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Deutsches Institut für
Entwicklungspolitik



German Development
Institute

Discussion Paper

5/2018

Strategic Policymaking and the German Aid Programme in the MENA Region since the Arab Uprisings

Mark Furness

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Bonn 2018

Discussion Paper / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik
ISSN 1860-0441

Die deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-96021-061-0

DOI:10.23661/dp5.2018

Printed on eco-friendly, certified paper

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Published with financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

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Acknowledgements and disclaimer

Thanks to Amirah El-Haddad, Annabelle Houdret, Stephan Klingebiel, Markus Loewe, Jan Orbie, Bernhard Trautner and Matthias Weiter for very helpful comments on earlier drafts. Thanks also to Fabian Winder for excellent assistance with the aid data and figures.

All remaining errors and omissions are the responsibility of the author.

Views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the positions of the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) or any entity of the German government.

Bonn, February 2018

Mark Furness

Abstract

Germany's official aid to Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries has more than doubled since 2011, ostensibly to support their responses to development challenges and humanitarian crises following the Arab uprisings. But the dramatic increases in aid have not been accompanied by a public strategy that sets out Germany's objectives in the region, and the role of aid in conjunction with other policy tools in achieving them. Furthermore, a closer look at the figures reveals that most of the increased aid has been spent in just two areas: humanitarian aid in response to the Syrian crisis; and soft loans to Morocco for investing in renewable energy production. This raises some interesting questions for observers of German development cooperation. First, what strategic objectives does the German government have for its MENA aid, and have these objectives changed in response to the Arab uprisings? Second, does the practice of Germany's aid spending actually address development and humanitarian challenges in the MENA region? And third, why has the German government not produced a clear strategy for its aid, given the political salience of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath? In order to address these questions, this paper develops some key insights from the historical institutionalist and aid effectiveness literature that explain strategic policymaking in complex decision-making systems. Two propositions are discussed: first, that Germany's aid and foreign policy system has not been able to produce a clear strategy due to political differences and bureaucratic inertia; and second that the priorities that have been defined tend to favour German and European security interests rather than the development and humanitarian priorities of the region. An examination of the policy and practice dimensions reveals that, while efforts have been made to set priorities for development and humanitarian cooperation in response to the Arab uprisings, Germany's MENA aid programme shows signs of policy incoherence and fragmentation. This is unlikely to change in the absence of a "whole-of-government" strategy for Germany's engagement in the MENA. Furthermore, while there is little evidence of purposeful securitisation of aid, short-term stability has been privileged over support for unpredictable political change. A whole-of-government strategy based on the Sustainable Development Goals would balance German interests with the MENA region's development priorities, and thus iron out the most problematic incoherencies.

Key Words: German development cooperation; Middle East and North Africa; aid effectiveness; policy coherence, historical institutionalism

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Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

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Abbreviations

AA	German Federal Foreign Office / Auswärtiges Amt
AHDR	Arab Human Development Report
BKAmt	German Federal Chancellery / Bundeskanzleramt
BMI	German Federal Ministry of the Interior / Bundesministerium des Innern
BMUB	German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety / Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit
BMVg	German Federal Ministry of Defence / Bundesministerium der Verteidigung
BMWi	German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy / Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development / Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
EU	European Union
EUR	euro
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HI	historical institutionalism
KfW	KfW Development Bank / Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
ODA	official development assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar

1 Introduction

The 2011 Arab uprisings and their aftermath have, figuratively at least, brought the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region “closer” to Germany. This has happened both politically through the diverse impacts of regional upheaval on Germany’s domestic and international politics, and physically through the presence of several hundred thousand mostly Syrian refugees since late 2015. The growing importance of the MENA region to Germany is reflected in the sharp increases in humanitarian and development aid to the region, which has more than doubled since 2011 from around EUR 750 million annually to around EUR 1.8 billion in 2015. The remarkable increases in official development assistance (ODA) have not, however, been accompanied either by a strategic policy statement that sets out the objectives of the aid programme itself, or by a “whole-of-government” strategy for the region that sets out Germany’s strategic goals and the role of aid in this context. This raises some interesting questions for observers of German development cooperation. First, what strategic objectives does the German government have for its MENA aid, and have these objectives changed in response to the Arab uprisings? Second, does the practice of Germany’s aid spending actually address development and humanitarian challenges in the MENA region? And third, why has the German government not produced a clear strategy for its aid, given the political salience of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath?

In addressing these questions, this paper aims to contribute to debates on Western development and humanitarian engagement in the MENA region. Following the 2011 Arab uprisings, there were widespread expectations that donors would change their strategic approaches to reflect new realities and priorities in the region (Perthes, 2011). Some experts nevertheless expressed scepticism that there would be much change at all (Schumacher, 2011). This more sceptical perspective has largely been borne out by events, with most studies on development cooperation in the MENA since 2011 observing continuity rather than change. Studies of the policy and practices of other Western aid donors have noted at least three major themes that have characterised “donorship” in the region since the Arab uprisings. First, there has been a recurring gap between rhetoric and practice – a disconnect between official expressions of support for democratic change and continuity in how foreign assistance programmes have been funded and run (Boogaerts, Portela, & Drieskens, 2016; Dadush & Dunne, 2011). Second, there has been a marked lack of focus on the part of donors on using aid for problem-solving, particularly with regard to long-standing tensions around the Arab social contract that exploded into political violence in the wake of the 2011 uprisings (Challand, 2014). Third, Western donors have not been able to establish themselves as legitimate contributors in the post-Arab Spring MENA region, because they have focussed primarily on their own economic and security interests in the region, the pursuit of which has contributed to decades of violence and chaos (Paragi, 2015).

These reflections on Western donors’ activities in the MENA region since the Arab uprisings are based on the normative expectations established by the international aid and development effectiveness agenda. Donors have promised to use their aid to support developing countries in resolving their development and humanitarian challenges (Brown & Swiss, 2013). This requires a coherent strategy that sets priorities, identifies attainable

goals and defines a step-by-step approach to reaching them (Andrews, 2013).¹ Furthermore, as most development and humanitarian challenges have multiple socio-political causes and effects, adequate funding is only one tool that is likely to be needed in addressing them – development and humanitarian aid have to be used in conjunction with other policy instruments, such as diplomacy, defence, trade and investment, in furthering local, national and regional objectives (Christopoulos, Horvath, & Kull, 2012). Although these principles have been given concrete form by the international aid and development effectiveness agenda, they are better understood as aspirations that are not usually met by donors (Ramalingam, 2013). Nevertheless, in a democratic donor country such as Germany, citizens have a legitimate expectation that public spending should be driven by a strategy that sets clear objectives and delivers results.

An ideal development cooperation strategy for the MENA region would support inclusive, sustainable development as well as reconciliation and reconstruction at various levels, from national down to the community level. It would be articulated by MENA actors themselves and supported by donors, working together to define and implement the steps necessary to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. If German aid were to meet these standards, it would need to target political, social and economic challenges, both coherently at the level of policy, and consistently at the level of operations. Moreover, as Germany is a democratic donor, its aid should target the strengthening of inclusive, democratic institutions in the recipient countries, particularly at a time when popular uprisings across the MENA region have called for this kind of support (Abbott, 2018; UNDP [United Nations Development Programme], 2011). At the same time, the ways in which Germany has used its aid to further its own “interests” in commerce, stability, and migration control would need to at least “do no harm” to socio-development outcomes, and, at best, actively contribute to turning the vicious cycle into a positive one.

The second section of this paper draws on insights from the historical institutionalist (HI) literature explaining strategy-building in complex decision-making systems. These provide theoretical explanations for why aid systems experience difficulties in producing coherent policy frameworks and “joined up” operational processes. This theoretical framing is expanded with reference to two analytical narratives from the aid effectiveness literature on policy coherence: fragmentation, and securitisation. The narratives, without drawing on HI specifically, emphasise factors that either support or hinder strategy development. These include institutionalist factors such as the challenges of coordinating policy positions in complex decision-making systems and the pressure to use resources to further donor country interests, particularly in security and stability, instead of addressing partner country development problems. Two propositions emerge from this framing: first, that political differences and bureaucratic inertia in the German foreign policy making system, in which the aid programme is embedded, have prevented the emergence of a clear aid strategy. Second, those priorities that do exist tend to favour German and European security interests rather than addressing the development and humanitarian problems of the region.

The third section of this paper explores continuity and change in Germany’s MENA aid policy and practice since 2011. At the policy level, an analysis of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)’s internal regional policy

1 “Strategy” is distinct from “tactics”, which are the steps that actors take at each stage of a strategy.

papers suggests a broad strategic orientation towards the resolution of development problems outlined by MENA partners in the Arab Human Development Reports (AHDRs) in the early 2000s. There have also been some initiatives to link with whole-of-government approaches to peacebuilding and crisis response, which have been developed in parallel to the MENA aid programme and which reference the region's crises. There is, however, no whole-of-government strategy for the MENA region. The German government has not publicly identified the political, social and economic processes it wants to support in the MENA, or the role of aid, along with other policy instruments, in pursuing these goals. Furthermore, there is a gap between the problem-oriented strategic analysis at the policy level and actual aid spending, which has largely followed patterns established before the Arab uprisings. The paper illustrates the practice level with data on German aid in the MENA since 2009, focusing on country and sector allocations, and aid disbursements through bilateral and multilateral channels and in technical and financial cooperation. The main factor driving aid increases to the MENA has been the public reaction to the refugee crisis, especially since 2015. Most additional spending has been concentrated in just two areas: humanitarian aid in response to the Syrian civil war; and renewable energy generation in Morocco.

The paper's fourth section discusses the implications of continuity and change at the policy and practice levels for the two propositions suggested by the HI framework and the aid effectiveness literature. Concrete measures addressing the "root causes" of forced migration have unsurprisingly been subsumed by attention to easing the plight of displaced people. While there is little evidence of purposeful securitisation of aid, stability has been privileged over support for unpredictable political change. Measures to support governance have mostly focussed on specific sectors rather than on democracy support, and these have not been well coordinated among the various German agencies. The paper concludes with some thoughts on Germany's contributions to stability and development in the post-2011 MENA region on the basis of these findings. A German whole-of-government strategy, based on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would balance Germany's interests with the MENA region's development priorities. This could help iron out the most problematic incoherencies at the policy level, while providing clearer guidelines to the practice level.

2 Framing strategy in complex decision-making systems

The importance of strategy in development cooperation has been debated among advocates of ex ante planning and advocates of ex post monitoring and adaptation (Andrews, 2013). The former approach stresses that uncertainty and divergent interests can result in strategic ambiguity (Denis, Dompierre, Langley, & Rouleau, 2011). Although actors in many policy fields conceptualise, write down and sometimes publish their strategic objectives, many prefer the ambiguity of leaving key points undefined, either because they themselves are unclear about them or because they are wary of being held to their promises. The latter approach recognises that development interventions are inevitably complex and that many eventualities cannot be planned for (Hummelbrunner & Jones, 2013). Cognitive deficits in strategy have been conceptualised as "networks of indecision" in which participating actors have a common project, but do not agree about what it really involves. Even for those with a clear idea of what they are doing, a common approach is to define strategic objectives and the steps to be taken

towards their achievement in highly vague terms. When strategy documents exist, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the objectives outlined within are real or not, especially where a strategy is part of a bargaining or negotiation process (Dür & Mateo, 2010).

The broad HI literature provides a theoretical basis for framing analyses of strategy in aid and development policy. Institutionalists usually conceptualise institutions as complexes of rules and actors that define, enact and even constitute political and social processes (Fioretos, 2011). The primary goal of historical institutionalists is to explain the gap between social changes and institutional changes – such as the Arab uprisings themselves and their secondary impacts on European politics, and the German aid programme’s response to these events. HI focuses on how the underlying causes of social change are interpreted, debated, reflected in preferences and ultimately translated into policy (Capoccia, 2016). These factors influencing change can be either endogenous or exogenous to a society and its institutions.

The macro-level strand of the HI literature explores perspectives that focus on how competing societal beliefs shape institutional rules, systems and organisations, where change originates from the contest between competing logics (Thelen, 1999). One of the key features of aid agencies is that they work across the “social space” divide. They are supposed to respond to social change in another country, but decisions are taken by actors based in the home society (Martens, 2005). From this perspective, a central theoretical puzzle is how exogenous shocks, like the Arab uprisings and their aftermath, influence complex bureaucratic decision-making systems. The impact of shocks can be indirect in response to the diffusion of the shocks’ impacts in broader political debates (Schmidt, 2010), or through direct impacts such as when decision-making coalitions shift, or as an outcome of successful policy entrepreneurship, where the external shock creates a window of opportunity (Powell & Bromley, 2015).

At the micro-level, much HI attention has been devoted to explaining why institutions are “sticky” and why change tends to happen slowly and in path-dependent ways, even in the face of external shocks (Capoccia, 2016). One strand of the literature focuses on the micro-foundations of institutional processes, especially the relationships between individuals and institutions (Powell & Bromley, 2015). HI shares the rational choice notion that actors calculate their options based on their understanding of their preferences and their perceptions of opportunity. Incumbents that wish to protect their position and perceive a threat from change have strong incentives to try to resist it. Institutional culture (particularly in established bureaucratic institutions) can stymie change processes. Deeply embedded preferences and policies can outlive the conditions that led to them being developed and promoted (Capoccia, 2016). A further important insight that emerges from this work is that, while institutional decision-making structures and the actors within them are capable of agency, they are not necessarily capable of acting rationally, in the sense of setting clear strategic goals and working coherently towards them (Hanrieder, 2014).

The HI focus on macro-level socio-cultural factors and micro-level processes helps frame the exogenous influences and domestic manoeuvring that lie behind continuity and change in Germany’s MENA aid programme. Although the aid effectiveness literature is not usually associated with HI, its concern with effective decision-making, policy coherence, and the impact of humanitarian and development aid has clear parallels with institutionalist theories. From an institutionalist perspective, development cooperation is always uncertain, difficult and complex (Page, 2008). Furthermore, since aid is both an expression of

solidarity and a tool of foreign policy, there is an essential tension at the heart of the aid business (Carothers & de Gramont, 2013). There are usually no simple explanations for why decisions are made, while the success or failure of policy frameworks, programmes and even individual projects is difficult to measure and judge objectively (Arkesteijn, van Mierlo, & Leeuwis, 2015).

Two analytical narratives from the aid effectiveness literature on policy coherence provide plausible explanations for this: a narrative on fragmentation, and a narrative on securitisation.

2.1 Fragmentation

“Fragmentation” in political science refers to the multiplication and atomisation of actors in decision-making processes. The literature on the fragmentation of aid explores the costs and benefits associated with measures to improve coherence, and the impact of aid fragmentation on development outcomes (Klingebiel, Mahn, & Negre, 2016). Fragmentation is usually understood to refer to the proliferation of donors engaged in a particular partner country or cooperation sector, and/or the engagement of a single donor across a wide range of partners and sectors (Easterly & Pfutze, 2008). Although there is little hard evidence that fragmentation actually undermines effectiveness (Brown & Swiss, 2013), there has long been widespread agreement that it raises transaction costs and produces detrimental outcomes for developing countries. These include the proliferation of small and uncoordinated projects in a particular country or sector, or donors whose competing demands for access and influence use up partner country capacity and divert attention from addressing challenges in their own countries (Roodman, 2006).

Perhaps the most important factors contributing to fragmentation are political. The aid effectiveness literature posits that development policy is usually driven by donor rather than recipient interests (Carothers & de Gramont, 2013). Aid is a political instrument, particularly in a strategically important geographical region like the MENA, where in addition to development and humanitarian aid, non-ODA “hard aid” provided by the US military to Egypt and Israel plays a prominent role (Myers, 2015). This implies that donor strategies – whether open or implicit – tend to further their own interests rather than solidarity with poor people, with the implication that the problems faced by aid recipients are a lower priority. Several strands of research certainly support this view. As discussed below, the growing literature on securitisation posits that the main purpose of aid is to reduce threats to the donor country. Research on “tied aid” provides numerous accounts and explanations for aid spending that amounts to subsidies for donor country investors, exporters and industries (Carbone, 2014; Hühne, Meyer, & Nunnenkamp, 2014). Critical scholarship has pointed out that Western countries have used development aid as a way of maintaining post-colonial dominance (MacGinty, 2010).

If only it were that simple. More often than not, aid does not further nefarious donor-country security or economic interests at the expense of the world’s poor. Decision-making processes around aid allocation and spending often involve a large number of institutional, political and even individual actors, and rarely produce clear strategies (Dietrich, 2013). Sometimes, domestic political or even bureaucratic factors that have very little to do with developing countries determine how aid is spent. Aid is often allocated and programmed without a clear focus aimed at problem-solving, but rather in line with how donors define

development needs (in the best case) or with a focus on strategic goals that are only vaguely linked to socio-economic development deficits. Furthermore, well-meaning aid interventions can be defeated by misunderstandings or by the sheer complexity of the social, political and economic environments where they take place (Andrews, 2013). Coherence may be entirely unrealistic, given the intense complexity of any development engagement, especially in regional and national contexts where violent conflict and state fragility must be contended with.

These complex challenges are not always insurmountable, and even if they are, this may not necessarily cause suboptimal outcomes. The aid effectiveness literature also addresses instances where aid has been used coherently and effectively for development and humanitarian ends, when the circumstances have been favourable and, crucially, the strategy on both donor and recipient side has been adequate (Ramalingam, 2013). Indeed, although the humanitarian/development nexus has widely been considered to pose major challenges for donors, not least due to the different legal frameworks governing the two policy areas, there are examples, including in the MENA, of successful strategies for addressing the impact of longer-term humanitarian crises on communities and individuals (Zetter, 2014). Other studies have shown that even where interventions are considered “fragmented” due to an absence of strategy, this is not necessarily a problem for partner countries, and that a number of other factors, such as bureaucratic quality, administrative capacity and the poverty level of recipient countries are just as important as fragmentation on the donor side (Gehring, Michaelowa, Dreher, & Spörri, 2015). Aid is not normally about regime change, but rather about supporting or incentivising incremental reforms that would not have taken place without aid. This implies that aid sometimes strengthens a regime or maintains the status quo rather than being an agent of change.

2.2 Securitisation

Securitisation narratives debate a major source of the gaps between rhetoric and reality, policy and practice, and coherence and incoherence in development cooperation, especially in fragile and conflict-affected countries and regions. Securitisation theory emerged as a way of explaining the processes through which political actors add a security dimension to policy areas that, at their core, are unrelated to questions of threat and protection, such as migration or development cooperation (Balzacq, Léonard, & Ruzicka, 2016). The literature on the securitisation of aid discusses the extent to which donors have used ODA to nullify perceived security threats from developing countries and regions (Brown & Grävingholt, 2016). Even where there is no direct threat to Western countries, there are doubts about the political commitment of many Western donors to increasing the coherence of security policy with sustainable development objectives, given that the policy constituencies for security tend to be politically more influential than those for development cooperation (Furness & Gänzle, 2016).

The securitisation perspective is closely linked to debates about legitimacy in development cooperation, because it questions donors’ motivations and the coercion of societies into cooperation that benefit Western security interests rather than socio-economic development, often in collusion with developing country governments (Fisher & Anderson, 2015). Critical perspectives on the security-development nexus consider the liberal development community’s focus on state fragility as perpetuating (or at least legitimising) post-colonial

dominance (Duffield, 2010). In recent years, policy discourses in the EU especially have increasingly stressed “resilience” as a guiding principle for development cooperation in conflict-affected regions. This perspective has been critiqued both for its meaninglessness (nobody could be against resilience, even though it is not clear what exactly is meant by it) as well as its potential to be used to justify short-term measures that prioritise repressive law and order responses to perceived terrorist threats (Chandler, 2015; Juncos, 2016).

The securitisation narrative raises the long-standing dilemma of European engagement in the MENA, between supporting stability based on cooperation with authoritarian regimes, and risking long-term investments in support of democratic change. Democracy in the Arab world has long been associated with the risk of Islamist fundamentalist violence in the minds of some European policymakers, especially since 11 September 2001. Arab elites have exploited European fears that popular uprisings in the MENA region may spill over into uncontrolled migration and terrorist violence in Europe (Youngs, 2014). Western donors have duly been guilty of spending money on protecting themselves against perceived threats, rather than on the basics of development in the MENA region (Barakat, 2016). Some observers have argued further that this fear of insecurity has led international actors into policies that do not serve their best interests, but rather their obsessions in the MENA region, especially with the Islamic State in the Levant and in Libya (Harling & Simon, 2015).

In Germany, the Arab uprisings were initially greeted with enthusiasm. It did not take long before the dilemma between supporting peoples’ aspirations and protecting against security threats produced a series of foreign policy crises, starting with Germany’s 2011 abstention from the UN resolution on intervention in Libya (Berenskoetter, 2011). The sense that the MENA’s problems are impacting on Germany itself has deepened to the extent that the German government’s open-border response to the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis had major domestic political fallout in the rise of nationalist political parties. And yet, in spite of these crises, the upheaval in the MENA region has not been explicitly framed as a threat by the German government, despite this view being widely promulgated in media coverage and public fears, rational or otherwise (Smale, 2016).

3 Continuity and change in Germany’s MENA aid policy and practice since 2011

3.1 The policy dimension

Germany’s approach to the MENA has traditionally been as a “payer”, rather than a “player” – at least compared with actors that have tried to change the political balance of power in the region, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France. Although Germany has not historically been a geopolitical power-broker in the MENA region, it has maintained a prominent diplomatic, economic and development presence for several decades (Perthes, 2002a). Commercial interests have at times influenced German government policies towards the region (Müller, 2011; Perthes, 2002b). Germany’s bilateral engagement has focussed mostly on supporting political stability and promoting economic cooperation, with active engagement from civil society groups and the German political party foundations. Moreover, Germany has taken a key role in steering EU policy initiatives and programmes towards the “southern neighbourhood”, and has supported multilateral processes, both at

the level of the United Nations and in “club governance” formats such as the G8 and G20 (Behr, 2008). There is, however, no overarching whole-of-government strategy that publicly sets out Germany’s strategic goals in the MENA region, and the role of aid along with other policy instruments in achieving these objectives.

This largely pragmatic, risk-averse approach came under pressure in the wake of the 2011 uprisings. German MENA aid policy since 2011 has been faced by a new situation, albeit one caused by an old problem. As several UN Arab AHDRs have pointed out, addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by Arab states – including the demographic challenges of growing youth populations, microeconomic challenges related to consumer prices, macroeconomic challenges related to hydrocarbon dependency, and poverty and rising inequality – requires resolving their political problems, but socio-economic challenges contribute to political malaise (UNDP, 2011). This fundamental dilemma was sharpened by justice challenges related to authoritarian repression, which weakened the legitimacy of many Arab states. Many observers agree that, although these factors drove the Arab uprisings, they were largely ignored by Western donors before 2011, even by actors such as Germany which promoted the regionally “owned” analysis of the AHDRs. Since the Arab uprisings, humanitarian challenges related to conflict and displacement have made the development-authoritarian politics dilemma even more intractable (Costello, Jenkins, & Aly, 2015; Heydemann, 2015).

An examination of Germany’s MENA aid policy framework indicates that there is indeed a gap between social change and institutional change. German aid policy for the MENA region is set out in the BMZ’s concept paper from 2008 – published three years before the Arab uprisings but elaborated and drafted even earlier. Although this paper has been overtaken by events and by subsequent strategic reflections resulting in an internal strategy paper, it is still in the public domain. It represents, therefore, the “starting point” for the evolution of Germany’s MENA aid strategy after the Arab uprisings. The paper – entitled “Principles, focus and perspectives of German development policy with the Middle East and North Africa region” – starts by stating that MENA countries need to understand the sources of their development problems, and face their political and economic consequences. It notes that Germany’s credibility will be measured by its contributions to the resolution of regional conflicts, especially between the Palestinians and Israel. Development aid is seen as an important instrument for engaging in dialogue and cooperation, including that on regional peace and security. Nevertheless, the paper also points out that, although the socio-economic development of individual countries is the main priority, global and European interests are also important, specifically: security, migration, and energy supplies. The paper does not go into possible conflicts between these two sets of priorities, but rather focuses on three core areas for cooperation where Germany is an international leader: water, renewable energy, and vocational training (BMZ [Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung], 2008).

The 2008 concept paper has a section on the development challenges in the MENA region, which references the AHDRs. It candidly points out that authoritarian, patriarchal rentier states are not ready to cooperate economically and politically, which limits investment, productivity and development potential. Further, the dangers of increasing poverty, societal instability, political suppression and demographic change are stressed, and the paper warns that security and migration problems are likely to emerge. There is a prominent section on increasing the capacity of MENA countries for reform, which stresses principles but does

not go into details on anything other than capacity-building in specific administrative sectors, such as water management. The needs for economic diversification away from oil and the closer integration of the MENA region into the global economy are also raised, with emphasis on strengthening the investment climate and the private sector (BMZ, 2008). The ways in which the three cooperation areas are expected to contribute to address the problems outlined in the AHDRs are not made clear, leaving the impression that factors other than the problem analysis led to the selection of these sectors.

The BMZ's 2008 MENA concept paper has not been updated or replaced on the ministry's website, and there has been no public announcement of a new regional aid policy framework in response to the changes in the Arab world since 2011. Nevertheless, the uprisings and their aftermath prompted the ministry to undertake a strategic reflection process resulting in an internal position paper circulated in August 2014. This paper, which became the de facto strategy paper for the aid programme, starts by stressing the geo-strategic importance of the MENA region for Germany and Europe, because of its location and its energy wealth. Like the 2008 concept, the paper included a clear problem analysis in its central argument, noting that the region's authoritarian regimes have exploited energy resources in ways that enabled them to maintain their hold on power, and that it was peoples' dissatisfaction with their socio-economic and political situation that prompted them to call for bread, freedom and social justice in the spring of 2011. The paper blamed the decayed social contract between Arab regimes and citizens, who gave away rights to speak out in exchange for subsidised fuel and food, free healthcare, cheap rent and government jobs, for the Arab uprisings. It affirmed that Germany and the EU share the interests of the people of the MENA in stability, prosperity and democracy, without which more people will try to flee to Europe. The paper also placed Germany's development cooperation in the context of EU efforts to reform its Neighbourhood Policy, indicating that new approaches to the MENA region were necessary (BMZ, 2014a).

The 2014 paper did not, however, herald fundamental changes in Germany's MENA aid programme. The most significant departure from the 2008 paper was the elevation of "governance and education" as a focal issue for German development cooperation in the MENA region. Democracy, political participation, justice, transparency in the public authorities, and gender equality were all highlighted as key issues. The 2014 position paper also promised to focus on four specific problems: the potentially explosive problem of youth unemployment; economic instability; the democratic deficit; and stability in crisis countries, especially with regard to the humanitarian crisis in Syria (BMZ, 2014a). These policy changes were given concrete form in the BMZ's 2014 launch of a "Special Initiative for Stabilisation and Development in North Africa and the Middle East". This EUR 100 million budget line promised to expand on and strengthen the core areas of cooperation and speed up Germany's response to change and challenges, especially youth unemployment, economic stabilisation (particularly in rural areas), democracy (especially through civil society engagement) and the stability of Syria's neighbours (BMZ, 2014b). The three core areas for cooperation from 2008 were maintained, alongside governance and education, again with little explanation provided as to exactly how these sectors address the problems clearly identified at the beginning of the paper.

Beyond the aid programme itself, other key policy documents set strategic guidelines for Germany's engagements in the region. From 2011 to 2012 the foreign, development and defence ministries undertook a reflection process based on the experience of Germany's

engagement in Afghanistan which was driven by a whole-of-government strategy document from 2010. This reflection resulted in a policy commitment to “networked approaches” (*vernetzte Ansätze*) to interventions, linking development, humanitarian and foreign policy with civilian actors and the military. Although the document did not make specific reference to the MENA region, it promised that the Federal Government would improve its intra-governmental strategy development through the development and regular update of strategic documents, coordinated among the relevant ministries and establishing measurable criteria where possible to ensure strategic continuity and coherence (Bundesregierung, 2016, p. 51). More recently, the German government published a series of “guidelines” (*Leitlinien*) on crisis prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding in June 2017, which referred to the “clay feet” upon which the MENA region’s authoritarian governments stand, and proposed long-term, multifaceted engagements to help resolve the challenges of inequality, corruption and weak statehood. The guidelines promised above all to make the commitment of the Federal Government in crises and conflicts a joint ministerial task requiring contributions from justice, education, environment, health, social, immigration, cultural, economic, nutrition, equality and trade policies as well as development and humanitarian aid (Bundesregierung, 2017, p. 24). These commitments have subsequently been interpreted in decision-making circles as crisis-response principles that should be upheld, and have been repeatedly referred to both publicly and behind closed doors by senior BMZ officials and political figures.

Changes in emphasis in the MENA aid programme after the 2013 Federal Election and in response to the refugee crises caused by the Syrian and Libyan civil wars touched on some sensitivities due to the division of labour in the German system. Reflections on the coordination of humanitarian aid, which is formally the responsibility of the German Federal Foreign Office (AA), and development aid, formally the responsibility of the BMZ, have taken place on a number of levels in the decision-making system (AA [Auswärtiges Amt] & BMZ, 2013). Cross-ministerial strategic thinking has resulted in the realisation that the humanitarian/development gap must be bridged at least operationally in spite of the contradictory political mandates. Systematic discussions involving a wide range of stakeholders and experts have taken place to develop “resilience” initiatives that make use of humanitarian and development aid instruments and approaches. This has been emphasised strongly by the German government, especially in the context of the Middle East’s long-term humanitarian crises through the Berlin Communiqué of the Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation (AA, 2014). The outcome was the 2013 launch of “bridging assistance” (*Übergangshilfe*) targeted towards improving the “resilience” of people and communities affected by conflict and natural disasters, thus bridging the operational gap between relief and development instruments (BMZ, 2013). This instrument has subsequently been used to assist Syrian refugees in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, as well as outside the MENA region.

The strategic reflections in the BMZ and between the BMZ and other ministries since 2014 have not resulted in anything resembling a whole-of-government strategy for the MENA region. This appears to support the HI expectation that strategy development is very difficult in such a complex decision-making system. This does not mean that there is no aid strategy per se; nor does it mean that the aid programme is de-linked from other German government initiatives in the MENA. Indeed, the *vernetzte Ansätze*, *Leitlinien*, and humanitarian-development nexus policy processes indicate the preparedness to develop whole-of-government strategies when political circumstances allow. Nevertheless, the BMZ’s strategic

policy has been limited by the lack of an overall German government position on the MENA region. This has not only hindered the articulation of a MENA aid strategy that clearly links the problem analysis based on the AHDRs with the core areas of cooperation; as discussed in Section 4 below, the absence of a German policy for the region has also left coordination on aid programmes and projects between the AA and BMZ without a frame of reference.

3.2 The practice dimension

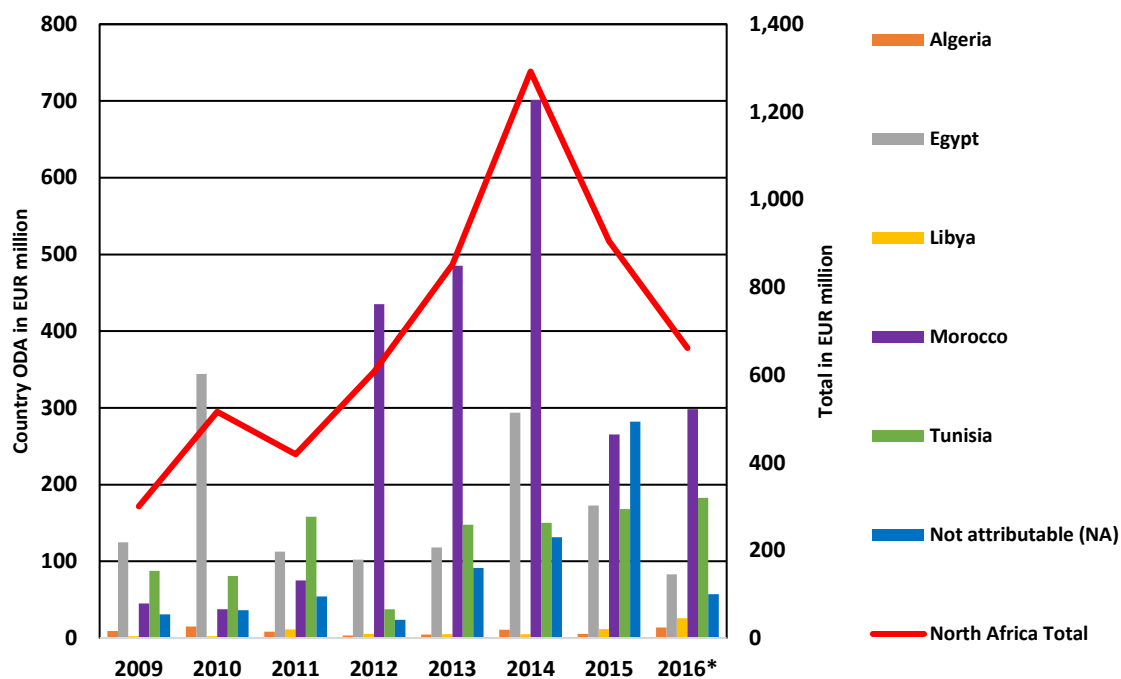
An analysis of Germany's practice-level activities illustrates this gap further. The latest BMZ data show that German aid to the MENA region more than doubled between 2009 and 2015, from around EUR 750 million to around EUR 1.8 billion. Another billion euros was added in 2016 following the 2015 refugee crisis. The rate of increase was slightly higher than for the German aid budget overall, which grew from around EUR 6.8 billion in 2009 to around EUR 15.9 billion in 2015.² Germany has become the second largest bilateral OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) donor in the MENA after the United States, as well as a major contributor to UN and EU regional programmes and other initiatives in response to conflict and upheaval. In 2016, Germany's MENA aid accounted for 16.7 per cent of its total ODA spending, which was the third highest of all OECD/DAC members after Italy and Greece, and equal with France (OECD/DAC [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Donor Assistance Committee] 2017).

Figure 1 shows that Germany has several large country programmes in the Middle East sub-region, in particular for Iraq and Palestine. German aid to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon has increased significantly in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian civil war. In North Africa, Egypt – traditionally the largest MENA recipient of German aid – was overtaken in 2015 by a sharp increase in aid to Morocco, which serves to distort the overall figures. Aid to Egypt increased during the country's brief experiment with democracy in 2013 before dropping back to similar levels as before the Arab uprisings. Aid to Tunisia more than doubled from around EUR 87 million in 2009 to nearly EUR 188 million in 2016.

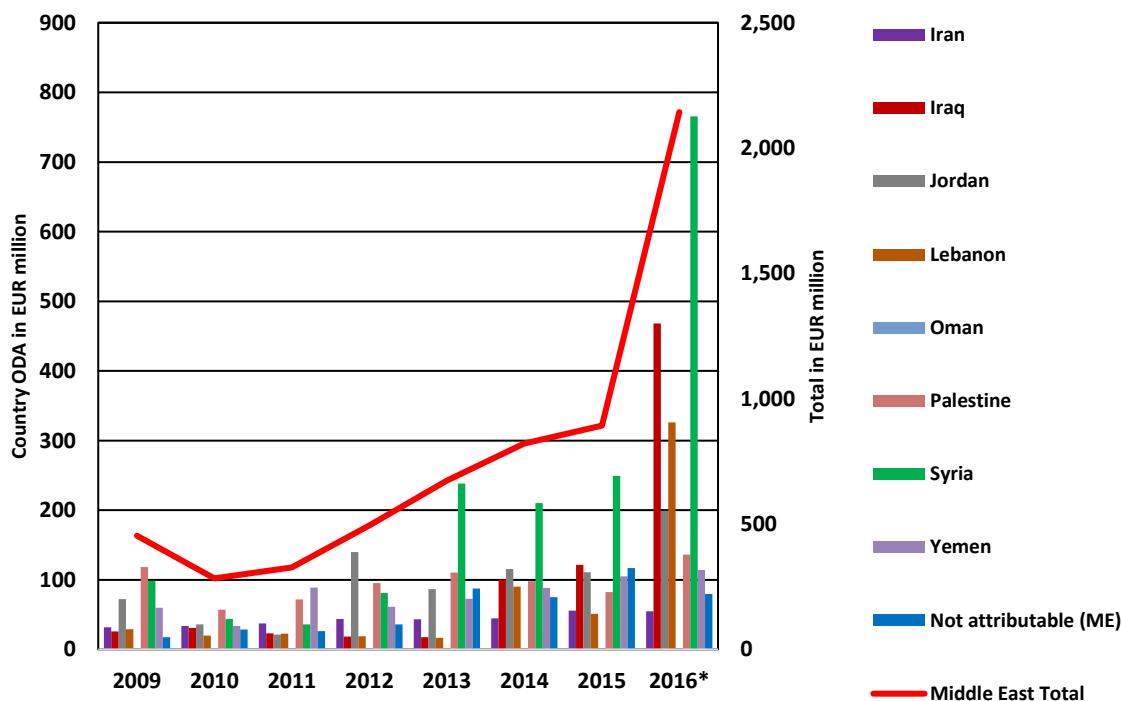
2 Of the EUR 15.9 billion in German aid commitments in 2015, around EUR 2.7 billion were allocated for spending on refugees in Germany, many of whom had fled conflicts in the MENA region, especially the Syrian civil war. In 2016 Germany's overall spending on development-related activities increased again by around 36 per cent in 2016 to more than EUR 22 billion, which is a faster increase than that for the MENA region, but most of this increase was for refugee spending inside Germany.

Figure 1: German bilateral ODA commitments to MENA countries, 2009-2016 (million Euros)

North Africa (NA)



Middle East (ME)

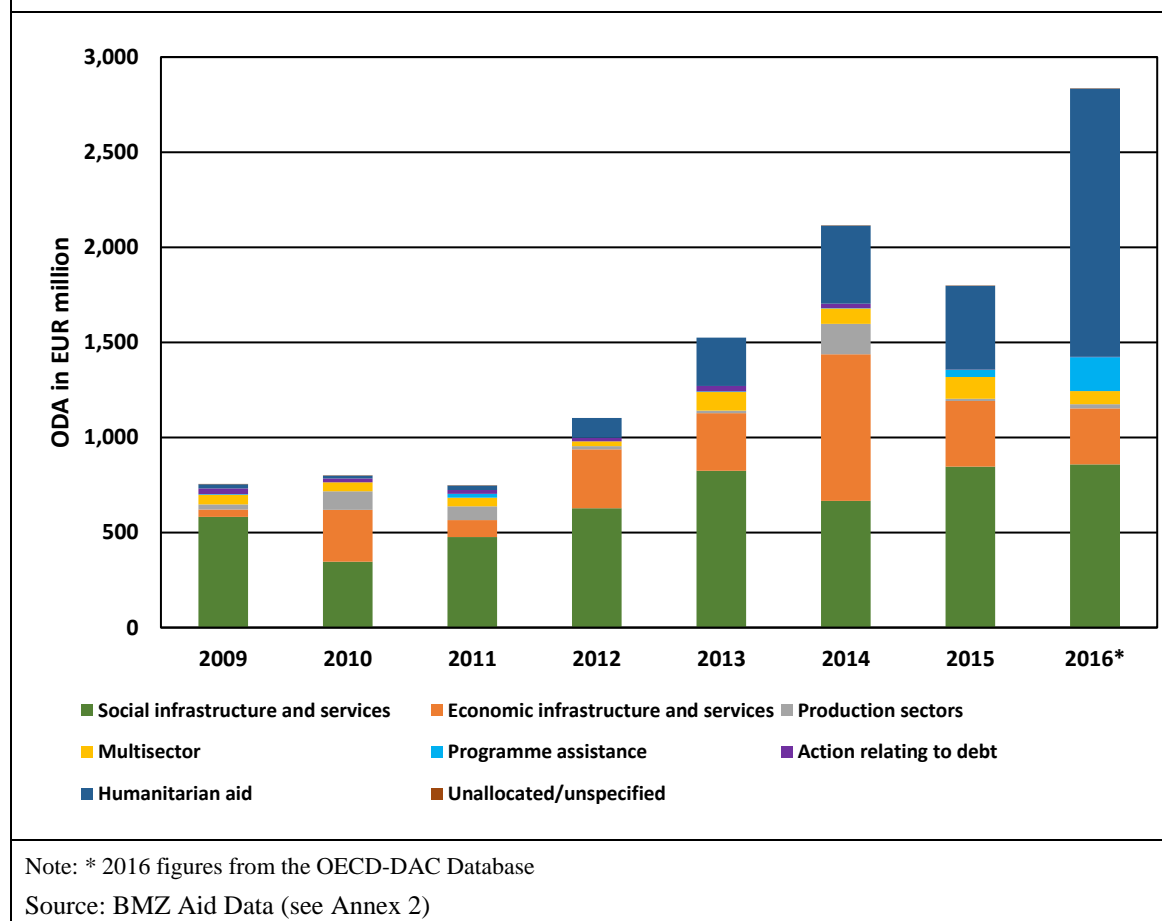


Note: *2016 figures from the OECD-DAC Database

Source: BMZ Aid Data (see Annex 1)

From a strategy perspective, the country breakdown does not reveal much about what drove the increases. Looking at what the aid was spent on can provide more information in this regard. At first glance, Figure 2 shows significant changes in the broad sector break-down for German ODA spending in the MENA region since 2009. Appearances can be deceiving. First, the real drivers of the increase have been humanitarian aid in the Middle East, and economic infrastructure in North Africa. This might indicate that there is an increasing focus on humanitarian and development priorities. However the fact that much of this is accounted for by ODA-eligible loans to Morocco for renewable energy production leaves an impression that Germany’s aid to the MENA region since 2011 has been driven by German interests as well. Social infrastructure and services, which includes health, water/sanitation, education and support for civil society, decreased proportionally but increased in real terms, from around EUR 582 million in 2009 to around EUR 857 million in 2016. This indicates that social infrastructure remains a priority, even if the biggest increases in the aid programme have been driven by other factors.

Figure 2: Bilateral German ODA commitments to the MENA region, 2009-2016: sector distribution (million Euros)



Second, while the BMZ’s sector breakdown does not reveal whether more aid has been spent on initiatives to support good governance and democracy in MENA countries, this does not necessarily imply that Germany’s policy-level emphasis on governance is mere rhetoric. The BMZ financed a “governance fund” from 2012 to 2016, which aimed at improving the effectiveness of the state and supporting the impetus for democratic reform. Multisector aid, which includes governance programmes, has remained at about 6 per cent of

the MENA aid programme, meaning that it has doubled in real terms. Whether this indicates a stronger governance focus is difficult to tell without breaking down the individual country programmes. In Tunisia, for example, multisector aid has mostly been spent on sector governance and capacity-building projects (OECD/DAC, 2017). These measures have often been attached as “governance components” to other projects financed by the BMZ in the regional priority areas of water, energy, environment, sustainable economic development and education. The core political questions around democratic transformation in the region have not been tackled directly by the BMZ, but rather by the AA through its “transformation partnerships” aimed at supporting constitutional and justice reform, human rights and civil society in several MENA countries (AA, 2016). These initiatives have not been closely coordinated with the BMZ’s sector governance initiatives despite their inclusion in the German government’s 2016 *Leitlinien* (Bundesregierung, 2017).

Figure 3: Bilateral and multilateral distribution of Germany’s MENA ODA disbursements, 2009-2015 (million Euros)

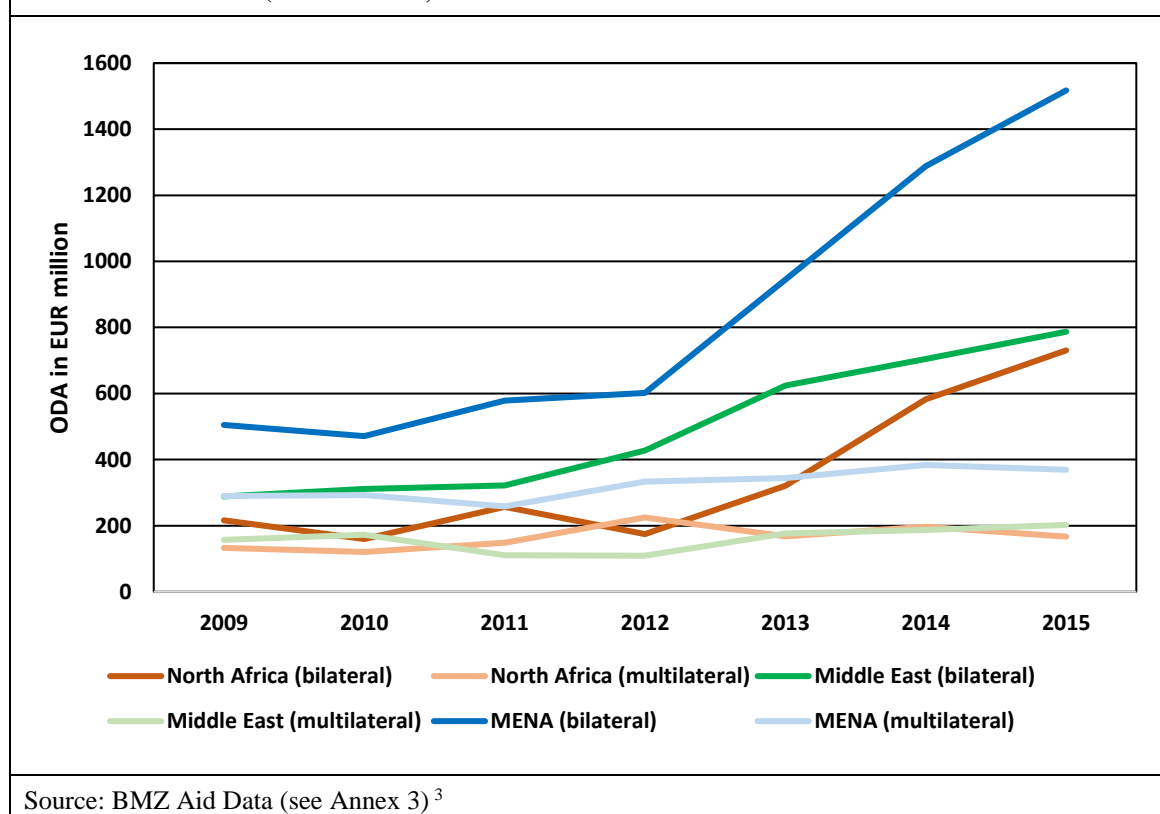


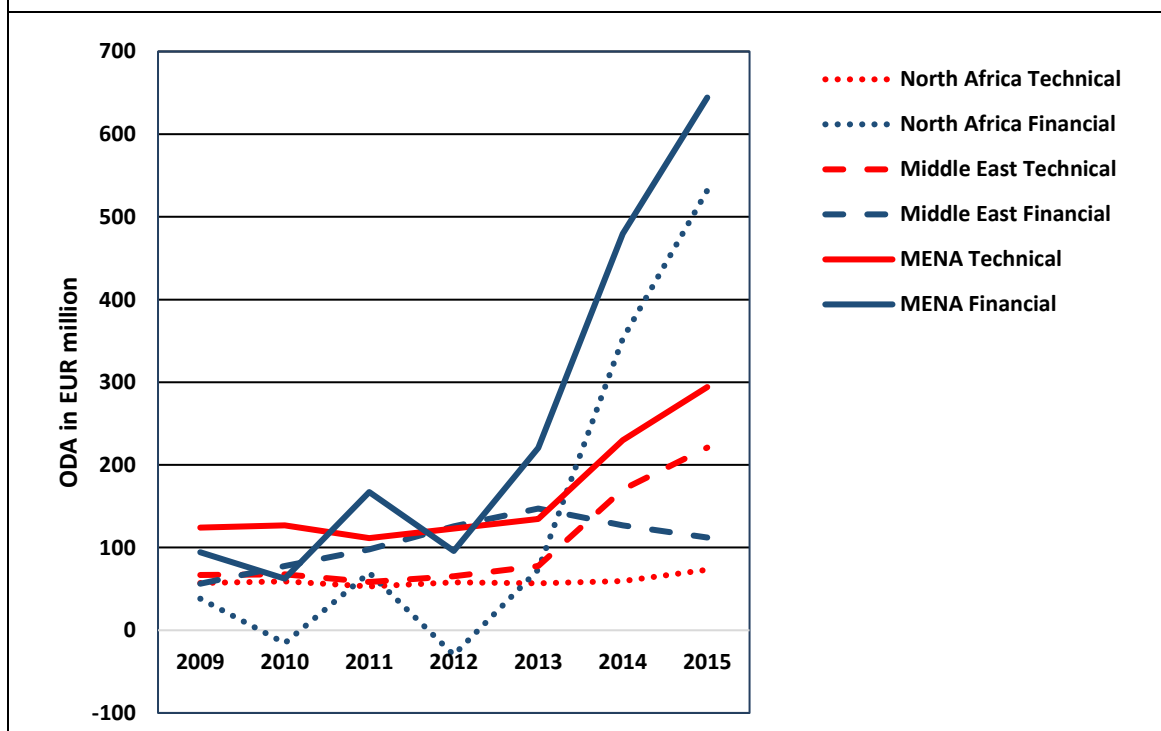
Figure 3 shows that the increases in German aid to the MENA have been mostly through bilateral, rather than multilateral, channels. Germany has taken a strong role in all of the main multilateral initiatives for the post-Arab Spring MENA region, particularly the UN-led 3RP initiative for promoting resilience in refugee populations, and the G7 Deauville Partnership to support Arab countries engaged in transitions toward “free, democratic and tolerant societies”. Germany has also supported innovations by other actors, such as through its contributions to the European Commission’s new trust funds for the Syrian refugee crisis and managing migration from Africa (Castillejo, 2016). These multilateral engagements

³ Whereas Figures 1 and 2 present ODA commitments for countries and sectors, Figures 3 and 4 have to present ODA disbursements because decisions about which channel to use are taken at the disbursement stage.

have, nevertheless, been dwarfed by the increases in bilateral aid. This not only reflects an increased willingness on the part of the German government to act in its own right in the MENA region but also reflects a vested interest in the German aid system to channel a large share of bilateral aid through Germany’s main aid implementation agencies, the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for technical cooperation, and the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) for financial cooperation (OECD/DAC, 2015)

Germany’s bilateral aid has been programmed across a wide range of areas, making the task of assembling a complete overview of the many initiatives and projects in financial and technical cooperation very difficult. As Figure 4 shows, some of the increases in ODA have not been new money but rather debt relief and soft loans, especially in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia (OECD/DAC, 2017). While some of these were later re-classified as aid grants, loan repayments from North Africa exceeded new loans in 2010 and 2012, leading to slightly negative totals for financial cooperation in those years. The most remarkable post-Arab uprisings change is the sharp increase in financial cooperation with North Africa since 2013, which – as also indicated in Figures 1 and 2 – is mostly accounted for by loans for renewable energy infrastructure in Morocco. Although these loans are ODA eligible, they will have to be repaid, presumably through profits from electricity sales. The financial cooperation figures have also been enhanced by the provision of direct budget support in some cases (BMZ, 2016). Since financial cooperation entails much higher budgets than technical cooperation, it is difficult to compare the two in order to assess how much “more” has been done since 2011 on specific types of activities. Spending on governance, for instance, while strategically significant, does not add as much to the aid figures as spending on a renewable energy programme in Morocco, or the massive humanitarian response to the Syrian civil war.

Figure 4: Financial and technical cooperation distribution of German bilateral MENA ODA disbursements 2009-2015 (million Euros)



Source: BMZ Aid Data (see Annex 4)

Figure 4 also indicates that Germany's technical cooperation has roughly doubled since the Arab Uprisings, with emphasis on the Middle East. Much of this increase is in the humanitarian sector. There have also been major efforts to develop new instruments for "bridging the gap" between humanitarian response and development cooperation, in recognition of the fact that the region's refugee crisis is likely to be long-term. Germany has developed "innovative instruments" such as a "cash for work" programme for refugees living in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, based on experiences with similar programmes in Afghanistan (Tharoor, 2016). German aid has also been spent on more traditional areas of cooperation, especially vocational training aimed at improving the skills of young people and women, microfinance, water supplies and waste collection (GIZ [Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit], 2017).

4 A fragmented or securitised strategy?

This section returns to the question posed in the introduction: Why has Germany seemingly been unable to produce a clear strategy for its MENA aid programme, given the political salience of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath in Germany? The HI framework developed in the paper's second section suggested two potential explanations for the picture that emerges from the analysis of the policy and practice levels in Section 3: first, that political differences and bureaucratic inertia in the German foreign policy-making system, in which the aid programme is embedded, have prevented the emergence of a clear aid strategy; and second, that the priorities that have been defined tend to favour German and European security interests rather than addressing the development and humanitarian problems of the region.

4.1 Fragmentation

The preceding discussion of the policy framework for Germany's MENA aid programme suggested that, in terms of strategic orientation, a gap exists between the problem analysis and the actual policy priorities for cooperation. The problem analyses in the 2008 and 2014 policy papers are based on the development priorities identified in the UN's AHDR series. The BMZ's regional policy papers discuss the implications of authoritarian, rentier regimes, of poverty, of demographic change and gender inequality for development in the MENA region. They stress the importance of focusing on specific areas of importance, such as migration or education. This represents an aid strategy focussed on economic growth, employment and poverty reduction – themes which have been revisited in the changing context of the region's crises with programmes that have targeted education, employment and subsistence for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. The launch of the special initiative for stability and development in the MENA region heralded better targeted aid and faster programming processes. Nevertheless, when the policy papers turn to what German aid will actually fund, the focus is on the three sectors where Germany has been a world leader: water, renewable energy and vocational training.

Similarly, on the political dimension, the analytical framing of the policy framework has evolved in response to the Arab uprisings, but the policy itself has not changed much. Differences in the 2008 and 2014 policy papers indicate awareness that the lack of

democratic governance across the MENA region is hindering development, and that this problem has deepened as the euphoria of 2011 dissipated. The language in the 2014 paper is much stronger on democracy, participation and transparency than in 2008. But, when the paper turns to concrete approaches to political challenges in the Arab world, it merely adds “governance and education” as a fourth sector, without a clear indication of how spending more aid on these aspects will support democratic transformation. Germany has been an open and, at times, vocal supporter of liberal democratic change and the underpinning of the private sector in the region, through its political foundations and respective funds. At the same time, the BMZ’s sector governance initiatives have skirted around the edges of political transformation. Meanwhile, as with other Western donors, Germany has retained a strong relationship with the region’s authoritarian governments. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from this is that, for Germany, democratic transformation in the MENA region is an aspiration, rather than a strategic objective supported by a plan.

Unsurprisingly, the gap between analysis and policy is repeated in aid practice. The above analysis of the practice level does not delve deeply into country-level operations, where there are many national and local projects and training programmes financed by German aid. Most of these are valuable in themselves, and there are interactions between them, but they do not add up to a clear and comprehensive strategy that addresses the MENA region’s core development priorities in the wake of the Arab uprisings. One example that illustrates this point is the case of Tunisia, where Germany spent USD 76 million in the social infrastructure and services sector in 2015.⁴ This aid was spread across 89 projects, ranging from integrated rural water resources management (USD 1.82 million) to “education for democratisation” (USD 1,300) to “sewage sludge disposal” (a USD 2.8 million loan). This aid was distributed by several agencies, including the BMZ, the AA, the German interior ministry (for several police and border control training programmes), the German health, environment and education ministries, the states of North Rhine-Westphalia (which financed the USD 1,300 democratisation project) and Hamburg, and the KfW which distributed several ODA-eligible loans. The aid for the social infrastructure and services portfolio in Tunisia also includes USD 23 million to fund Tunisian citizens studying at higher education institutions in Germany (OECD/DAC, 2017).

This seemingly random pattern, which is repeated in other sectors and recipient countries across the region, has started to concern officials in the BMZ and other ministries. There is recognition that measures need to be taken to reduce country-level fragmentation. In Morocco, for example, while the vast majority of Germany’s aid has been provided in ODA-eligible loans in the renewable energy and water sectors, at the level of project grants there is a similar picture as in Tunisia. In the social infrastructure and services sector, the 71 projects reported to the OECD in 2015 range from measures to strengthen the management of rural drinking water supplies, to improving community-level reception facilities for returning migrants, to cooperation with foreign research institutions, to police training, to the promotion of sports relations (OECD-DAC, 2017). The BMZ, KfW and GIZ have undertaken to explore ways to reduce fragmentation through closer alignment of technical cooperation measures with the large financial cooperation initiatives in Morocco. These measures are, nevertheless, unlikely to be able to reduce fragmentation significantly, since – as in Tunisia – many grant projects are financed and monitored by the AA, the German

4 OECD-DAC aid figures are reported in United States dollars.

Parliament, the environment and education ministries, and the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Hesse and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The HI framework leads us to expect path dependencies, since these actors have their own interests (including a natural desire for autonomy) and systems (which are resistant to change). There are numerous examples of path dependence in the German MENA aid programme, evident both at the policy level in the conservative evolution of the policy framework, and in practice. Political and bureaucratic actors within Germany's aid system have tried to understand and address development problems and crisis-related challenges in the region. They have engaged in intense inter-agency consultations on certain issues, and have designed approaches that reflect this thinking. There have been some notable successes: Germany's humanitarian aid to the MENA region has increased substantially and has been complemented by innovative measures, such as the "cash for work" programme, to bridge the gap between short-term humanitarian and longer-term development assistance (BMZ, 2017a). Nevertheless, aside from Minister Müller's forays into the foreign ministry's humanitarian mandate, the BMZ has largely stayed within its core area of economic cooperation and development. Coordination between the BMZ and the AA has been more difficult on issues where both ministries have mandates, where the division of labour is not formally defined, and where both have been sensitive about their autonomy. One example is the lack of coordination between the BMZ's sector governance programmes and the AA's Transformation Partnerships. The latter initiative, which aims to promote democratic transformation through civil society support, human rights, constitution and justice policy, public administration reform, gender equality, media and scholarships, has amounted to EUR 260 million since 2012 (AA, 2016). As the Transformation Partnerships address many of the core questions of democratic change in the Arab world, their complementarity with the BMZ's sector governance measures appears clear but the two ministries have been reluctant to explore this.

What has caused this fragmentation in the German aid programme? The HI lens focuses attention on the complexity of the German aid system and the plurality of interests that influence it. The aid effectiveness literature leads us to expect that bureaucratic decision-making systems incorporating a multitude of actors and processes are a major driver of fragmentation. The analysis of the practice dimension above indicates that, while a causal relationship is difficult to identify, a correlation certainly exists. The German aid system, and the broader foreign policymaking system in which it is embedded, is not a unitary actor, but rather a complex political-institutional framework, which is prone to fragmentation. A non-exhaustive list of actors that influence decision-making includes the political parties in the German Parliament; executive actors including the development minister, the Federal chancellor and the foreign minister, and also the ministers for the economy, environment and the interior. With regard to the MENA region, in addition to the BMZ and the AA at least three other ministries have mandates that strongly influence the aid programme – the Federal Chancellery (BKAmt), the economics ministry (BMW), and the interior ministry (BMI). The environment ministry (BMUB) also has a role in the energy and water sectors, while the defence ministry (BMVg) is involved in decisions related to German engagement in Northern Iraq as well as broader debates about security in the region. The German foreign intelligence service (BND) provides information and analysis in support of decision-making processes. The German agencies responsible for implementing programmes in developing countries, GIZ and KfW, also influence decision-making at the policy level as well as "on the ground". Other important actors with varying degrees of influence include the German

political party foundations; non-governmental actors including major charities like Caritas, Brot für die Welt, and Welt Hunger Hilfe; and private sector actors with investments in developing countries.

It would be more likely for this highly complex decision-making system to be able to focus and strategize if it were directed by a whole-of-government structure. However, not only would this be a difficult process to realise in this complex decision-making system where ministries are used to autonomy, but it would also risk compromising on aid effectiveness principles and prioritise German interests, including security interests, ahead of development priorities in instances where these clash.

4.2 Securitisation

While the perception that instability in the MENA poses a threat to Germany has been an indirect factor in shaping the strategic orientation of the German aid programme in the region, securitisation has only had an indirect impact on policy and practice. While there has been a tendency towards risk-averse policymaking favouring stability, there is little evidence that German aid has been spent with the explicit purpose of reducing specific security threats to Germany itself. Rather, there is evidence that a broad culture of euphoria and solidarity with the region's peoples led to rhetorical support for democratic change and higher aid volumes from 2011 onwards, followed by a change to a more pragmatic focus on security, stability and a crisis/humanitarian response as the Arab uprisings turned sour with the wars in Syria and Libya and the return to authoritarian rule in Egypt. The ambiguity inherent in this position has, nevertheless, led to some coherence problems resulting from a certain unwillingness to face inevitable trade-offs between security, stability and development objectives.

The general tendency towards securitised narratives for explaining and understanding the Arab uprisings (Fakhoury, 2016; Malmvig, 2014) has indirectly influenced German aid policy in other ways as well, leading to incoherencies with other policies. The preference for stability over political upheaval and (real or imagined) threats of *jihadi* violence and uncontrolled refugee flows has shaped policy positions on key countries where there are important development cooperation programmes. Germany has, for instance, been supportive of Egyptian President Al-Sisi's plans to embark on a massive infrastructure building programme while German politicians, including Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, have been reticent in their criticism of increasing repression in Egypt (Marx, 2015). The impact of the refugee crisis on perceptions of domestic security has influenced domestic policy in other areas, for example Germany's plans to re-designate Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco as "safe countries of origin" to which failed asylum seekers could be returned following assaults on women in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015 (Brady, 2016). Perhaps the most obvious example of incoherence between security and development policy has arisen around the issue of German arms exports to Saudi Arabia which have most likely been used in Yemen (Kausch, 2015). Indeed, Germany has not remained above the region's conflicts, as evident in its provision of weapons and other kinds of material support for Iraqi Kurds, and its mostly logistical engagement in the coalition war with the Islamic State (Wallace, 2015).

There is no question that the domestic political debate on refugees, which has strong securitised overtones, has had a major impact on the German MENA aid programme

(Bohnet, 2017). Securitised narratives have formed a backdrop for the parliament's increases to the aid budget. Increases in German aid have been publicly justified by assurances that the money will be spent on fighting the "root causes" of forced migration (CDU/CSU Fraktion, 2015; Cheney, 2017). There have been increases in support for programmes and projects for supporting returned migrants and for economic initiatives designed to increase the capacity of North African countries to absorb migrants from south of the Sahara, linked to the BMZ's proposals for a "Marshall Plan with Africa" (BMZ, 2017). Nevertheless, more extreme narratives, such as the supposed danger emanating from Islamic State terrorists posing as refugees, are not taken seriously in aid policymaking circles. In this context, the BMZ publicly contradicted the Ministry of the Interior and refused to tie aid to the cooperation of partner countries in the repatriation of illegal migrants (Ziedler, 2017).

Furthermore, the practice dimension of Germany's MENA aid programme indicates that references to security in the policy documents do not represent a purposeful securitisation of aid. The two main areas of ODA increases – humanitarian aid and aid for economic infrastructure – do not appear to have been driven primarily by security concerns. The substantial increases in German aid to the MENA region since 2011 have included allocations for refugees and their host communities in Syria's neighbours, aid which has not only addressed immediate humanitarian needs but which has also targeted longer-term issues such as education, water, efficient energy use, and even job creation, through initiatives like the Jordan Compact and the "cash for work" programme. German policymakers have intended that these longer-term initiatives provide refugees with reasons not to continue the journey to Europe, but also that they improve the lives of Syrians living in neighbouring countries. They are also partly intended as a stabilisation mechanism for the neighbouring countries themselves, and therefore have a security-related function, albeit one that is secondary to the humanitarian obligation.

Although Germany is far from being a neutral actor, its aid policy and practice has not been undermined by the kinds of legitimacy problems that are attributed to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, which have been directly engaged in the region's wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria (Heydemann, 2014). Germany is considered a legitimate partner by several governments as well as non-government actors in the MENA region. This is due to Germany's consistent humanitarian, legalist, and multilateral approach to the MENA, exemplified by the country's abstention from the 2011 UN Security Council Resolution 1973 authorising airstrikes on Libya and its non-participation in the 2003 Iraq invasion. Germany has acted as a broker between regional powers, for example in the Iran nuclear negotiations, and the unsuccessful mediation efforts to end the Syrian war (Steinmeier, 2016). Germany's reputation in the "Arab street" is also highly positive while the country was widely lauded by ordinary people in the region for opening its borders to refugees from Syria, even though its efforts pale in significance in relation to those of Syria's neighbours (Ostrand, 2015). Germany's legitimacy does, of course, require caveats. Its role in the MENA region has shifted from restraint to much more active engagement, including in crisis response and even military questions (Koenig, 2016). Moreover, specific measures targeting "migration management", conducted at the EU-level but with full German support, indicate that the risk of increasing securitisation in the future is high. One example of this is the provision of aid, training and technical support to increase the capacity of the Libyan coast guard, which has been accused of complicity in human rights abuses (UNSC [United Nations Security Council], 2017).

5 Conclusions

This paper has presented an analysis of the strategic thinking behind Germany's MENA aid programme, which has increased dramatically since the 2011 Arab Uprisings. The increases in aid have not been accompanied by a publicly available strategic framework for the aid programme itself, let alone a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to the region as such. This is puzzling, since the Arab uprisings have led to an epoch-defining set of events in the MENA region, which have, in turn, had major political, economic and social impacts on Germany itself. Prior to the Arab Uprisings, the de facto role of development aid in the MENA region had been to provide short-term stability to Arab states and to insulate them from their own weaknesses. In this sense, development aid represented a not insignificant pillar to the Arab social contract, where states provided people with an acceptable standard of living in return for quiescence on the core features of power and wealth distribution in their countries (Rougier, 2016). The AHDRs argued that this should change – a theme continued in the 2030 Agenda through the SDGs. Although Germany's response has been to more than double the size of its aid programme, the lion's share of this increased aid is concentrated in just two areas: the humanitarian response to the Syrian civil war; and ODA-eligible loans for renewable energy and other infrastructure projects in Morocco. The strategic reasoning behind this response is unclear, especially since Germany's aid strategy for the MENA has not been informed by a broader national strategy for engagement in the region.

The theoretical insights provided by HI scholarship help with understanding the macro- and micro-level dynamics of the German aid system. On a general level, there has clearly been a massive gap between social change (the Arab uprisings) and institutional change (the German aid programme). This gap can partly be explained by the institutional complexity of the German aid system itself, as well as the wider foreign policy decision-making system within which aid is embedded. The policy papers discussed above are based on a convincing problem-oriented analysis, which draws on the AHDRs. There is a gap to the sector focus which reflects the areas in which Germany has been working for decades. This gap increases further at the country-level into a myriad of large and small initiatives. Although most of these are justifiable individually, they do not appear to have been informed by a regional strategy for addressing the development challenges that contributed to the Arab uprisings, and which have become even more salient since 2011. The fact that these initiatives are managed by an array of federal and state-level agencies – with little discernible coordination – contributes to the impression of fragmentation and the absence of a common orientation. This indicates that there is a gap between the recognition that the region's upheaval is linked to development deficits common to many of the partner countries, and what bilateral aid has actually been spent on, as agreed with the partner governments. A fragmented decision-making structure has, not surprisingly, produced a fragmented aid programme.

This does not, of course, mean that Germany has no strategy. Some cornerstones can be discerned: The general European concerns about the potential negative externalities of unpredictable political change in the region have been reflected in the German government's overall approach to the post-Arab Spring MENA. These concerns have been reinforced to an extent by Germany's commercial interests. The large German investments in renewable energy in Morocco illustrate this general strategic orientation. It would, however, be inaccurate to argue that Germany has ignored the region's problems or has focused narrowly on advancing its own interests at the expense of Arab countries or their peoples. Germany

has taken on more responsibility in the MENA region since 2011, its contributions have increased and its influence has grown as a result. The large increases in Germany's humanitarian aid have been driven not only by a desire to limit migration but also by the obligation to assist threatened communities and individuals. This was exemplified by the remarkable *Willkommenskultur* that initially greeted the Syrian refugees who arrived in Germany in the autumn of 2015.

The big question for Germany's aid policymakers is whether a coordinated approach based on a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy is really worth working towards, or whether it would be better to "make the most" of incoherence because it means more autonomy and less likelihood that aid will be used for non-development purposes. The political factors that lie behind the MENA region's development deficits cannot be "fixed" from outside the region and certainly not by using aid only. A comprehensive approach from the German government to the MENA region, identifying strategic objectives and defining the role of the significant policy tools at its disposal, including its burgeoning aid programme, would certainly help enhance Germany's soft power to benefit the people and countries of the region. Such an approach must, nevertheless, be tempered by realistic expectations. As the AHDRs acknowledge, the MENA region's development challenges are deep, multifaceted and vary from country to country. Any strategy for assisting the countries of the region to address these challenges must set priorities, but must also be flexible enough to find compromises between conflicting goals and must, above all, be targeted towards patient progress over the long term.

Fortunately, a framework for just such an approach exists, both internationally and in the German decision-making system. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs offer a comprehensive set of guidelines for any government engaging with any developing region. The 2030 Agenda has been agreed at the highest levels of government and provides a set of objectives, not only for resolving development problems but also for structuring cooperation. Moreover, the 2030 Agenda is universal, with the implication that a strategic framework based explicitly on the SDGs requires "developed" and "developing" countries to work together; it also requires a donor country such as Germany to consider how its domestic and European policies are impacting on developing regions and countries. Achieving policy coherence in the SDG context is highly challenging, since the 17 Goals inevitably require prioritisation and complex trade-offs. Nevertheless, the most problematic instances of incoherence in Germany's MENA engagements could potentially be ironed out within the context of a regional strategy explicitly based on the 2030 Agenda. German arms sales to countries in the region, for example, would become much more difficult to justify. Perhaps even more importantly: current EU trade and migration regimes would require reforming in the context of a regional strategy based on the 2030 Agenda. While a German whole-of-government strategy would not automatically change the approaches of other EU member states or the EU institutions themselves, it would send a clear signal that the time for change has finally come. At the level of political decision-making, Germany's approach to the 2030 Agenda is coordinated from the BKAmT. An SDG-based MENA regional strategy would therefore have the Federal Chancellor's authority to focus the attention and priorities of the AA, BMI, BMWi and BMUB, as well as the BMZ. As historical institutionalists would no doubt point out, this would not reduce the complexity of Germany's decision-making system, but could help free it from bureaucratic inertia by introducing direction from the top of the political hierarchy.

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Annex

Annex 1: German ODA commitments to MENA countries 2009-2016 (million Euros)								
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
North Africa (NA)								
Total	300.38	516.00	419.07	607.12	851.78	1,292.11	905.13	661.20
Algeria	9.23	14.80	8.17	3.09	4.68	10.65	5.26	13.90
Egypt	124.90	344.09	112.55	102.00	118.16	293.53	172.81	83.11
Libya	2.58	2.66	11.03	5.47	4.91	4.93	11.81	26.00
Morocco	44.99	37.42	75.03	435.31	485.05	701.25	265.36	298.24
Tunisia	87.66	80.90	158.11	37.64	147.76	150.26	167.92	182.81
Not attributable (NA)	31.02	36.12	54.18	23.60	91.22	131.49	281.98	57.14
Middle East (ME)								
Total	453.59	283.45	327.21	494.44	672.97	821.68	892.44	2,143.44
Iran	31.91	33.48	37.36	43.71	43.26	44.63	55.47	54.67
Iraq	25.81	30.89	23.17	18.49	17.70	99.68	121.58	468.26
Jordan	72.30	36.11	21.33	139.89	86.55	115.66	111.01	199.02
Lebanon	28.97	19.69	22.63	19.07	16.48	90.17	51.18	325.99
Oman	0.46	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Palestine	118.07	56.87	71.76	95.13	110.38	97.93	82.26	136.07
Syria	98.57	43.49	36.04	80.99	238.26	210.36	249.14	765.70
Yemen	59.83	33.46	88.68	61.34	72.90	88.12	104.86	114.06
Not attributable (ME)	17.66	28.72	26.22	35.81	87.43	75.13	116.94	79.68
Total MENA	753.97	799.45	746.28	1,101.56	1,524.75	2,113.79	1,797.58	2,804.64
* 2016 Figures from the OECD-DAC Database. Exchange rate for 2016 data (dollars to euros): 1,10582771204								
Source: BMZ Aid Data (Bilaterale ODA-Zusagen nach Förderbereichen http://www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/zahlen_fakten/oda/hintergrund/umrechnungskurs/index.html)								

Annex 2: German ODA commitments to the MENA region by sector 2009-2016 (million Euros)								
North Africa	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
Social infrastructure and services	215.87	118.59	218.77	258.40	478.04	271.07	406.26	359.57
Economic infrastructure and services	24.10	261.76	85.21	296.92	250.59	761.37	322.40	244.69
Production sectors	22.91	95.96	65.03	16.26	12.48	138.00	7.41	10.10
Multisector	10.02	20.19	21.08	13.70	46.73	42.21	87.45	43.03
Programme assistance	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.53	0.80
Action relating to debt	19.47	19.47	19.47	19.47	27.95	23.89	1.17	0.00
Humanitarian aid	7.50	0.00	9.50	2.38	36.00	55.58	78.91	10.12
Unallocated/unspecified	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	300.38	516.00	419.07	607.12	851.78	1,292.11	905.13	668.30
Middle East	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Social infrastructure and services	365.99	228.41	256.98	369.20	346.45	395.43	439.39	497.75
Economic infrastructure and services	14.15	11.06	4.47	12.70	52.50	9.40	23.02	50.13
Production sectors	4.45	0.49	7.03	0.03	1.00	22.55	4.02	12.70
Multisector	41.44	27.55	23.80	11.45	50.18	37.62	28.44	25.29
Programme assistance	1.57	0.00	21.50	0.00	4.00	2.00	35.47	178.79
Action relating to debt	10.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.94
Humanitarian aid	15.02	15.90	13.41	101.07	218.84	354.67	362.10	1,400.83
Unallocated/unspecified	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
TOTAL	453.59	283.45	327.21	494.44	672.97	821.68	892.44	2,166.44
MENA (ME+NA)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Social infrastructure and services	581.86	347.00	475.76	627.59	824.49	666.50	845.65	857.32
Economic infrastructure and services	38.26	272.82	89.68	309.62	303.09	770.77	345.41	294.81
Production sectors	27.36	96.44	72.06	16.29	13.48	160.55	11.43	22.80
Multisector	51.46	47.74	44.89	25.14	96.91	79.83	115.90	68.32
Programme assistance	2.08	0.00	21.50	0.00	4.00	2.00	37.00	179.58
Action relating to debt	30.42	19.47	19.47	19.47	27.95	23.89	1.17	0.94
Humanitarian aid	22.52	15.90	22.92	103.45	254.84	410.26	441.01	1,410.95
Unallocated/unspecified	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
TOTAL	753.97	799.45	746.28	1,101.56	1,524.75	2,113.79	1,797.58	2,834.74
Source: BMZ Aid Data (Bilaterale ODA-Zusagen nach Förderbereichen)								

Annex 3: German net ODA bi- and multilateral disbursements 2009-2016 (million Euros)							
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
North Africa (bilateral)	216.4	159.5	256.9	174.4	320.5	582.7	730.5
North Africa (multilateral)	132.8	120.3	147.8	224.7	168	196.6	166.7
Middle East (bilateral)	288.4	311.4	321.4	427.5	624	704.9	786.9
Middle East (multilateral)	156.9	172.1	110.4	109	176.4	187.1	202.2
MENA (bilateral)	504.8	470.9	578.3	601.9	944.5	1287.6	1517.4
MENA (multilateral)	289.7	292.4	258.2	333.7	344.4	383.7	368.9

Source: BMZ Aid Data

Annex 4: German net ODA financial and technical cooperation 2009-2016 (million Euros)							
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
North Africa TZ	57.033	59.275	53.044	57.981	56.72	59.37	73.188
North Africa FZ	38.125	-15.404	69.466	-29.819	73.28	352.681	532.044
North Africa – Other ressorts	35.297	30.478	51.667	70.775	75.015	70.837	60.397
North Africa – Federal states	66.46	65.661	61.305	55.873	51.052	55.069	63.656
North Africa – Debt relief	19.468	19.468	19.468	19.468	64.217	44.548	1.172
North Africa TOTAL Net	216.383	159.478	256.897	174.374	320.488	582.722	730.515
Middle East TZ	66.988	67.677	58.432	65.138	77.792	170.322	220.963
Middle East FZ	56.332	77.845	97.876	125.664	147.202	127.072	112.253
Middle East – Other ressorts	62.678	66.859	61.573	121.794	297.962	302.1	334.496
Middle East – Federal states	88.981	97.084	100.121	107.705	100.929	105.308	119.208
Middle East – Debt relief	10.956	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle East TOTAL Net	288.434	311.36	321.446	427.469	623.96	704.884	786.937
MENA TZ	124.021	126.952	111.476	123.119	134.512	229.692	294.151
MENA FZ	94.457	62.441	167.342	95.845	220.482	479.753	644.297
MENA – Other ressorts	97.975	97.337	113.24	192.569	372.977	372.937	394.893
MENA – Federal states	155.441	162.745	161.426	163.578	151.981	160.377	182.864
MENA – Debt relief	30.424	19.468	19.468	19.468	64.217	44.548	1.172
MENA TOTAL Net	504.817	470.838	578.343	601.843	944.448	1287.606	1517.452

Notes: FZ (Finanzielle Zusammenarbeit): financial cooperation
TZ (Technische Zusammenarbeit): technical cooperation
Source: BMZ Aid Data

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