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**Europe and the Mediterranean  
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**RAMSES<sup>2</sup>**

**Rethinking the  
Mediterranean:  
Reality and  
Re-presentation in the  
Creation of a 'Region'**

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**About RAMSES2:** RAMSES2 is a Network of Excellence on Mediterranean Studies funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme. Oxford's contribution to RAMSES2 is a collaborative endeavour of the European Studies Centre and the Middle East Centre, which is run by SEESOX. Launched and coordinated by the Maison Méditerranéenne de Sciences de l'Homme in Aix-en-Provence, RAMSES2 involves 36 academic institutions from Western Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East researching the history, societies and current politics of the wider Mediterranean area. Its ambition is to create a new field of Mediterranean studies by bringing together the hitherto disparate scholarship on the different littoral subregions and countries. Through its activities, the network seeks to supplement the efforts of the European Union to bolster cross-Mediterranean integration via the Barcelona Process, the newly-instituted Neighbourhood Policy as well as the enlargement framework covering now the Balkans and Turkey. RAMSES2 investigates the Mediterranean as a geo-historical space marked by various patterns of exchange and cross-fertilisation in order to transcend the socio-political, economic and cultural fractures characterising it at present.

Within RAMSES2, St Antony's coordinates a work package dealing with borders, conflicts and memories in the Mediterranean. It examines, from a comparative perspective, the experience of wider South East Europe (the Balkans, Turkey and Cyprus), the Middle East and North Africa. The research will focus on three main axes:

- The (de)legitimising discourses on borders in South East Europe and the wider Mediterranean;
- The impact of imperial legacies and memories on border conflicts;
- The transformation and resolution of border conflicts.

The RAMSES2 sub-project run by St Antony's brings together a group of scholars from the European Studies Centre, the Middle East Centre, Maison Française and the Department of Politics and International Relations. The steering committee includes Kalypso Nicolaidis (Chair), Othon Anastasakis, Richard Caplan, Philip Robins and Michael Willis.

**RETHINKING THE MEDITERRANEAN:  
REALITY AND RE-PRESENTATION IN THE CREATION OF A 'REGION'**

**Michelle Pace**

The Mediterranean is an area that involves the leading states and international organisations in the world. Also it is often conceived of as a meeting point of the 'North' and 'South' and of different cultures in the area: as an interface between three continents, North Africa, Europe and Asia: as a 'region' with diversity and as a complex case which presents challenges – perhaps more than other areas. It is also a reasonably contemporary theme to codify the conditions and effects of discourses on regionality. Moreover, there seems to be a gap in the available material with a critical approach to the study of the Mediterranean area. As its title suggests, this working paper seeks to problematise conventional conceptions of regionality and to specifically re-think the Mediterranean 'region' in an open, relational, political context. It also aims to suggest a re-imagining of this 'region' politically, geographically, socially and culturally. The major objective of this working paper is to *conceptualise* the social construction of this area (as a holistic 'region') and the underlying assumptions of such imaginings, and in so doing to reveal how regions, in particular the Mediterranean region, are produced and reproduced over space and time. Despite the several references to the Mediterranean as a taken-for-granted concept, there does not seem to be one common, shared understanding of this area. So, what is the Mediterranean?

On the one hand, any attempt to map the (social) relations of the Mediterranean and their overlapping points runs the risk of misinterpretation. On the other hand, there is an obvious need (especially for an academic investigation like this one) to ensure that the Mediterranean is recognizable as an object of study and that all those interested in this area are in fact talking about the same 'thing'. The boundary lines that govern the physical and political relationships of the Mediterranean region may provide such a common understanding. However, to draw such precise boundaries is bound to lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Once such lines are drawn, they give the

impression that all relations pertaining to this ‘region’ fall neatly within these boundaries. The result in effect is to fix the Mediterranean’s changing geography and to leave the ‘region’ without meaning. Therefore, whether one takes the view of the Mediterranean as a region or as a meeting place between regions, one runs into this problem, so neither is satisfactory. But one can ask does this mean that we stop talking about ‘regions’? [I started by criticising the notion of the Mediterranean as a region sufficiently to put the term region in inverted commas]. The next question that follows from such a stance is then whether there is any justification for continuing to refer to the ‘region’ (even in inverted commas) or whether one should advocate a policy of referring to the Mediterranean as ‘the Mediterranean area’, thereby adopting a more neutral term (and which implies a focus on the society/people of a particular space). The latter option is the one chosen in this paper since it holds that, *inasmuch as the sustained political relevance of regions depends on people considering them to be relevant to their activities, the study of regions must in some way include the study of meaning and identity, particularly processes of identification, categorization and self-understanding.*<sup>1</sup>

It is important to clarify here what is meant by identity – as this concept will often be used here – particularly the relation of identity to culture. Is identity a substitute for political culture? As the above section explored a problematisation of region, so too the concept of identity needs to be explicated. Identity is understood here as the process of associating oneself closely with other individuals or reference groups to the extent that one comes to adopt their goals and values and to share considerably in their experiences. However, the notion of identity also includes those processes of *disassociation* from other individuals or reference groups, thereby incorporating a rejection of certain groups’ goals, values and experiences. In other words, identity is a process of the ‘continuous making of the self’ through othering. It is therefore a flexible, fluid concept rather than a static, fixed notion. Hence, it follows that *national identities as well as collective identities have their internal and external others who may be threatening while others may be inspiring.*<sup>2</sup> It may well be argued then that identity is neither an independent nor

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<sup>1</sup> The understanding of ‘identity’ in this paper has been influenced by the seminal work of Brubaker and Cooper who opt for three alternative terms for “identity” arguing that the latter is confusing as a term and that it is overburdened with multiple meanings and multiple functions. Hence, they opt for identification and categorization, self-understanding and commonality/connectedness/groupness. See Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper, 2000. ‘Beyond “identity” in *Theory and Society* 29, pp. 1-47.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion gains from debates on multiple identities in the European Union (supranational, national, regional and local). See Smith, Michael, E., 2004. ‘Institutionalization, Policy Adaptation and European Foreign Policy Cooperation’, in *European Journal of International Relations*, 10(1), pp. 95-136.

the dependent variable but rather an *element*, an important one indeed, that influences foreign policy (for example, the European Union's foreign policy) in interaction with other factors. These factors include: ideology, member states' domestic politics and party-political differences and national policy-making style/s.<sup>3</sup>

This rethinking of the Mediterranean has been encouraged by the fact that this area is a complex space in the making and involves overlapping and intersecting relationships. It also involves some concept of evolution, of dynamics.

The questions of 'place', boundaries, borders and space have raised issues of theoretical approaches to the study of 'regions' and even of the nature of theory itself; of the conceptualisation of regions and their practical definitions and of the criteria that make regions, or what should be studied 'within' them.<sup>4</sup> These questions have recently found themselves on the agenda of IR.<sup>5</sup> Conventional theories mostly focus on regional arrangements based on security co-operation issues. The more critical theoretical approaches to the study of regions - which have influenced my work - look into the processes of region making through the practice of foreign policy and identity politics.<sup>6</sup>

The perennial struggle between and across different discourses about the definition of the categories and phenomena that make up our 'social' world is not only the agenda of the Copenhagen School but more broadly of the work of critical theorists/constructivists.<sup>7</sup> The seminal work of Steve Smith has been very instructive in this thinking.<sup>8</sup> Smith's starting point is that although social constructivism offers an improved explanatory power in studies of European governance, it has largely been ill-

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<sup>3</sup> Pace, Michelle, 2004. 'Collective Identity: The Greek Case' in Carlnaes, W., Sjursen, H. and White, B., (eds). *Contemporary European Foreign Policy*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 227-238.

<sup>4</sup> Although the theory reviewed may initially seem odd – since most of it does not address regionalism explicitly – I draw upon these works and connect them with the analysis of regions through the common underlying theme in these works, that is, identity politics.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, the work of Buzan, Barry, 1991. *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester on regional security complex theory or one of the standard textbooks in the area, Lake, David, A. and Patrick M. Morgan, eds., 1997. *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*. Pennsylvania UP. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press. A more recent work is that of Buzan, Barry and Ole Wæver, 2003. *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: CUP.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Neumann, Iver, B., 1994. 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe', *Review of International Studies* 20 (1): 53-74 and Larsen, H., 1997. *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis: France, Britain and Europe*. London: Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> Brubaker and Cooper, 2000. For an interesting overview of the different strands of social constructivist works see Smith, Steve, 1999. 'Social constructivisms and European Studies: a reflectivist critique'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6(4), Special Issue, 682-91.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, 1999.

defined in the literature. He therefore argues that there is in effect a range of social constructivisms within IR, ranging from rational choice theorists (rationalism) to middle ground theorists (social constructivism) to postmodern scholars (reflectivism), with divergent meta-theoretical assumptions. This range of constructivisms share a similar starting point in that they reject assumptions of rationalist accounts but diverge in social ontologies, that is, in how to characterize European governance.<sup>9</sup> Smith is not very happy with the label of ‘middle ground’ for social constructivisms and therefore develops a distinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ constructivisms: To the extent that constructivists treat reasons as causes, they can easily relate to (neo-liberal institutionalist) rationalist arguments (thin constructivists). But, to the extent that they cannot, they are then involved in telling a different type of story about the social world, one that differs from the rationalist story on ontological and epistemological grounds (thick constructivists).

The approach I follow in this paper is a reflectivist one where social constructivism is combined with discourse analysis, thus emphasizing the power of enabling discourses in foreign policy (where I take policy as part of discourse and where my empirical focus is specifically on the EU’s policy towards the Mediterranean). As Foucault claims ‘discourse in general and scientific discourse in particular, is so complex a reality that we not only can but should approach it at different levels and with different methods’.<sup>10</sup> Discourse analysis can be used as a method to analyse the social world, specifically those statements which point to the varied nature of this world. Foucault’s methodological works can therefore be seen as tools for studying the world in the light of statements that constitute our social world. Those who follow a Foucauldian, radical constructivist analysis hence point to the need for pluralist methods in an analysis of discourses. This radical strand of constructivism offers tools that can be applied to regionalism and region-building and which can then highlight the social/political creation of spaces and specifically of regions. Boundaries have a crucial role in the construction of regional consciousness. Therefore, this process of region-construction is linked to the politics of identity since regions can be formed in response to discursive formations of an ‘other’. Some ‘thick’ constructivists work within the field of regional and identity studies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 682.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, Michel, 1973. *The Order of Things*. NY: Pantheon, xiv.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Neumann, Iver B., 1996a. *European Identity, EU Expansion and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus*. Paper presented at the conference: Defining and Projecting Europe’s Identity: Issues and Trade-Offs. Institut Universaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, Geneva, 21-22 March.

Within the ‘soft’ or ‘thin’ constructivist works in IR, some hold that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces.<sup>12</sup> Hence, along the constructivist continuum, it follows that regions are determined by discourses and practices. Moreover, identities and interests of purposive actors, including states, are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature. Critical theorists in general criticize neo-realists and neo-liberals, who see the structure of the international system as a distribution of material capabilities, with the neo-liberals adding institutions to the material base. They maintain that it is ideas and culture that constitute the meaning and content of material factors. They further state that ideas shape the identities and interests of actors. Wendt, for example, develops a complex theory of structure, agency and process based on three distinctions: macro and micro levels; causal and constitutive effects; and effects on behaviour and on identities and interests. Since Wendt argues that social structures (such as regions) may constitute agents (states), ‘the nature of states might be bound up conceptually with the structure of the state system’, and that ‘the ideas held by individual states are given content and meaning by the ideas which they share with other states.’<sup>13</sup> In contrast to Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*,<sup>14</sup> Wendt demonstrates that many of the states’ essential qualities (including identities) are contingent and socially constructed. Whereas neo-realists explain structural change in terms of the distribution of capabilities, Wendt sees it in terms of the evolution of identities through natural and cultural selection. He also discusses how interdependence, common fate, homogenisation and self-restraint may be responsible for collective identity formation / identification processes (that is, including regional identity).<sup>15</sup> Hence, Wendt’s strand of constructivism is not arguing that material interests are irrelevant or about trying to privilege ideational over material explanations: rather, Wendt’s point is that material factors become intelligible only in light of ideational factors that attach meanings to them.<sup>16</sup> Wendt’s work brings us back to the discussion of regions and how it is to be approached throughout this working paper. This paper has been influenced by the works of critical theorists, particularly the strand of constructivists

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<sup>12</sup> Wendt, Alexander, 1999. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>13</sup> For example, what makes ‘us’ European.

<sup>14</sup> Waltz, Kenneth, N., 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

<sup>15</sup> In effect, this is what the EU does with the ‘regions’ it co-operates with: it homogenises them in order to develop a European (EU) collective identity. Smith is critical of Wendt’s constructivist strand, arguing that Wendt seems to alter his view on the relationship between the material and the ideational. See Smith, Steve, 2000. ‘Wendt’s world’. *Review of International Studies*, 26, 151-163.

<sup>16</sup> Wendt 1999, 94.

labelled as radical or reflective. Rather than applying conventional, static theoretical approaches which reify a social configuration of a region as an entity that exists, this paper adopts a process based framework, adapted from the *discursive constructivist* strand of social constructivist approaches, where the project of region-making is analysed as an ongoing process and not as a fixed concept;<sup>17</sup> and, moreover, as a process through which collective identities are negotiated and continuously in the making. This approach is more akin to the work of radical constructivists where the main focus lies on the role of language in the construction of entities such as the Mediterranean. Discussions of the Mediterranean are then not simply descriptions of an existing reality but are instead part of the process of constructing that reality and where discursive practices enable such an entity to be conceptualised, talked about and addressed in policy statements, etc.<sup>18</sup> This approach does not imply discarding conventional theoretical frameworks. Rather, in order to have a more informed view of ‘reality’, we need to work with theories in parallel, that is, to take a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of regions.

At the core of these theoretical ideas lie two interrelated aspects of nation/region building: social spatialization and spatial socialization. The social construction of regions can be interpreted as a process of social spatialization.<sup>19</sup> Aspects of spatial socialization include ‘the attachment of the population to [this] region in various ties which are constructed in the practices of everyday life and social action’ – in effect, a double treatment of space and society which uncover the manner in which the idea of a nation or region is connected to territory and particularly to boundaries.<sup>20</sup> Essentially, the imagination of a nation or region is constantly produced and reproduced in social and institutional practices, including school education and media broadcasting, to which people are connected in their daily lives. Boundaries play a crucial role in the construction of national and regional consciousness in that they attach the social distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ to the spatial ones between ‘here’ and ‘there’. Thus, regions can be constructed in response to the perception of an ‘*other*’. Any identity,

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<sup>17</sup> The process-based theoretical framework adopted here has broadly benefited from debates in sociology, philosophy and IR on substantialist and relationalist approaches to the study of change in global politics. See Emirbayer, Mustafa, 1997. ‘Manifesto for a Relational Sociology’ in *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 103, Number 2, September, pp. 281-317 and Jackson, Patrick, Thaddeus and Nexon, Daniel, H., 1999. ‘Relations Before States: Substance, Process and the Study of World Politics’, in *European Journal of International Relations*, Volume 5 (3), pp. 291-332. See also Larsen, Henrik, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, Diez, Thomas, 2001. ‘Europe as a Discursive Battleground. Discourse Analysis and European Integration Studies’. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 36(1), 5-38.

<sup>19</sup> Shields, Rob, 1990. *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London: Routledge.

<sup>20</sup> Paasi, Anssi, 1996. *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border*. Chichester: Wiley.

whether of a state or social group or entity, is always 'established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to [its] being'.<sup>21</sup> Identity can therefore be established only in relation to what it is not, that is, to difference. Difference in turn is constituted in relation to identity. Thus, identities are always contingent and relational.

When analysing regions, one needs to acknowledge this relationality in the formation of identity/ies (that is the processes of identification, categorization, etc) due to the fact that otherness is often fundamentally treated as something significant only in relation to ourselves and from our perspective. In other words, the Other is interpreted as an essential opponent when constructing the Self. Following this line of argument, one can argue that regions are socially constructed and constructions of such 'realities' reflect, enact and reify relations of power.<sup>22</sup> Relations between the West and the rest of the world have been analysed through such a perspective and focus on how Western references to any part of the rest of the world end up with images of an area that shadow overlapping and interdependent identities.<sup>23</sup> Definitions of the Rest in this vein often serve functional purposes. Such doctrines pose as attempts to dissolve differences and preserve similarities (if any) rather than encouraging and celebrating differences.<sup>24</sup> Thus, in terms of these critical reflections, any categorisation of a 'region' brings forward specific affinities and overlaps while often disguising diversity. In West-Rest relations, the West is presented as *the* model and the Rest have to embrace Western values and systems without questioning whether these may be appropriate for other areas of the world. Moreover, the creation of regions "do(es) not merely reproduce the outlying territories: they work them out, or animate them, using narrative technique and historical and exploratory attitudes ...."<sup>25</sup> A good example of such constructions are expressed in travel guides which tend to orientalise the unfamiliar, the Other. In turn, such a

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<sup>21</sup> Connolly, William E., 1991. *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. New York: Cornell University Press, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Weldes, Jutta et al., 1999. *Cultures of Insecurity. States, Communities and the Production of Danger*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Borderlines, 11, 14.

<sup>23</sup> For this argumentation see Said, Edward W., 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage. See also his 1978. *Orientalism. Western Conceptions Of the Orient*. London: Penguin Books.

<sup>24</sup> See for example Cohler, Anne M., Miller, Basia Carolyn and Stone, Harold Samuel (eds.), 1989. *Montesquieu. The Spirit of the Laws*. Cambridge: CUP; Cowen, Michael, P and Robert W Shenton, 1995. *Doctrines of Development*. London: Routledge; Escobar, Arturo, 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: PUP; Fabian, Johannes, 1983. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press; Ferguson, James, 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: CUP.

<sup>25</sup> Said, E., W., 1993, 120.

construction of the Rest is the result of a securitization discourse reflecting the need for stability and security.<sup>26</sup> Hence, although the term ‘region’ is often used in a geographical sense one has to analyse carefully the implications on the political spectrum because:

“All cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them. Yet not all cultures make representations of foreign cultures *and* in fact master or control them. It requires the study of Western knowledge or representations of the non-European world to be a study of both those representations and the political power they express”.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, in short, when one is dealing with representations or constructions of a ‘region’, one is indirectly involved in analysing a (language) power game. Analysts therefore need to trace out markers across hegemonic discourses that construct fields of knowledge to understand how the latter are given meaning, created, produced and re-produced. Locating power centres and referent objects of power has been the concern of theorists of modernity who attempt to deconstruct developmentalist discourses in light of globalization forces and contemporary global changes.<sup>28</sup> In this perspective one can interpret how modernity developed at the intersection of national and international conditions and processes. The West, for example, started to forge its identity and interests in relation to endogenous developments in Europe and America and through relations of unequal exchange with the Rest, the Other – the often excluded, colonized, conquered and exploited.

By focusing on the issue of *space* and *time*, one can understand how the spread of electronic media and the global movement of people, goods, capital and services has rendered communications between different cultures incredibly rapid. Thus, political, economic and cultural reference points for different people across the globe are at one and the same time both more uniform and more diverse. Therefore, any reference to identities, whether national, regional or international, has as much a homogenizing

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<sup>26</sup> Buzan and Wæver, 2003, 73, 86-7 where the authors develop the idea of securitisation as a means of mapping regional variations.

<sup>27</sup> Said, E., W., 1993, 120. (Power as non-substantialist).

<sup>28</sup> Hall, Stuart, Held, David and Tony McGrew, 1992. *Modernity and its Futures*. Oxford: Polity Press; Appadurai, Arjun, 1996. *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press.

implication as well as a heterogeneous content. Thus, globalisation can be said to bring about a tension between allegiances towards a national identity, a regional identity and an international identity: not an unfamiliar notion in Europe today.<sup>29</sup> Hence, modernity can be said to spread various images worldwide through symbolic forms which are reflected in our cultural identities and which place our sense of *self*, or who we are and where we come from, in considerable flux and disarray. Thus, ‘in the ‘marginal’ countries (or regions), identities evolved from once-stable rural or traditional cultures compete with those borrowed from or disseminated by ‘the West’.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Western hegemonic discourses on the Rest enter local, whether Mediterranean or Arab or any of Europe’s Other discourses.<sup>31</sup> Such readings reveal how historically the colonized defined the colonizers who in turn defined the colonized and how these practices are still played out in the contemporary global world. This suggests that notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ are interdependent notions and not separate concepts. Analysts therefore need to go beyond such dichotomies – especially the one between identity and difference – by seeing them as inherently relational. In order to understand otherness one needs to recognize identity markers which require difference but not necessarily ‘otherness’ and to highlight the indebtedness of self to difference, because it enables the self to be. This does not mean that plurality is not equally important.<sup>32</sup> In the context of regionalism, regions are themselves products of processes of identity construction (identification, categorization) in which the self and the other, or multiple others, are constituted. Regions, therefore, become part of our taken-for-granted world and one hardly ever queries their existence. In this manner, regions can appear to be natural phenomena. Regions are not natural entities but rather social constructs. “Regions” do function as a way of organizing the international system for political, economic or cultural reasons, a manner in which politics can be organized. One needs to keep in mind, however, that hegemonic concerns for boundaries and their maintenance wanes with the changing interests of the ‘core’ countries or the ‘outside’ powers. What is needed is an “unmapping” of the familiar order of the world and a reversal of conventional ways of thinking about IR by distancing

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<sup>29</sup> One can assume that these observations have similar implications for sub-national identities.

<sup>30</sup> Appadurai 1996, 9.

<sup>31</sup> We therefore need analytic and explanatory models of the social sciences to adjust to the reality of the modern and postmodern, rapidly developing world with its continuously and extensive transformations – not to be misunderstood as an attempt at representing reality ‘out there’, rather to understand societies and regions as processes of overlapping dimensions, each with its own patterns of change and development. In other words we need to redraw political and cultural maps of our period. Jameson, Frederic, 1981. *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methuen.

<sup>32</sup> Connolly, William E., 1995. *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 202-203.

ourselves from familiar accounts.<sup>33</sup> Our concern should focus on ‘how historically developed, socially embedded interpretations of identity and space give rise to the objects scrutinized in both policy discourse and the disciplinary conceits of IR and FPA’,<sup>34</sup> in other words, a ‘struggle over the language of analysis’.<sup>35</sup> Through this perspective, the region structure can be interpreted as an imaginary idea and as ‘one way among others of organizing the significance of space’.<sup>36</sup> What is needed is to locate discursive formations of regions and their contexts in an effort to better understand the social construction of such spaces.

The language approach adopted in this paper highlights the importance of language to an understanding of issues of political, economic and social concerns for EU-Mediterranean relations and the future development of this relation. In terms of practical relevance, it helps in our understanding of the ways we communicate both influence and are influenced by the structures and forces of contemporary political, economic and social institutions. Discourse analysis as a method furthers our knowledge on: how language functions in maintaining and changing power relations in modern and post-modern societies; on the ways in which we can analyse language and which can reveal these processes and on how people can become more conscious of themselves and more able to resist and change power relations. The question of language and power remains important and urgent today and with the substantial changes in the international context in the past three years or so, the nature of unequal power relationships has been particularly challenging. The agenda for a critical study of international relations through language is much called for.

Although my work focuses on EU-Mediterranean relations, this paper’s objectives extend beyond this subject and reach out to a much broader audience interested in issues of IR theory and foreign policy analysis more generally. The theoretical approach laid out, which built on previous works within the IR field, elaborates a discourse analysis theory of foreign policy.<sup>37</sup> Through this language approach, this theory identifies problems with rationalist accounts and approaches to foreign policy analysis. In this

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<sup>33</sup> Shapiro, Michael J., 1997. *Violent Cartographies. Mapping Cultures of War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>35</sup> See Derrida, Jacques, 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins.

<sup>36</sup> Shapiro 1997, xi.

<sup>37</sup> Hansen and Wæver, 2002.

respect, it highlights how rationalist explanations of FPA fail to capture the significance of identity-based arguments in understanding EU policy on the Mediterranean. These insights do not just affect how we should understand particular countries' attitudes to the EU but also indicate a need to rethink predominant understandings of the EU more generally. What is presented is not simply another advocacy of the importance of the politics of identity, but a systematically adapted and developed theory of foreign policy from a post-structuralist discourse analysis perspective. In particular, a specific attempt is made to show how discourses frame political, economic and social environments, thereby structuring options for EU action within Mediterranean bounds. It has been highlighted, that while all discourses have structuring effects, some are more important than others (dominant or embedded discourses). The idea of structural depth suggests that some discourses should be understood as rather deeply embedded in the discursive field at particular times and are relatively immune to change.<sup>38</sup> Other discourses, in contrast, are nearer the surface level, and are thus open to much greater contestation.

Is the construction of a Mediterranean region, for example in EU foreign policy making, a feasible project? Critical analysts would argue that the Mediterranean is not a 'region' – yet. There are cultural divides (Christianity/Islam/Judaism), Huntington's "clash of civilizations", an economic divide (rich/poor), a social divide (demographic trends, nutrition, housing, health care, literacy, etc), a political divide (democracy/authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian regimes), irregular/not intense patterns of interaction and in general an absence of regional identity and 'we-feeling'.

Elsewhere I have sought to make a contribution to this debate by showing the way in which the idea of the 'Mediterranean' has been and is variously conceptualised in EU discourses and in Mediterranean countries:<sup>39</sup> The focus being on these different discourses and how these have impacted on the EU's policy on the Mediterranean. Taken together, these insights illustrate the difficulties of treating the Mediterranean countries as an undifferentiated group. The fact that the case studies my earlier work drew upon (namely Greece, Morocco and Malta) illustrate that multiple competing 'Mediterraneans' exist within different national debates both in Europe as well as in the Mediterranean further highlights the difficulties facing EU Mediterranean policies. The Union and the Mediterranean partners are aware of these challenges and should use all the instruments

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<sup>38</sup> Wæver in Hansen and Wæver, 2002.

<sup>39</sup> See Pace, M, 2006. *The Politics of Regional Identity. Meddling with the Mediterranean.*

at their disposal within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership framework to develop their relations. The more recent European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) offers new opportunities for both partners. Efforts within the ENP context should:

- encourage public discussion on the impact of the EU on the democratisation processes of its southern neighbours, which will in turn
- influence decision-makers in the EU to adopt mutually motivating action plans concerning each southern country that is included in the ENP
- improve the willingness and ability of Non-Governmental Organisations from the EU and its southern neighbours to cooperate in implementing the ENP and
- develop networks between EU and southern neighbours' and support new cooperation projects, particularly those which impact on the local populations
- address obstacles for development in the south particularly those deriving from different political and institutional systems (as well as value-systems)
- develop tailor-made external policies or action plans to meet the internal political conditions of any given southern country since progress towards reform depends largely on the latter.

Therefore, rather than adopting a one-size fits all list of reform priorities, the Action Plans should take into account the specificities of each southern neighbour.

In 2004, the General Affairs and External Relations Council conclusions highlighted the need for jointly devised Action Plans which set out realistic and limited objectives, based on a set of shared principles.<sup>40</sup> This is a positive step forward in addressing past accusations of the EU's imposition of its value systems on the southern partners. These are the keys which can open possibilities for future EU-Mediterranean neighbourly relations, on a more equal footing. The ENP needs to be accompanied by political conditionality strategies for those southern partners who are not willing to comply or cooperate according to predefined and pre-agreed structures. The value of a single framework for relations with a number of diversified neighbours is an opportunity not to be missed!

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<sup>40</sup> General Affairs and External Relations Council, Conclusions, Luxembourg 14 June 2004.