

EDA WORKING PAPER

Executive Summary

The Evolution of the Regional Security Complex in the MENA Region

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- This EDA working paper looks at the geopolitical changes that have taken place in the MENA region over the past decade with an emphasis on the consequences for established actors and the new opportunities arising for new actors to establish themselves within the existing geopolitical spaces.
- Three factors can be identified as critical in terms of understanding the current transition:
 1. The overall domestic volatility that has resulted in a combination of uprisings, revolutions and even civil wars impacting in one way or another virtually all states in the Middle East.
 2. The growing concern among the Arab states of the MENA region of an expanding Iranian power especially through the use of non-state actors and proxy forces.
 3. The changing role of the United States in the region and the return of great power competition with Russia's re-emergence through its intervention in Syria.
- All three factors outlined above – on the domestic, regional and international levels – come together to present a different picture of the MENA region than in recent history. A strong argument can be made for the fact that the power constellations in the Middle East and North Africa region are indeed witnessing a dramatic shift.
- A direct result of this shift is that Middle Eastern geopolitics has placed greater emphasis on the role of regional forces whose foreign and security policy now stands more in the forefront than at any other time in recent decades.
- In this context, the GCC states may be in the unique position to stamp their own impression on the direction of future shifts and outcomes.
- Within the changing parameters, some of the GCC states are placing increased emphasis on the terminology of stabilisation in a regional context and looking at options for a regional framework wherein regional as well as international actors can come together to bring about a more stable environment.
- Key components to be pursued in areas where instability and volatility remains high include:
 - o ensuring the delivery of public services so as to maintain overall public support;
 - o stabilising the economy both as a means to deliver on the service front but also to provide a basis for medium- to long-term stability;
 - o and finally, establishing security on the ground so that the implementation of public service delivery and economic stability can be followed up on.
- In the future, efforts to set a new agenda for regional cooperation could see a move towards an Arab-led security architecture for the Middle East that is largely free from interference by outside actors. The ultimate goal, however, has to be an arrangement that also includes the non-Arab states of Turkey, Iran and Israel as well as the key international actors such as the United States, Russia, China and Europe.