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**THE EU COMMON MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY:  
IMPACT ON THE BARCELONA PROCESS**

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## **Introductory remarks**

The Common Mediterranean Strategy (CMS) establishes the principles, objectives and instruments of the European Union's (EU) Mediterranean policy. That policy largely regards the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), set up in 1995 with the task of implementing the Barcelona Declaration.

The crisis in Israeli-Palestinian relations triggered by the failure of the July 2000 Camp David Summit has brought the Barcelona process to a stop as well. It must be pointed out, however, that there were already few remaining expectations for the Barcelona process. The ongoing uprising in Palestine has only dramatised a framework that was already almost stalled. Many basic disagreements and much mistrust have in fact emerged among the EMP Partners with respect to issues as important as human rights, terrorism and globalisation, to quote just a few. Most decisive has proven to be the profound asymmetry between respective security agendas: stability in the Mediterranean, on the EU side, and peace in the Middle East, on the other side. Over time, it has emerged very clearly that no kind of plurilateral Mediterranean co-operation can be achieved unless the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) first reaches an acceptable solution. Despite efforts from EU official quarters to affirm the contrary, there is no doubt that the Barcelona process is hostage to the MEPP, for the simple reason that the Arab governments cannot give Israel any peace dividend in the EMP framework before peace is fully established in the Middle East.

The CMS was set out five years after the inception of the Barcelona process. It is similar, both in wording and contents, to the Barcelona Declaration. Given the difficulties and obstacles encountered by the Barcelona process so far, what value can the CMS now add to it?

## **EU decision-making and the EMP**

The functioning of the EMP has been hindered by the entanglement between its own institutions and those of the EU<sup>1</sup>. Internal EU decision-making is sometimes so cumbersome that results are submitted to the EMP too late for the Southern Partners to be able to consider them with the care they deserve. More importantly, EU unanimity leaves little flexibility for negotiations within the EMP once EU decisions have been made. Consequently, in the EMP the Southern Partners usually face a situation of

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<sup>1</sup> See Geoffrey Edwards, Eric Philippart, "The EU Mediterranean Policy: Virtue Unrewarded Or ...?", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 11, No 1, Summer/Fall 1997, pp. 185-207 and Jörg Monar, "Institutional Constraints of the European Union's Mediterranean Policy", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3. No. 2, Autumn 1998, pp. 39-60.

having either to take EU decisions as they are or to reject them fully. A number of improvements have been introduced in EMP procedures; others concern EU decision-making. One such improvement derives from the application of the “common strategy” concept.

As is well known, according to the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), the European Council can approve Common Strategies to direct the Union’s policy-making with respect to international issues or actors. The “Common Strategy of the European Union on the Mediterranean Region” (CMS) is one such strategy.

Besides providing general guidelines for policy-making, the purpose of EU Common Strategies is to allow, in principle, for qualified majority voting on Joint Actions and Common Positions that the EU may be willing to assume in relation to specific aspects of the Common Strategy in question. By allowing for majority voting, the Treaty aims at permitting more rapid and effective policy-making by the Union. This should allow in turn for quicker decision-making in the EMP.

It must be noted, however, that such majority voting is not envisaged for matters outside Title V (the Common Foreign and Security Policy-CFSP) where the Treaty requires unanimity. This provision is particularly relevant in the case of the CMS, which involves a large variety of questions relating to all three pillars of the Union: questions pertaining to the European Community (first pillar), to the CFSP (second pillar) and to the area of freedom, security and justice (third pillar). This is explicitly recalled in the last section of the CMS.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence, the practical effect of the CMS in terms of the EMP’s decision-making effectiveness may be limited.

### **Transparency: to each his own**

The merit of the CMS in terms of transparency of the Barcelona process should not be underestimated either.

Six months after the inception of the process (July 1996) it was already clear that the Barcelona Declaration did not reflect so much a common agenda resulting from some North-South compromise as the broad views and aims of the EU.

This fact should not be interpreted as the result of deliberate EU unilateralism or an imposition on its Partners. The Barcelona Declaration was definitely born as an EU initiative. It was quickly and willingly accepted as it was by the Southern Mediterranean Parties because of the circumstances (in particular, the then prevailing feeling that, thanks to the launching of the Oslo process, the Middle East Peace Process was going to succeed very soon). As circumstances soon proved different from what had been anticipated, the Barcelona Declaration's inherent unilateralism surfaced. For this reason, the Partners agreed to start talks on a Euro-Mediterranean Charter of Peace and Stability with a view to working out a document which would reflect the Parties’ requirements more faithfully<sup>3</sup>. In other words, they decided to re-write the Barcelona Declaration.

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<sup>2</sup> “Acts adopted outside the scope of Title V of the Treaty on European Union shall continue to be adopted according to the appropriate decision-making procedures provided by the relevant provisions of the Treaties, including the Treaty establishing the European Community and Title VI of the Treaty on the European Union”.

<sup>3</sup> See *Elements de l'intervention de J.-P. Courtois sur le projet de la Charte de Paix et de Stabilité*, Séminaire de Wilton Park sur le Dialogue Euro-Méditerranéen, 19-22 Octobre 1998 (mimeo)

The talks on the Euro-Med Charter have proven unsuccessful so far and the draft that was supposed to be adopted at the Ministerial Conference of Marseilles (15-16 November 2000) was set aside instead, again because of the MEPP's negative course. Still, thanks to the talks that have taken place on the Charter and the approval of the CMS by the EU, agendas are no longer blurred.

It is now clear that the Barcelona Declaration does not reflect a shared Euro-Med statement. Such a statement is reflected, rather, in the concepts generated and accumulated by the talks on the Euro-Med Charter. With respect to these two documents, the CMS has the merit of providing the EU vision of Euro-Med relations. Without doubt, the CMS thereby improves transparency in the Barcelona process. By the same token, it decreases confusion and unilateralism, thus increasing the likelihood of a North-South compromise.

### **Towards a common ground in Euro-Med relations**

Although the Euro-Med Charter has not been adopted, the CMS has clearly been shaped by the new shared concepts that have emerged in the course of the talks on the Charter, in particular as far as security relations are concerned. In the CMS, the unsustainable ambitions of the Barcelona Declaration's first chapter (the implementation of a common area of peace and prosperity) have largely been toned down, so that with respect to the Declaration the CMS looks more realistic and reasonable<sup>4</sup>.

The most important difference is that the EU's early ideas of instituting a multilateral security regime similar to the one successfully established by the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) have rightly been abandoned. That kind of multilateral regime has first to prevail in the Middle East (as a result of the MEPP) and only then can something similar be established across the Mediterranean.

In fact, in the CMS it is no longer a question of operational and structural CBMs/CSBMs leading to arms control and limitation. In the CMS, security aims are more general and, while looking for possibilities for establishing forms of co-operative security (identifying common ground on security issues; working out partnership-building measures; providing information; establishing possible arrangements for conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation and the struggle against soft security risks; promoting the signature of existing security regimes, like the NPT, CWC, BWC and CTBT; pursuing the setting up of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction), the CMS does not aim at objectives that are inconsistent with either the EU institutional capabilities or the EMP strategic context.

The more realistic EU perspective introduced in the EMP framework by the CMS should now help the Parties to discover more easily what they have in common in the security field.

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(Ambassador J.-P. Courtois is the French Senior Official in the EMP) and Roberto Aliboni, "Political Dialogue and Conflict Prevention in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership," *The International Spectator*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1, January-March 2000.

<sup>4</sup> See the essays included in chapters 7-10 in Á. Vasconcelos, G. Joffé (eds.), *The Barcelona Process. Building a Euro-Mediterranean Regional Community*, Frank Cass, London, 2000 and EuroMesco, *Working Group on Political and Security Co-operation, Working Group on Arms Control, Confidence-Building and Conflict Prevention, Joint Report*, R. Aliboni, A. M. Said Aly and Á Vasconcelos, April 1997 8 (mimeo) [on line: [www.euromesco.pt](http://www.euromesco.pt)].

## **The CESDP, the CMS and the Barcelona Process**

EU aspirations to establish forms of security co-operation across the Mediterranean, though reshaped in a more realistic perspective by the CMS, have not been dismissed. At the same time, in a wider international security perspective, the EU is preparing to play a greater role by building up a Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP) in support of its CFSP and in the broad framework of the Atlantic Alliance. What impact will the CESDP have on EU Mediterranean policies and what relationship is there between the CESDP and the CMS?

The CMS points out that the EU is willing (and almost ready) to conduct all kinds of peace support operations (PSOs) of a military as well as civilian character in the Mediterranean area. With the development of the CESDP, the EU's actual capabilities to conduct PSOs will definitely increase and materialise, whereas those capabilities were more tenuous and indefinite when mentioned in the Barcelona Declaration. At the same time, the experience made by the EMP, as tentatively enshrined in the draft of the Euro-Med Charter, suggests that there are limits - in some case very strong - to security co-operation in its framework. The improvement in the EU's capabilities to conduct PSOs, may therefore be an asset or a liability, depending on circumstances.

In principle, it could turn out to be a liability to the extent that PSOs would broadly be regarded by the Arab world as a tool of Western interference. The greater capability of the EU to conduct such operations will definitely be perceived as an increase in the ability of the EU and the West to interfere with and intrude in domestic affairs.

Strong reassurances are thus needed in the framework of the EMP. Such reassurance must be based on two policies. First of all, the distinctions between the EU Mediterranean policy and the EMP framework must be accentuated and enhanced. As we know from previous paragraphs, this is already underway and the working out of the CSM is an important part of it. The process must be convincingly reinforced by providing the EMP with increasingly effective and ever greater autonomy and symmetry. The aim should be twofold: to convince the Southern Partners that (a) EU Mediterranean aims do not necessarily coincide with the aims of the EMP (where they have to be negotiated to be translated into common aims); and that (b) EU initiatives in the field of PSOs will be taken not only within the international legal framework of the United Nations but also in consultation with the regional framework of the EMP. This commitment is needed in relation to EU-led operations, but also (and even more so) with respect to the mechanism of joint decision-making that the EU is negotiating with NATO and the candidate countries.

Second, the EU should not overlook the fact that the global PSO capability it is presently developing is only part of the wider EU common security and defence capabilities that the CESDP will generate. At the regional level - in the Balkans as well as the EMP - those capabilities will provide the EU with an enhanced ability to negotiate with Partners, as well as with the know-how to conduct a number of co-operative security policies, in particular in the field of declaratory and operational confidence-building measures (CBMs), such as chief-of-staff seminars and PSO

training<sup>5</sup>. These policies would strengthen the regional security framework and add substance to the EMP. In this sense, the CESDP would be an asset.

As a last point, it must be asked what the CMS' impact on EU decision-making relating to CESDP will be? The CESDP is being developed in support of the CFSP. In this sense, there is little doubt that CESDP decision-making is ruled by Art. 23 of the TEU, which states that the paragraph enforcing qualified majority voting in adopting joint actions and common positions “shall not apply to decision having military or defence implications”. Consequently, such decisions will require unanimity. This means that a decision to undertake a peace support operation in the Mediterranean area comprised by the CMS, i.e. a “common action”, would require unanimity. So would policies to implement CBMs. At the time of presentation of this paper, the new institutions presiding over the CESDP and the CFSP are somewhat in flux. Nevertheless, a shift towards different ways of voting in the EU field of military and defence co-operation seems unlikely.

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<sup>5</sup> See Fred Tanner, “Joint Actions for Peace-building in the Mediterranean”, *The International Spectator*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4, October-December 1999, pp. 75-90.