



The Middle East and the EU: New Realities, New Policies

FINAL PUBLIC CONFERENCE of the MENARA
and MEDRESET Projects

Wednesday, 6 March 2019
14:30- 19:00
Egmont Palace

About MENARA:

Over the past decade, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have witnessed profound geopolitical shifts, prompting extraordinary levels of unpredictability and instability. The “Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture: Mapping geopolitical shifts, regional order and domestic transformations” (hereafter, the MENARA Project) studies the geopolitical order in the making, identifies the driving forces behind it, sheds light on bottom-up dynamics and assesses the implications of these processes on the European Union (EU) and its policies towards the region. In order to do so, the MENARA Project poses a single all-encompassing question to help articulate a consistent and coherent research project: will the geopolitical future of the region be marked by either centrifugal or centripetal dynamics or a combination of both? The project is articulated in three levels of analysis (domestic, regional and global) and includes a strong dissemination and outreach component. In terms of methods, it is based on desk research, around 300 interviews, three focus groups, an on-line Delphi survey with 80 experts, several workshops and two stakeholders’ engagement meetings.

About MEDRESET:

MEDRESET is a European Commission-funded Horizon 2020 Project to develop alternative visions for a new Mediterranean partnership and corresponding EU policies. It aims at designing an inclusive, flexible, and responsive future role for the EU in the region based on the multiple perspectives of local and bottom-up actors. To reset our thinking, understanding, and definition of the Mediterranean, MEDRESET has mapped a region which has changed substantially in terms of geopolitical dynamics and in key policy sectors (political ideas, agriculture and water, trade and energy, migration and mobility), identifying the old and new stakeholders, their interaction, and the major policy issues around which this interaction flows. The project is based on a nonEurocentric research design and a multi-method approach that includes a substantive perception component of top-down and bottom-up actors: more than 700 stakeholders on all shores of the Mediterranean have been interviewed.



Conference Concept Note:

This conference aims at fostering a debate among the Brussels-based expert and policy community on the present and the future of the Middle East and North Africa and in particular on the EU's role towards this region. To do that, it will draw on the main research findings and policy conclusions of the two largest research projects on the Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa currently funded by the EU under its Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. It also aims at highlighting synergies between the two projects.

The first panel – "Where is the Middle East heading to?" – will kick-off with a short input by MENARA's scientific coordinator on the major findings of the project and ideas of how the domestic and the regional orders in the MENA will look like in the future. This will be followed by a discussion with key stakeholders on and from the MENA region.

The second panel – "How are we going to act together?" – will open with the short presentation by MEDRESET's scientific coordinator of the major findings of the project and ideas of how Euro-Mediterranean relations could be reset on both the regional and bilateral levels. These will then be discussed by key stakeholders in the Euro-Mediterranean processes and policies, including the director of one of the key civil society networks in the region.

About the MEDRESET Young Writers Prize:

The call for MEDRESET YWP was launched in Meknes in December 2017, and distributed through our media partner Jadaliyya. It aims to give young people coming from the Mediterranean region a voice. The selection process was pursued by our partner, the Arab Studies Institute (Research and Education Methodologies) based in Beirut. We had 22 Arabic, 16 English, and 3 French submissions.

Short bio of the winner:

Omar SHANTI graduated from Northwestern University in 2018 with an engineering degree in Computer Science and a liberal arts degree in Economics and MENA Studies. His academic interests lie primarily on the interplay of politics, culture, and movement in the MENA region, with specific emphasis on the Maghreb and Palestine. In addition to analyzing Maghrebi fiction, Omar has also written about Algerian Raï music as seen through a postcolonial lens and hopes to publish an interview with the late Rachid Taha shortly. He currently works as a software developer in Chicago, aiming to return to the Middle East and apply his learnings towards humanitarian purposes there.

