

Dealing with Geopolitical Flashpoints

Second and Third Order Effects that Threaten to Destabilize the MENA region

14-15 September 2017

Brussels (Belgium)

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Arrival of participants

Thursday, September 14, 2017

09h00 – 09h30 Opening Session

Karel Lannoo, Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium
Professor Anne Moisan, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies/Strategic Studies
Network Chairs, United States
Senén Florensa, President of the Executive Committee, European Institute of the Mediterranean
(IEMed), Spain
Cecilia Yuste, Ambassador of Spain to Belgium

09h30 – 10h45 Disorder, liquidness and fragmentation in the Middle East

It is often claimed that the system of regional alliances in the Middle East is in crisis and that the natural state is reestablishing itself and reshaped by the realities on the ground. This session will aim to ascertain whether these on-going changes, including the rise of non-state actors, are to be taken as a sign that the system is still naturally evolving.

Moderator: James Moran, Principal Advisor on the MENA region, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Panelists:

Marc Pierini, visiting scholar, Carnegie Europe, Brussels, Belgium

Eduard Soler, Senior Research Fellow and MENARA Project Scientific Coordinator, CIDOB, Spain

Open Discussion

10h45 – 11h00 Coffee Break

11h00 – 12h15 Syria, towards conflict de-escalation

This session will examine the lack of security architecture hampering the resolution of conflicts, most urgently in Syria which has become the engine of regional instability with far-reaching impacts in the immediate and far abroad regions.

Moderator: Steven Blockmans, Head of the EU foreign policy, Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium

Panelists:

Julien Barnes-Dacey, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council of Foreign Relations, United Kingdom

Lurdes Vidal, Director of the Arab and Mediterranean Department, IEMed, Spain

Open Discussion

12h15 – 13h30 Libya, militias and security conundrum

This session will examine the second and third order effects of the defeat of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the shifting to North Africa, specifically weak, ungoverned spaces such as Libya. Despite UN efforts and the establishment of the GNA, the country struggles with national reconciliation and normalcy. Is civil war once again inevitable or does ISIS II find a home?

Moderator: Anne Moisan, Professor, Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies/Strategic Studies Network (SSN), United States

Panelists:

Mustafa El Sagezli, General Manager, Libyan Programme for Reintegration and Development, Libya

Arturo Varvelli, Senior Research Fellow, Head of the North Africa Program, Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale (ISPI), Italy

Open Discussion

13h30 – 15h00 Lunch with key-note speech

Nicholas Westcott, Managing Director for the MENA region, European External Action Service

15h00 – 16h15 Algeria, the balance between continuity and change

This session will look at whether Algeria's past revolution will protect it from the instability befalling its neighbors, or will their elites be able to embrace the new realities and continue evolving into a more open, transparent and democratic society.

Moderator: Roger Albinyana, Director, Euro-Mediterranean Policies Department, IEMed, Spain

Panelists:

Arslan Chikhaoui, Executive Chairman, NSV Consultancy & Studies Center, Algeria

Yahia Zoubir, Professor, Kedge Business School (Marseille), France

Open Discussion

16h15 – 16h45 Coffee Break

16h45 – 18h00 ... and the Rest of the Regions' Reaction

This session will examine other regional players' reaction and strategies to deal with key challenging scenarios –Tunisia's democratic transition, Israel-Palestinian conflict, economic crisis in Southern Europe, etc. How have these countries tried to develop effective national strategies, reach out to new “friends” and “allies”, while still maintaining/juggling historic relationships?

Moderator: Lurdes Vidal, Director of the Arab and Mediterranean Department, IEMed, Spain

Panelists:

Mohamed Habib Sayah, Consultant, Intric8, Tunisia

Koert Debeuf, Director, Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy in Europe, Belgium

Shibley Telhami, Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development, University of Maryland, United States

Open Discussion

19h30 Welcome Reception for panel speakers hosted by H.E. Cecilia Yuste, Ambassador of Spain to Belgium (*only by invitation*)

Friday, September 15, 2017

09h30 – 10h45 Refugees and Immigration

This session will consider the rise of populism and the resulting xenophobic discourse in the West, but especially in Europe focused on immigration and refugee pressures. What lies ahead for the West and the region as a whole?

Moderator: Catherine Woollard, Secretary General, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Belgium

Panelists:

Roderick Parkes, Senior Analyst, EU ISS, France

Ilke Toygur, Researcher, Elcano Royal Institute and lecturer at University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain

Open Discussion

10h45 – 11h15 Coffee Break

11h15 – 12h45 International Players (US, EU, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey ...)

This session will focus on regional/international level policy responses to instability in the region. Not only do international players challenge one another, but they have regressed to engaging in politics on the ground. Rebuilding an effective strategy in the region will mean not only rebuilding ties with state partners, but determining how best to respond to the evolving and increasingly more assertive regional roles of Iran, Russia, China, Turkey and non-state actors. For instance, can a strategic understanding with Turkey be achieved?

Moderator: Senén Florensa, President of the Executive Committee, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Spain

Panelists:

Marc Otte, Senior Fellow, Egmont, Belgium

Pierre Vimont, Senior Fellow, Carnegie, Belgium

Open Discussion

12h45 – 13h15 Closing session and Farewell Remarks

13h30 – 15h00 Networking Lunch

PM Participants Depart