

Program

European Office Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Study-Launch “From Neutral Pillar to Strategic Partner. Towards a Comprehensive EU-North Africa Policy in the Age of a Rising China”

30th June 2022

15:00 – 16:00 (CET)

Online - Event

Relations between the European Union and North Africa are at a turning point in the age of a rising China. Even before the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the resulting breakdown in trade relations between the EU and Russia, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had announced the need to strengthen cooperation between the EU and Africa, and North Africa in particular. But not only the EU is strongly committed to deepen cooperation with Africa. China's relations with Africa and North Africa are strengthening. These are based primarily on Beijing's financial commitment and “investment appetite” in Africa, mainly North Africa.

Nevertheless, also the EU and North Africa share the potential to benefit from the dynamics of EU-Africa relations even if political and economic ties have become increasingly asymmetrical due to periods of trade liberalization and large refugee flows. However, a one-size-fits-all policy is not possible, and the characteristics of each North African country and its economic, technological, military, and diplomatic priorities must be assessed individually. In turn, the individual interests of foreign actors must also be considered to determine the EU's next steps. North Africa is faced with the agony of choice, being courted by the big geopolitical players. Therefore, the EU has carefully to consider the interests of foreign actors to determine its next steps. Never has it been more urgent to ask: How should the EU change its approaches to intervention in North Africa, given increasing Chinese competition in the global market, the domestic priorities of individual North African states, and China's existing relations in the region?

Our study “**From Neutral Pillar to Strategic Partner. Towards a Comprehensive EU-North Africa Policy in the Age of a Rising China**”, conducted by BANTS Consulting, offers results to these questions. The report shows how China-EU relations are developing on the ground in six different North African countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Sudan. Sudan is included in our study due to the UN's definition of North Africa, its Arabic language and its geography, separating it from the rest of Africa by the Sahara Desert. Based on country-specific analysis, the report traces growing trends in China-North Africa relations in thematic areas of increasing importance to the EU at national and international level: Economic and Military, Technology and Diplomacy. It further discusses the extent to which these relationships present opportunities and/or risks for China's relations with the EU. The report makes three concrete recommendations for the EU institutions' future engagement with the EU. **Guillaume Fine**, Deputy Head of Unit North Africa at the DG NEAR of the European Commission, Serge **Stroobants**, Executive-Director at BANTS Consulting who had the lead in the study, **Sophie Zinser**, one of the authors of the study, and **Ajla Hotic**, Senior Political Advisor for MENA Affairs at the EPP Group will discuss the findings of the study and what the EU needs to do now to avoid being pushed out of North Africa by China. We cordially invite you to join our online event on **Thursday, 30th June** from **15:00-16:00 (CET)**.

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15:00

Welcoming remarks

Dr Hardy Ostry

Head of the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

15:05

Presentation of the Study and its core findings

Serge Stroobants

Executive-Director at BANTS Consulting and Director Europe & MENA at the Institute for Economics and Peace

Sophie Zinser

Academy Associate, Middle East North Africa Programme and Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House

15:20

Panel discussion and questions from the audience

Guillaume Fine

Deputy Head of Unit North Africa at the DG NEAR of the European Commission

Ajla Hotic

Senior Political Advisor for MENA Affairs at the EPP Group

Sophie Zinser

Academy Associate, Middle East North Africa Programme and Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House

moderated by

Serge Stroobants

Executive-Director Executive-Director at BANTS Consulting and Director Europe & MENA at the Institute for Economics and Peace

16:00

Acknowledgement and end of the event