cit.

46. World Trade Organization Statistics Database:
http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFView.aspx?Language =E&Country=TR [last visited: 30th April 2011].

47. S. Öztürk., op. cit.

Lessons Learned and New Opportunities

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This section draws and analyses some lessons learned through the study of the AMU and the GCC and emphasises some remarks for these initiatives. It also underlines useful opportunities for the new sub-regional process initiated by Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Having analysed the role of institutions, leadership, agenda and external factors of the three sub-regionalisms, the paper endeavours to extract the most valuable elements when explaining the success or the failure of any sub-regional process.

The AMU stands out for its survival despite its lack of success throughout its history. After more than 20 years, this sub-regional cooperation project has not been able to increase the interdependence among member states. The paper considers five explanatory factors: the lack of a pre-existing sub-regionalisation; a highly institutionalised working method; the presence of two leaders in the sub-region; the mutual distrust between the members; and the Western Sahara conflict. Thus, the AMU, despite having some favourable preconditions such as important identity factors (same language, culture, history, religion, etc.), has been unable to achieve any success or any of the goals set in the treaty. The five explanatory factors are interlinked since the mutual distrust is mainly caused by the Western Sahara conflict, also enhancing suspicions between the two sub-regional leaders. On the other hand, the institutionalisation of the organisation has not led to an increase in regionalisation. Furthermore, the treaty established goals that have proved to be too ambitious, and this has created a capability expectation gap.

The GCC has gone through a relatively stable cooperation path despite the difficulty of reaching effective sovereignty transfer decisions. Some factors that can explain its success is the indisputable leadership of one of the member states, namely Saudi Arabia, a cooperation based mainly on the financial and economic fields, the existence of an important process of regionalisation due to the expansion and growth of economic actors in the sub-region and a relatively simple institutional structure in which technical committees are created progressively, responding to the needs of new cooperation fields. As an external factor, the growth of a Gulf identity interested in guaranteeing stability vis-à-vis other regional powers such as Iraq and Iran can also be a flattering element of its success.

Despite historical and cultural links, Arab-Turkish cooperation has not acquired an important dimension until recent years. The QCC is perhaps one of the most interesting initiatives in this new chapter of Turkish-Arab relations. It is still uncertain what the achievements of this framework will be but a priori it presents important potentialities. Another question is whether this initiative responds to circumstantial rather than structural factors. Even if this will have to be developed in future research, it seems reasonable to argue that changes in the political structure of QCC countries may reinforce rather than weaken the cooperation framework.

Bearing in mind the three cases studied, some lessons learned can be set out for current and potentially new processes of sub-regional cooperation in the region. Since the authors consider that

no single approach can fully explain the success or failure of sub-regionalism, four explanatory factors – institutions, leadership, agenda and external factor – have been used to this end.

The institutional framework of a given sub-regional process as well as the capacity to interact with private actors is a key element to explain the success or failure of the cooperation. The process of sub-regionalisation, understood mainly as trade interaction between countries of one sub-regional cooperation process driven by private actors, is considered as a necessary but not sufficient condition. Yet, it has been proved how sub-regionalism cannot be considered as an infallible condition that promotes sub-regionalisation. Again, the case of the AMU shows how, despite having a formal sub-regionalism process based on organisations and institutions, sub-regionalisation remains very low. Thus, while the AMU opted for a highly institutionalised organisation, the GCC chose a progressive path by which the sub-regionalism shapes itself. Therefore, the paper concludes that a low degree of institutionalisation can help, especially at early stages of sub-regionalism. However, it seems improbable to develop a lasting cooperation framework without concrete institutions, which may need to be developed progressively.

In terms of leadership, the presence of two leaders acting as rivals in one sub-region represents a difficulty in its development, impedes cooperation and ends up blocking such a process. This is particularly true in the AMU case whereas in the GCC and QCC cases the single-leader pattern contributes to successful common actions. Hence, even if a two-leader based structure is often a problem for a sub-regional process, a single-leader pattern is not a guarantee of success.

Issues-areas dealt with in the agendas of the three sub-regional projects have proved to affect the evolution of the processes. In this respect, economic oriented sub-regionalism seems to be the most result-oriented cooperation framework. As has been pointed out above, the processes focused on practical cooperation such as economy, transport and energy have more possibilities of success than those with strong political and security components. However, overcoming existing conflicts between countries engaged in a common regional or sub-regional process is a prior condition to this practical cooperation. An example can be seen in the evolution of the Union for the Mediterranean which, despite using a practical and technical cooperation approach, has been blocked since its creation due to political stagnation derived from pre-existing conflicts. Once conflicts among parties are solved, it may be recommendable to base cooperation on technical issues-areas leaving aside other potential controversial fields, at least at the first stages of the cooperation process, as this can be used as a way to build confidence between member states. Moreover, the will to deal with many subjects can also represent an obstacle for a recently born process of sub-regionalism.

Besides institutions, leadership and agenda, a fourth key explanatory concept has been studied in this paper: external factors. Apparently, all sub-regional processes are affected directly or indirectly by

external countries or regional organisations. In the case of the AMU, the will to emulate the EU led to an attempt to carry out an "express" integration initiative as a response of the communitarian process. The GCC was an alternative to Iran's and Iraq's influence in the region but was seen as a complementary strategy of GCC states' traditional allies, particularly the USA. As has been pointed out, the fact that the six states shared a common threat contributed to the promotion of the sub-regional process. Finally, the QCC cannot be seen as a Turkish alternative to its difficulties to access the EU. Even if the QCC is somehow part of a diversification strategy in terms of regional policy, EU access continues to be a priority for Turkey. Although it is not possible to make predictions in this respect, it seems reasonable to argue that an enlarged EU including Turkey could benefit in the future from current Turkish plans in the region.

Conclusions

The paper has shown through the study of three practical cases that the thesis outlined by the authors in the introduction seems to be validated. Institutions, leadership, agenda and external factors have a key role when explaining the success or failure of a sub-regional process. In order to contribute to the debate and to future processes of this kind, as well as the future evolution of the cases studied, the authors present the following conclusions.

First, a low degree of institutionalisation, especially at the first stages, is recommended as it avoids political blockage. Institutions without a clear function and mandate can become a hindrance for the sub-regional cooperation process. This has been the case of the AMU, trying to build a complete institutional framework from its foundation that has not helped to achieve relevant results. Informal meetings, constructive dialogue and ad hoc ministerial summits may be a good start for a sub-regional process before the establishment of formal bodies, rules and institutions. Yet, in order to promote a solid cooperation path, any sub-regional process will need formal institutions with clear functions and an effective sovereignty transfer.

Second, leadership also conditions the evolution of a given sub-regional process. The existence of two leaders can affect cooperation negatively, particularly if these two leaders are acting as rivals in a competitive attitude for leadership. This has been the case of the AMU with Morocco and Algeria and the blockage causing the Western Sahara conflict. Thus, any sub-regional cooperation would with difficultly obtain tangible results and success when leaders are involved in unresolved conflicts. In contrast, clear leadership may contribute to fostering and accelerating cooperation in the sub-region. Turkey and its capacity to generate positive synergies among QCC members has been an example of this fact.

Third, an agenda based on practical and progressive cooperation tends to lead to better results than other working methods which try to cover too many issues-areas. An example can be seen in the evolution of the GCC, where a first stage based on coordination through subcommittees and agencies has led to more ambitious goals such as the achievement of a monetary union and a single currency, still underway. Technical, practical and progressive cooperation is useful to build confidence and boost inter-linkage between member states. This approach based on a progressive method allows countries to better design their strategies and promote cohesion in the evolution of the sub-region. It also contributes to identifying the priorities commonly shared by the countries and may generate a spill-over effect in non-priority areas.

Finally, sub-regional cooperation also depends on external factors. When an external factor is linked to an external threat the members of the sub-region may have strong incentives to cooperate to respond to the influence of another actor perceived as a menace. This is the case of the GCC, created in the context of the Iraq-Iran war by Sunni-ruled countries as a way of putting limits on

the influence of these two countries. On the other hand, external factors based on positive inputs, such as the will to emulate neighbouring integration processes, do not seem to have a real impact in the cases studied.

North African and Middle Eastern countries are currently going through an unprecedented wave of change, the results of which remain uncertain. Regional and sub-regional dynamics will undoubtedly be affected by these changes. However, these four key factors will continue to condition existing and potential sub-regional process, and will have to be taken into account by those undergoing these process and those who are willing to contribute to an effective regionalisation of the region.

IEMed.

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, is a consortium comprising the Government of Catalonia, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Barcelona City Council. It incorporates civil society through its Board of Trustees and its Advisory Council formed by Mediterranean universities, companies, organisations and personalities of renowned prestige.

In accordance with the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Barcelona Process, and today with the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean the aim of the IEMed is to foster actions and projects which contribute to mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation between the different Mediterranean countries, societies and cultures as well as to promote the progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Mediterranean.

Adopting a clear role as a think tank specialised in Mediterranean relations based on a multidisciplinary and networking approach, the IEMed encourages analysis, understanding and cooperation through the organisation of seminars, research projects, debates, conferences and publications, in addition to a broad cultural programme.

EuroMeSCo

Comprising 58 institutes from 35 European and Mediterranean countries, as well as 28 observer institutes, the EuroMeSCo (Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) network was created in 1996 for the joint and coordinated strengthening of research and debate on policy and security issues in the Mediterranean, aspects considered essential for the achievement of the objectives of Euro-Mediterranean policy.

As agreed by the EuroMeSCo General Assembly in 2010, the objectives of the network are: encourage communication, foster joint initiatives and facilitate the publication of the works of member institutes; promote the activities and research of the network among experts and institutions linked to Euro-Mediterranean relations; and provide policy recommendations in the framework of the Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes the organisation of an annual conference, where the members debate political and security issues in the Mediterranean that have emerged during the year; a research programme to foster research projects among the institutes and experts of the network; and a series of seminars, workshops and meetings to stimulate debate on Mediterranean politics.