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ARTICLE

"Donorship" and strategic policy-making: Germany's Middle Eastern and North African aid programme since the Arab uprisings

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Abstract

Motivation: Germany's official aid to Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries has more than doubled since 2011, ostensibly to support their own responses to development and humanitarian challenges following the Arab uprisings. The dramatic increases in aid have not been accompanied by a public strategy setting out Germany's objectives in the region, and the role of aid in conjunction with other policy tools in achieving them.
Purpose: What strategic objectives does the German government have for its MENA aid, and have these objectives changed in response to the Arab uprisings? Does the practice of Germany's aid spending actually address development and humanitarian challenges in the MENA region, as these are defined by MENA countries themselves? In order to address these questions, this article develops key insights from the historical institutionalist and aid effectiveness literature that explain strategic policy-making in complex decision-making systems.
Approach and Methods: Two propositions are discussed in a structured review of the policy and practice dimensions of Germany's MENA aid programme: first, that Germany's aid and foreign policy system has not been able to articulate a clear strategy due to political differences and bureaucratic inertia; and second that the priorities tend to favour German and European security interests rather than the region's own development and humanitarian priorities.
Findings: The analysis reveals that, while new priorities for development co-operation in response to the Arab uprisings have been set, Germany's MENA aid programme shows signs of policy incoherence and fragmentation. This is unlikely to change without a "whole-of-government" strategy for Germany's MENA engagement. Furthermore, while there is little evidence of purposeful securitization of aid, short-term stability has been privileged over support for political change.
Policy Implications: A whole-of-government strategy based on the Sustainable Development Goals could balance German interests with the MENA region's development priorities, ironing out the most problematic incoherencies, and thereby increasing partner country ownership.

KEYWORDS

aid effectiveness, German development co-operation, Middle East and North Africa, ownership, policy coherence

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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 the region's upheaval on Germany's domestic and international politics, and physically through the presence of several hundred thousand mostly Syrian refugees in Germany since late 2015. The growing importance of the MENA to Germany is reflected in sharp increases in humanitarian and development aid to the region, which more than quadrupled since 2011 from around EUR 750 million annually to around EUR 3.6 billion in 2017.[1] Germany, like other donors, has promised to use aid to support countries in resolving their own development and humanitarian challenges. This requires a coherent strategy that sets priorities, identifies attainable goals and defines a step-by-step approach to reaching them (Andrews, 2013).[2]

The remarkable increases in official development assistance (ODA) have not, however, been accompanied by a strategic policy statement that sets out the objectives of Germany's MENA aid programme. Nor has there been any kind of "whole-of-government" strategy for the region, defining Germany's strategic goals, the role of aid in this context and the role of other relevant policy tools. This absence raises some interesting questions for observers of German "donorship" with regard to the MENA, defined here as the external partner's ability to articulate and pursue development objectives in third countries. First, what strategic objectives does the German government have for its MENA aid, and have these changed in response to the Arab uprisings? Second, in keeping with the ownership principle, does the practice of Germany's aid spending actually address development and humanitarian challenges in the MENA region, as these are defined by regional partners themselves? And third, why has the German government not produced a clear strategy for its aid to the region, given the political salience of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath?

This article addresses these questions with reference to debates in the historical institutionalist (HI) literature explaining how actors conduct strategic policy-making in complex decision-making systems. These provide theoretical explanations for why aid systems struggle to produce 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 securitization. These narratives emphasize factors that either support or hinder strategy development. These include institutionalist factors such as the challenges of co-ordinating 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. While fragmentation and securitization are often framed and studied from a donor perspective, they are just as relevant to partner country actors' ownership due to their role in undermining development effectiveness. Two propositions emerge from this framing: first, that political differences and bureaucratic inertia in the German foreign policy 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.

Has Germany's MENA aid programme been influenced by fragmentation and securitization? At the policy level, the regional policy papers of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ)

[1]The most recent year for which complete figures are available.

[2]"Strategy" is distinct from "tactics," which are the steps that actors take at each stage of a strategy.

suggest a broad strategic orientation towards resolving development problems outlined by MENA partners in the Arab Human Development Reports (AHDRs) in the early 2000s. There is, however, a gap between this strategic analysis and actual aid spending, which has largely followed patterns established before the Arab uprisings. Most additional spending has been concentrated in just two areas: humanitarian aid in response to the Syrian civil war, and ODA-eligible loans for renewable energy generation in Morocco. While there is little evidence of purposeful securitization of aid, stability has been privileged over support for unpredictable political change. Measures to support governance have mostly focused on specific sectors rather than on democracy support, and these have not been closely co-ordinated among the various German agencies.

Despite 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 no whole-of-government strategy for the MENA region itself. 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. A German whole-of-government strategy, based on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would help to balance Germany's interests with the MENA region's development priorities. This could iron out the most problematic incoherencies at the policy level, while providing clearer guidelines to reduce fragmentation at the practice level.

The rest of this article is arranged as follows. The next section unpacks the debates on strategic policy-making in the HI and aid effectiveness literature. The article's third section explores continuity and change in Germany's MENA aid policy and practice since 2011, with reference to the BMZ's internal regional policy papers and 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 co-operation. The 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. The final section concludes.

2 | FRAMING AID STRATEGY IN COMPLEX DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS: HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM, SECURITIZATION AND FRAGMENTATION

Reflections on "donorship" in the MENA since the Arab uprisings are rooted in normative expectations established by the international aid and development effectiveness agenda. Following the 2011 Arab uprisings, there were widespread expectations that donors would change their approaches to reflect new realities in the MENA (Perthes, 2011). Some experts nevertheless expressed scepticism that there would be much change at all (Schumacher, 2011). The sceptical perspective was largely borne out by events, with most studies on development co-operation in the MENA since 2011 observing continuity rather than change. First, there has been a recurring gap between rhetoric and practice—a disconnection between official expressions of support for democracy, and continuity in how aid programmes have been funded and run (Boogaerts et al., 2016). Second, donors have not focused on using aid for problem solving, particularly with regard to long-standing tensions around the Arab social contract that exploded into violence in the wake of the 2011 uprisings (Challand, 2014). Third, most Western donors have not been able to establish themselves as legitimate contributors in the post-Arab Spring MENA. They have continued to focus on their own economic and security interests in the region, the pursuit of which has contributed to decades of violence and chaos (Paragi, 2015).

The importance of strategy in development co-operation 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 et al., 2011). Although actors in many policy fields conceptualize, 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 recognizes that development interventions are inevitably complex and that many eventualities cannot be planned for (Hummelbrunner & Jones, 2013). Cognitive deficits in strategy have been conceptualized as "networks of indecision" in which participating actors have a common project, but do not agree about what it is supposed to achieve, especially where these "higher goals" are defined by principles such as development effectiveness or ownership. 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 process with actors who have their own goals and strategies (Dür & Mateo, 2010).

The HI literature provides a theoretical basis for framing analyses of strategy in aid and development policy. Institutionalists usually conceptualize 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 how gaps between social and institutional changes—such as the Arab uprisings themselves and their secondary impacts on European politics—change and evolve over time. The factors influencing change can be either endogenous or exogenous to a society and its institutions. HI focuses on how the underlying causes of social change are interpreted, debated, reflected in preferences and ultimately translated into policy, such as the German aid programme's response to events in the Arab world (Capoccia, 2016).

A macro-level strand of the HI literature explores perspectives on how competing societal beliefs shape institutional rules, systems and organizations, where change originates from the contest between competing logics (Thelen, 1999). Competing logics are especially salient for aid agencies, which work across the "social space" divide. This is especially relevant to ownership discussions, as aid agencies 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 felt 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 of individual decision-making systems, 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). Indeed, bureaucratic and legal structures are usually deliberately designed to be resilient to shocks and resistant to change, at least in the short term. One strand of the literature focuses on the micro-level 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 who 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 do not always act rationally, in the sense of setting clear strategic goals and working coherently towards them (Hanrieder, 2014).

The HI focus on macro-level sociocultural factors and micro-level decision-making 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, conflicts between donor and recipient interests, and the impact of humanitarian and development aid, has clear parallels with institutionalist theories. 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 et al., 2015).

HI can be linked to the aid effectiveness literature through two analytical narratives on policy coherence that provide explanations for strategic failings in aid policy-making: a narrative on fragmentation and a narrative on securitization. Fragmentation refers to the proliferation of donors engaged in a particular partner country or co-operation sector, and/or the engagement of a single donor across a wide range of partners and sectors (Klingebiel et al., 2016). Decision-making processes around aid allocation and spending involve an array of institutional, political and even individual actors, and rarely produce clear, coherent policy strategies (Dietrich, 2013). Aid is often allocated and programmed without a clear focus on problem solving, but rather in line with how donors define development needs (in the best case) or with strategic goals that are only vaguely linked to socioeconomic development deficits. Sometimes, policy documents are selective about the motivations and goals that are mentioned, while key donor interests remain implicit (Keijzer & Lundsgaarde, 2018). Although there is little hard evidence that fragmentation actually undermines effectiveness, there has been widespread agreement that it raises transaction costs and produces detrimental outcomes for developing countries (Brown & Swiss, 2013).

Securitization refers to the extent to which donors use ODA to counter perceived security threats from developing countries and regions (Brown & Grävingholt, 2016). Furthermore, since aid is both an expression of solidarity and a tool of foreign policy, the tension between security and development objectives is at the heart of the aid business (Carothers & de Gramont, 2013). The securitization perspective is closely linked to debates about legitimacy in development co-operation. The use of aid for security purposes does not indicate a lack of strategy. Rather, it questions donors' motivations and highlights the coercion of societies into co-operation that benefits Western security interests rather than socioeconomic development, often in collusion with developing country elites (Fisher & Anderson, 2015). Consequently, securitization is at the heart of debates about policy coherence for development. As studies on the securitization of EU aid have indicated, the strategic objectives of donor-country security policy and sustainable development are often incompatible (Furness & Gänzle, 2017). With regard to the MENA, the securitization narrative raises the long-standing dilemma of Western engagement, between supporting stability based on co-operation with authoritarian regimes and risking support for democratic change (Youngs, 2014).

More often than not, however, aid does not further nefarious donor-country interests at the expense of the world's poor, and complex challenges are not always insurmountable. The aid effectiveness literature also addresses instances where aid has been used 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). 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). Furthermore, as most development and humanitarian challenges have multiple sociopolitical causes and effects, money is only one tool likely to be needed—development and humanitarian aid have to be used in conjunction with other policy instruments, such as diplomacy,

defence and trade, in furthering local, national and regional objectives (Christopoulos et al., 2012). These principles are best understood as aspirations that are not usually met by donors. 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.

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" when compared with actors that have tried to change the political balance of power in the region, such as the US, the UK and France. Germany has, nevertheless, maintained a prominent diplomatic, commercial and development presence in the MENA for several decades (Perthes, 2002). Germany has focused mostly on supporting political stability and promoting economic co-operation, with active engagement from German civil society groups and political party foundations. Moreover, Germany has taken a key role in steering EU policy towards the "southern neighbourhood," and has supported multilateral processes, both at the United Nations and in "club governance" formats such as the G8 and G20 (Behr, 2008).

An examination of Germany's MENA aid policy framework reveals a gap between the problems it identifies and the measures proposed to address them. The starting point for German aid policy for the MENA region is the BMZ's concept paper from 2008—published three years before the Arab uprisings but drafted even earlier. The paper – entitled 'Principles, focus and perspectives of German development policy with the Middle East and North Africa region' – has a section on development challenges in the MENA, based on the regionally 'owned' priorities set by the AHDRs. It candidly points out the dangers of increasing poverty, societal instability, political repression and demographic change, and warns that security and migration problems are likely to emerge.

The paper also notes that although the socioeconomic development of individual countries is the main priority, global and European interests are also important: specifically, security, migration, and energy supplies. It does not go into possible conflicts between these two sets of priorities, but rather focuses on three core areas for co-operation where Germany is an international leader: water, renewable energy, and vocational training (BMZ, 2008). The ways in which the three co-operation areas are expected to address the priorities 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.

Remarkably, the 2008 MENA concept paper remained on the BMZ's website until mid-2018, and there has been no subsequent publication of a regional aid policy framework in response to the changes in the Arab world since the uprisings. Nevertheless, the uprisings and their aftermath prompted the ministry to undertake a strategic reflection resulting in an internal position paper circulated in August 2014. The paper stressed the importance of the MENA region for Germany and Europe due to its location and energy wealth. As in the 2008 paper, the 2014 paper started with a clear problem analysis, noting that it was peoples' dissatisfaction with their socioeconomic and political situation that prompted the calls for bread, freedom and social justice in the spring of 2011. The paper blamed the decayed social contract between Arab regimes and citizens for the Arab uprisings. It affirmed that Germany and the EU share the interests of MENA citizens in stability, prosperity and democracy, without which more people will try to flee to Europe (BMZ, 2014a).

The most significant departure from the 2008 paper was the elevation of "governance and education" as a co-operation sector. The three core sectors from 2008 were maintained, again with little

explanation as to how they address the problems outlined at the beginning of the paper. The 2014 paper also promised to focus on four specific problems: youth unemployment; economic instability; the democratic deficit; and stability in crisis countries, especially with regard to the humanitarian crisis in Syria (BMZ, 2014a). These issues were given concrete form in the BMZ's 2014 launch of a "Special Initiative for Stability and Development in North Africa and the Middle East." This EUR 400 million budget line promised to expand on and strengthen the core areas of co-operation and speed up Germany's response to challenges, especially youth unemployment, economic stabilization, democracy and the stability of Syria's neighbours (BMZ, 2014b).

Beyond the aid programme itself, other key policy documents set strategic guidelines for Germany's MENA engagements. From 2011 to 2012, the federal foreign, development and defence ministries reflected on the experience of Germany's engagement in Afghanistan. This resulted in the commitment to "networked approaches" (*vernetzte Ansätze*) to interventions, linking development, humanitarian and foreign policy with civilian actors and the military. Although the policy document did not reference the MENA region, it promised that the Federal Government would improve its strategy development, co-ordinated among the relevant ministries to ensure strategic continuity and coherence (Bundesregierung, 2016, p. 51). Subsequently, 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 to make the Federal Government's response to 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).

Strategic reflections in the BMZ and between the BMZ and other ministries since 2014 have not resulted in a whole-of-government strategy for the MENA region. This does not mean that there is no aid strategy per se; nor does it mean that the aid programme is disconnected from other German government initiatives in the MENA. Indeed, the *vernetzte Ansätze*, *Leitlinien*, and humanitarian–development nexus policy processes indicate preparedness to develop whole-of-government strategies when political circumstances allow. Nevertheless, the lack of an overall German government position on the MENA region 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 co-operation. It has also left co-ordination on aid programmes and projects between the Federal Foreign Ministry (AA) and BMZ without a frame of reference, and this has impacted on the practical dimension.

3.2 | The practice dimension

BMZ aid data show that German aid to the MENA region increased nearly fivefold between 2009 and 2017, from around EUR 750 million to more than EUR 3.6 billion.[3] In 2016, Germany's MENA aid accounted for 16.7% of its total ODA spend, which was the third highest of all OECD-DAC members after Italy and Greece, and equal with France (OECD, 2017).

As Figure 1 shows, 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 increased significantly in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian civil war. In North Africa, aid to Egypt

[3]The rate of increase was slightly higher than for the German aid budget overall (BMZ, n.d.).

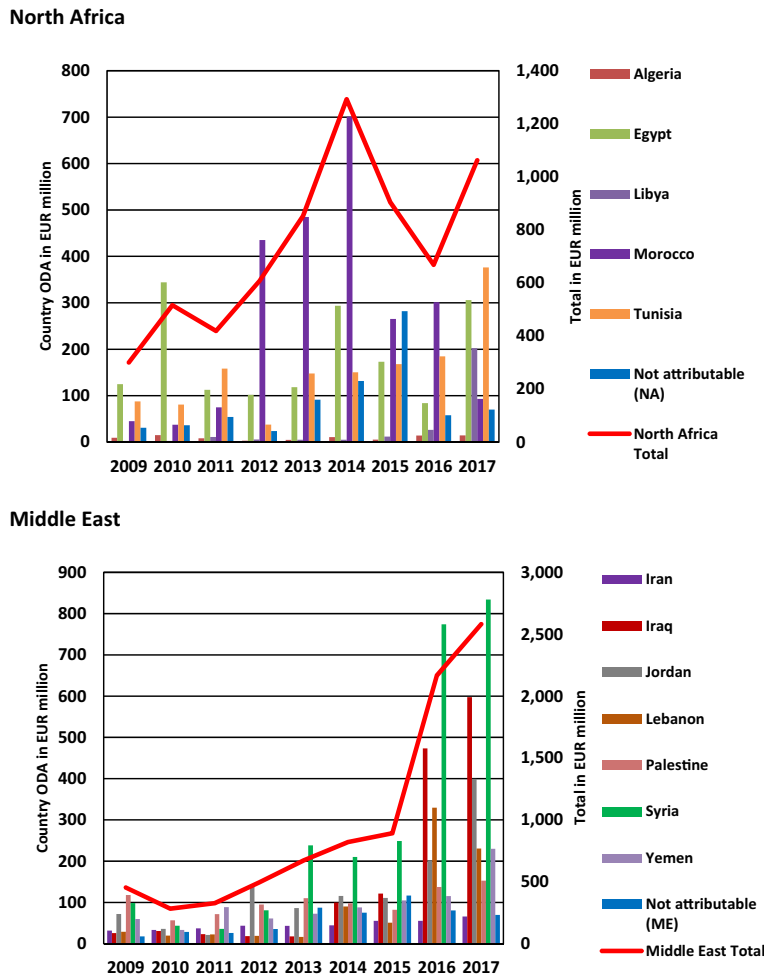

FIGURE 1 German bilateral ODA commitments to MENA countries. 2009–2017 (million euros)
Source: BMZ Aid Data (see Appendix 1)

increased during the country's brief experiment with democracy in 2013 before dropping back to similar levels as before the Arab uprisings. Egypt—traditionally the largest MENA recipient of German aid—was overtaken in 2015 by a sharp increase in aid to Morocco. Aid to Tunisia more than doubled from around EUR 87 million in 2009 to nearly EUR 188 million in 2016.

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 breakdown for German ODA spending in the MENA region since 2009. The real drivers of the increase have been humanitarian aid in the Middle East and economic infrastructure in North Africa. This might indicate an increasing focus on humanitarian and development priorities. However, the fact that Morocco's increase is mostly accounted for by ODA-eligible loans for renewable energy production leaves an impression that German interests have been a strong driving factor as well. Moreover, the figures show dramatic annual fluctuations in sector distribution. While this can partly be attributed to annual programming administration and the sheer size of individual projects, particularly in Morocco, the high levels reflect fragmentation rather than strategic clarity.

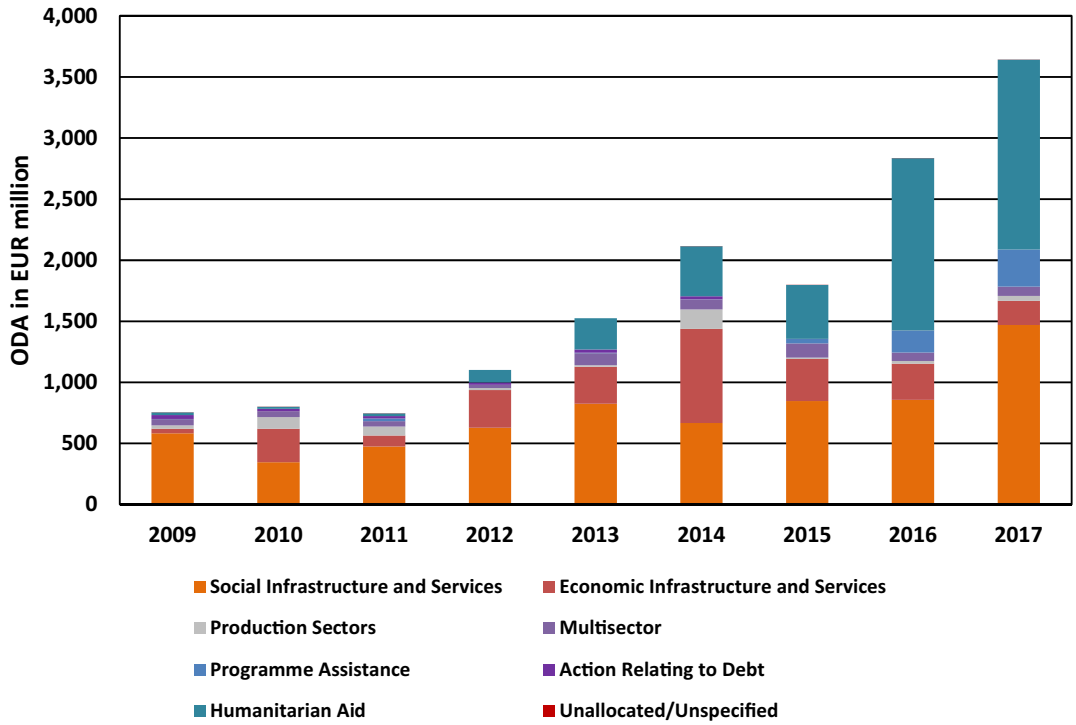

FIGURE 2 Bilateral German ODA commitments to the MENA region. 2009–2017: sector distribution (million euros) Source: BMZ Aid Data (see Appendix 2)

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. However, these measures were often added as "governance components" to projects financed 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, 2019). These initiatives have not been closely co-ordinated with the BMZ's sector governance initiatives despite their inclusion in the German government's 2016 *Leitlinien* (Bundesregierung, 2017).

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, the G7 Deauville Partnership to support Arab countries in transition, and the OECD's MENA Competitiveness Programme. Germany has also supported the European Commission's trust funds for the Syrian refugee crisis and managing migration from Africa. These engagements have, nevertheless, been dwarfed by the increases in bilateral aid, especially following the 2015 refugee crisis in Germany. This not only reflects the increased willingness of the German government to act in its own right in the MENA region. It also reflects the vested interest in the German aid system to channel aid through Germany's main aid implementation agencies, the Gesellschaft

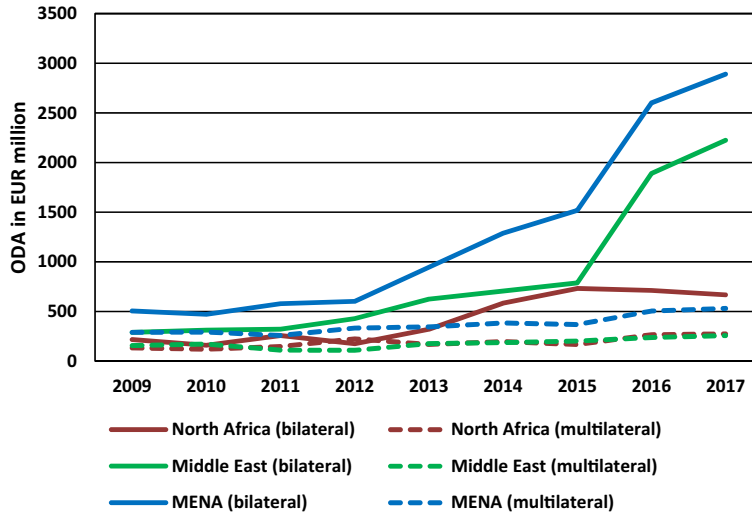

FIGURE 3 Bilateral and multilateral distribution of Germany's MENA ODA disbursements. 2009–2017 (million euros)
Source: BMZ Aid Data (see Appendix 3)[4]

für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for technical co-operation, and the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) for financial co-operation (OECD, 2015). The sharp increases in humanitarian aid, aid to Syria, bilateral aid and technical co-operation in 2016 and 2017 are largely accounted for by the classification of meeting the costs of mainly Syrian refugees in Germany as ODA, and not by any strategic considerations with regard to the MENA region.

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 co-operation 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, 2017). While some of these were later reclassified as aid grants, loan repayments from North Africa exceeded new loans in 2010 and 2012, leading to slightly negative totals for financial co-operation in those years. The most remarkable post-Arab uprisings change to development co-operation is the sharp increase in financial co-operation 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 co-operation figures have also been enhanced by the provision of direct budget support in some cases (BMZ, 2016).

Figure 4 also indicates that Germany's technical co-operation has more than tripled 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 co-operation, 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

[4]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.

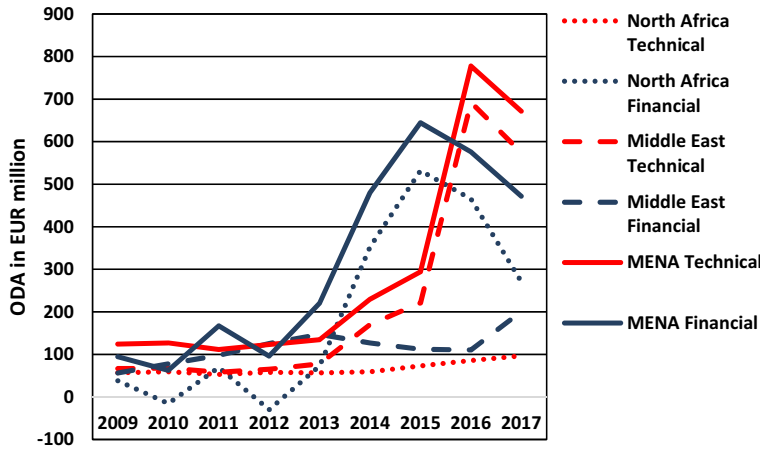

FIGURE 4 Financial and technical co-operation distribution of German bilateral MENA ODA disbursements 2009–2017 (million euros)
Source: BMZ Aid Data (see Appendix 4)

areas of co-operation, especially vocational training aimed at improving the skills of young people and women, microfinance, water supplies and waste collection (GIZ, 2017). Since financial co-operation entails much higher budgets than technical co-operation, 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.

4 | A SECURITIZED STRATEGY, LEADING TO FRAGMENTED OPERATIONS?

This section returns to the third question posed in the introduction: why has Germany seemingly been unable to publish 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 article'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 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.

With regard to fragmentation, the gap between analysis and policy identified above is, unsurprisingly, repeated in aid practice. In the HI framework, bureaucratic actors pursue their own interests—including a natural desire for autonomy—and operate through their own systems, which are resistant to change. This leads to co-ordination problems as actors pursue their own initiatives, and inertia when it comes to developing new ideas and approaches. 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 interagency consultations on certain issues, and have designed approaches that reflect this thinking. The BMZ's internal policy documents represent a

partial strategy for the aid programmes under the Ministry's competence. They do not—and are not intended to—provide strategic guidance for Germany's aid programme as a whole, which includes humanitarian aid and programmes such as the transformation partnerships under AA competence, as well as the myriad initiatives of other federal ministries and the German *Bundesländer*. All of these ODA-providing actors have their own decision-making systems and interest constituencies, and while there has been ad-hoc policy co-ordination, operational co-ordination at the country level has been sporadic at best.

There have, nevertheless, been some notable successes. Germany's humanitarian aid to the MENA region, which is an AA competence, has increased substantially. This has been complemented by innovative measures from the BMZ, such as the "cash for work" programmes in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, which aim to bridge the gap between short-term humanitarian and longer-term development assistance (BMZ, 2019). Co-ordination between the BMZ and the AA has been more difficult on issues where the division of labour between the ministries' mandates is not formally defined, and where both have been sensitive about their autonomy. One example is the lack of co-ordination 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, 2019). 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.

At the level of country operations, hundreds of national and local projects and training programmes have been financed by German aid. Most of these are valuable in themselves, and there are interactions between them. They do not, however, add up to a comprehensive set of engagements that address the MENA region's core development priorities in the wake of the Arab uprisings. One example that illustrates the outcome of strategic ambiguity, fragmentation in the German aid system, and the ad-hoc prioritization of security is Tunisia, where Germany spent USD 76 million in the social infrastructure and services sector in 2015. This aid was spread across 89 projects, ranging from integrated rural water resources management (USD 1.82 million) to "education for democratization" (USD 1,300) to "sewage sludge disposal" (a USD 2.8 million loan). Aid was distributed by several agencies, including BMZ, AA, the German Interior Ministry (for several police and border control-training programmes), the federal health, environment and education ministries, the states of North Rhine-Westphalia (which financed the USD 1,300 democratization project) and Hamburg, and the KfW which distributed several ODA-eligible loans (OECD, 2017).[5]

This seemingly random pattern, which is repeated in 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, BMZ, KfW and GIZ have explored ways to reduce fragmentation through closer alignment of technical co-operation projects with the large financial co-operation initiatives in the country. These measures are, nevertheless, unlikely to reduce fragmentation significantly, since—as in Tunisia—many projects are financed and monitored by the AA, the German Parliament, the environment and education ministries, and the federal states (OECD, 2017).

With regard to securitization, there is no question that the domestic political debate on refugees, which has strong securitized overtones, has had a major impact on the German MENA aid programme

[5]OECD-DAC aid figures are reported in US dollars.

(Bohnet, 2017). Increases in German aid have been publicly justified by assurances that money will be spent on fighting the "root causes" of forced migration (CDU/CSU Fraktion, 2015). There have been increases in support for programmes for supporting returned migrants and for initiatives 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 policy-making circles. In this context, the BMZ has publicly contradicted the Ministry of the Interior and refused to tie aid to co-operation in the repatriation of illegal migrants (Ziedler, 2017).

The general tendency towards securitized 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 co-operation 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 former Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, have been reticent in their criticism of increasing repression following the 2013 coup d'état in Egypt (Marx, 2015). 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).

Nevertheless, 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, securitization has only had an indirect impact on policy and practice. While there has been a tendency towards risk-averse policy-making 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.

Strategic ambiguity, the prioritization of stability over transformation, and country-level fragmentation do not prevent Germany being considered a legitimate partner by governments and non-government actors in the MENA. This is due to Germany's consistent humanitarian, legalist, pacifist and multilateral approach to the region, exemplified by the country's abstention from the 2011 UN Security Council Resolution 1973 authorizing 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 mediation efforts to end the Syrian war (Steinmeier, 2016). Germany's legitimacy does, of course, require caveats. Although Germany's reputation in the 'Arab street' is highly positive after opening its borders to refugees from Syria, its efforts are small in relation to those of Syria's neighbours (Ostrand, 2015). Moreover, specific measures targeting 'migration management', conducted at the EU-level but with full German engagement, indicate that the risk of increasing securitization in the future is high. An example of this is the German and European support for the Libyan coast guard, which has been accused of complicity in human rights abuses (UNSC, 2017).

5 | CONCLUSIONS

This article 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, let alone a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to the region as a whole. 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 and to try to help insulate Arab states from their own weaknesses. In this sense, aid supported the Arab social contract, where states provided people with an acceptable standard of living in return for quiescence on the distribution of power and wealth (Rougier, 2016). The AHDRs argued that this should change—a theme continued in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

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. The fact that these initiatives are managed by an array of federal and state-level agencies—with little discernible co-ordination—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, nevertheless, be inaccurate to surmise 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 *Willkommenskultur* that initially greeted the Syrian refugees who arrived in Germany in the autumn of 2015, and also through their generally positive integration into German society and its labour market (Oberhuber, 2018).

The big question for Germany's aid policy-makers is whether a co-ordinated approach based on a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy is really worth working towards, or whether it would be better to remain strategically ambiguous. 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. 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 must set priorities,

but must also be flexible enough to find compromises between conflicting goals and, above all, be targeted towards patient, long-term progress.

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 broad, but 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 co-operation. 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 Germany to consider how its domestic policies are impacting on developing regions and countries. Achieving policy coherence in the SDG context is highly challenging, since the 17 Goals inevitably require complex trade-offs. Nevertheless, the most problematic incoherencies in Germany's MENA engagements could potentially be ironed out in the context of a regional strategy explicitly based on the 2030 Agenda and prioritizing the goals that most clearly address the development deficits identified in the AHDRs. 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. A German whole-of-government strategy would send a clear signal to others that the time for change has finally come.

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APPENDIX 1

German ODA commitments to MENA countries 2009–2017 (million euros)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
North Africa Total	**300.38**	**516.00**	**419.07**	**607.12**	**851.78**	**1292.11**	**905.13**	**668.29**	**1062.05**
Algeria	9.23	14.80	8.17	3.09	4.68	10.65	5.26	14.05	14.28
Egypt	124.90	344.09	112.55	102.00	118.16	293.53	172.81	84.01	305.86
Libya	2.58	2.66	11.03	5.47	4.91	4.93	11.81	26.27	202.40
Morocco	44.99	37.42	5.03	435.31	485.05	701.25	265.36	301.43	92.97
Tunisia	87.66	80.90	158.11	37.64	147.76	150.26	167.92	184.78	376.38
Not attributable (NA)	31.02	36.12	54.18	23.60	91.22	131.49	281.98	57.75	70.17
Middle East Total	**453.59**	**283.45**	**327.21**	**494.44**	**672.97**	**821.68**	**892.44**	**2166.43**	**2580.89**
Iran	31.91	33.48	37.36	43.71	43.26	44.63	55.47	55.26	66.08
Iraq	25.81	30.89	23.17	18.49	17.70	99.68	121.58	473.28	597.30
Jordan	72.30	36.11	21.33	139.89	86.55	115.66	111.01	201.16	399.52
Lebanon	28.97	19.69	22.63	19.07	16.48	90.17	51.18	329.48	230.73
Oman	0.46	0.75	0.00	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	137.53	153.10
Syria	98.57	43.49	36.04	80.99	238.26	210.36	249.14	773.91	834.21
Yemen	59.83	33.46	88.68	61.34	72.90	88.12	104.86	115.29	230.28
Not attributable (ME)	17.66	28.72	26.22	35.81	87.43	75.13	116.94	80.53	69.67
Total MENA	**753.97**	**799.45**	**746.28**	**1101.56**	**1524.75**	**2113.79**	**1797.58**	**2834.72**	**3642.93**

Source: BMZ (n.d.) Bilaterale ODA-Zusagen nach Förderbereichen

APPENDIX 2

German ODA commitments to the MENA region by sector 2009–2017 (million euros)

North Africa	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Social Infrastructure and Services	215.87	118.59	218.77	258.40	478.04	271.07	406.26	359.57	590.40
Economic Infrastructure and Services	24.10	261.76	85.21	296.92	250.59	761.37	322.40	244.69	132.20
Production Sectors	22.91	95.96	65.03	16.26	12.48	138.00	7.41	10.10	31.41
Multisector	10.02	20.19	21.08	13.70	46.73	42.21	87.45	43.02	34.32
Programme Assistance	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.53	0.80	225.00
Action Relating to Debt	19.47	19.47	19.47	19.47	27.95	23.89	1.17	0.00	0.00
Humanitarian Aid	7.50	0.00	9.50	2.38	36.00	55.58	78.91	10.12	48.72
Unallocated/ Unspecified	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	300.38	516.00	419.07	607.12	851.78	1292.11	905.13	668.29	1062.05

Middle East	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Social Infrastructure and Services	365.99	228.41	256.98	369.20	346.45	395.43	439.39	497.75	878.87
Economic Infrastructure and Services	14.15	11.06	4.47	12.70	52.50	9.40	23.02	50.13	65.53
Production Sectors	4.45	0.49	7.03	0.03	1.00	22.55	4.02	12.70	9.02
Multisector	41.44	27.55	23.80	11.45	50.18	37.62	28.44	25.29	41.28
Programme Assistance	1.57	0.00	21.50	0.00	4.00	2.00	35.47	178.79	80.50
Action Relating to Debt	10.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.94	0.00
Humanitarian Aid	15.02	15.90	13.41	101.07	218.84	354.67	362.10	1400.83	1505.54
Unallocated/ Unspecified	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.16
TOTAL	453.59	283.45	327.21	494.44	672.97	821.68	892.44	2166.43	2580.89

MENA (NA+ME)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Social Infrastructure and Services	581.86	347.00	475.76	627.59	824.49	666.50	845.65	857.32	1469.26
Economic Infrastructure and Services	38.26	272.82	89.68	309.62	303.09	770.77	345.41	294.82	197.73
Production Sectors	27.36	96.44	72.06	16.29	13.48	160.55	11.43	22.79	40.42
Multisector	51.46	47.74	44.89	25.14	96.91	79.83	115.90	68.32	75.60
Programme Assistance	2.08	0.00	21.50	0.00	4.00	2.00	37.00	179.59	305.50
Action Relating to Debt	30.42	19.47	19.47	19.47	27.95	23.89	1.17	939.00	0.00
Humanitarian Aid	22.52	15.90	22.92	103.45	254.84	410.26	441.01	1410.95	1554.26
Unallocated/Unspecified	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.16
TOTAL	753.97	799.45	746.28	1101.56	1524.75	2113.79	1797.58	2834.72	3642.93

Source: BMZ (n.d.) Bilaterale ODA-Zusagen nach Förderbereichen

APPENDIX 3

German net ODA bilateral and multilateral disbursements 2009–2017 (million euros)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
North Africa (bilateral)	216.4	159.5	256.9	174.4	320.5	582.7	730.5	710.9	667.1
North Africa (multilateral)	132.8	120.3	147.8	224.7	168	196.6	166.7	266.4	273.6
Middle East (bilateral)	288.4	311.4	321.4	427.5	624	704.9	786.9	1889.5	2222.9
Middle East (multilateral)	156.9	172.1	110.4	109	176.4	187.1	202.2	238.1	257.8
MENA (bilateral)	504.8	470.9	578.3	601.9	944.5	1287.6	1517.4	2600.4	2890.0
MENA (multilateral)	289.7	292.4	258.2	333.7	344.4	383.7	368.9	504.5	531.4

Source: BMZ (n.d.) Bi- und multilaterale Netto-ODA nach Ländern

APPENDIX 4

German net ODA financial and technical co-operation 2009–2017 (million euros)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
North Africa TZ	**57.03**	**59.28**	**53.04**	**57.98**	**56.72**	**59.37**	**73.19**	**85.73**	**96.89**
North Africa FZ	**38.13**	**-15.40**	**69.47**	**-29.82**	**73.28**	**352.68**	**532.04**	**465.43**	**270.73**
North Africa - Other ministries	35.30	30.48	51.67	70.78	75.02	70.84	60.40	87.76	215.85
North Africa - Federal states	66.46	65.66	61.31	55.87	51.05	55.07	63.66	72.02	83.61
North Africa - Debt relief	19.47	19.47	19.47	19.47	64.22	44.55	1.17	0.00	0.00
North Africa TOTAL Net	216.38	159.48	256.90	174.37	320.49	582.72	730.52	710.94	667.09
Middle East TZ	**66.99**	**67.68**	**58.43**	**65.14**	**77.79**	**170.32**	**220.96**	**692.18**	**574.59**
Middle East FZ	**56.33**	**77.85**	**97.88**	**125.66**	**147.20**	**127.07**	**112.25**	**110.73**	**201.06**
Middle East - Other ministries	62.68	66.86	61.57	121.79	297.96	302.10	334.50	946.12	1288.04
Middle East - Federal states	88.98	97.08	100.12	107.71	100.93	105.31	119.21	128.82	159.24
Middle East - Debt relief	10.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.65	0.00
Middle East TOTAL Net	288.43	311.36	321.45	427.47	623.96	704.88	786.94	1889.50	2222.92
MENA TZ	**124.02**	**126.95**	**111.48**	**123.12**	**134.51**	**229.69**	**294.15**	**777.91**	**671.48**
MENA FZ	**94.46**	**62.44**	**167.34**	**95.85**	**220.48**	**479.75**	**644.30**	**576.17**	**471.79**
MENA - Other ministries	97.98	97.34	113.24	192.57	372.98	372.94	394.89	1033.87	1503.89
MENA - Federal states	155.44	162.75	161.43	163.58	151.98	160.38	182.86	200.84	242.85
MENA - Debt relief	30.42	19.47	19.47	19.47	64.22	44.55	1.17	11.65	0.00
MENA TOTAL Net	504.82	470.84	578.34	601.84	944.45	1287.61	1517.45	2600.44	2890.01

Source: BMZ (n.d.) Bilaterale ODA nach Instrumenten und Ländern