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PROSPERITY, SECURITY, DEMOCRACY IN THE EU PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN

by Roberto Aliboni

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1. The *acquis* of the EU in regard to foreign and security policy is definitely predicated less on realist than liberal and neo-liberal views. The EU is based on a functionalist model of economic and political integration, which has brought about a model of interdependent security. The development of these models has been coupled by the consolidation of democratic polities. The interplay of inter-state co-operation and intra-state democratisation has given way to a community whose fundamental principles have been ultimately stated by the 1993 European Council in Copenhagen (democratic institutions, rule of law, respect of human rights, and protection of minorities).

All in all, despite uncertainties and shortcomings, Western Europe is today established politically on a combination of domestic democracies and inter-state democratic peace. This political regime is very close to the one political thinkers in XVIII and XIX century- Kant in particular - used to suggest: republican (i.e. democratic/liberal) governments; their commitment to avoid war; and a cosmopolitan law to guarantee individuals' rights across states' jurisdiction.

Thanks to these developments, post-Second World War EU's political and security thinking lays pre-eminently on the need to develop democracy and functional international co-operation - in particular economic integration - so as to reach conditions of democratic peace in inter-state relations, i.e. a peace based on the democratic and co-operative character of states and their external policies.

In emphasising co-operative security paradigms (co-operation rather than balance of power or deterrence, let alone re-armament, in order to overcome security dilemmas), EU security thinking is also profoundly influenced by the CSCE experience.

With the end of the Cold War and its existential threat, the EU is trying to establish its security internationally by expanding its model and promoting its values. This policy concerns in particular its closest regions, like the Balkans, the CIS area, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean area - a peculiar configuration stemming from no other rationale than EU history - is involved in one such policies, namely the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). In EU's eyes, the EMP is geared to stabilise its proximate Mediterranean approaches so as to contain and pre-empt a set of undesired spill-over effects.

2. In this perspectives, the EMP - if regarded as the Mediterranean policy response of the EU - is based on a set of assumptions consistent with the EU model of security.

The early agenda suggested by the Barcelona Declaration (which subsequent developments have unveiled less as a shared than EU-only manifesto) starts from the necessity to introduce democracy and pluralism as well as strengthen prosperity, good

¹ Director of Studies, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome.

governance and the rule of law, with a view to achieve, particularly among Southern states, relations based on the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflict and the respect of the fundamental principles of international law. In other words, the EU is looking for prosperous, secure, and democratic neighbours with a view to strengthen its own security.

Aims and policies set out by the Declaration assume a large and significant set of functional links (represented in the enclosed chart). In general, these links cut both ways. The broad relations between security, prosperity and democracy are definitely the most important ones. This paper explores such relations.

3. Let's begin with prosperity and security. While there are few doubts that prevailing conditions of security (as a broad prerequisite for political and social stability) contribute to foster prosperity (e.g. multiplying investment), the reverse argument may result more controversial. Is prosperity conducive to security in Mediterranean relations?

The EU response is that prosperity increases security globally (i.e. for all the Euro-Mediterranean actors) if it brings about political domestic changes in the South conducive, in turn, to inter-state relations based on democratic peace. As a matter of fact, the concrete response is that prosperity is conducive to security in the Euro-Med circle, if it consolidates democracy by (more or less gradually) replacing current Southern undemocratic political regimes.

Stability of Southern incumbent regimes is based, further to coercive instruments, on the persistence of pre-modern patterns of political and social relations, generally related to patronage and tribal or other traditional relations. If prosperity increases without changing these patterns of relations, there will be only limited political change. This prosperity may even bring about a consolidation of incumbent undemocratic regimes.

It must be noted that, in this perspective, external financial aid risks funding the durability of authoritarian regimes and thus preventing regional countries from reaching the inter-state conditions of democratic peace that the EU believes conducive to international co-operation and security.

On the other hand, if increases in prosperity happen to be significant, they can hardly take place without some significant social and political changes altogether. Such changes can result attenuated, however, by limitations to competition on the supply-side of the economy. Such limitations can assume different forms: a collusion of the state with an emerging business class, or an expanding state-owned economy, or a combinations of both. Political change can also be limited by adopting consociational patterns of relations among incumbent regimes and opposition, generally predicated on limitations to economic competition and some kind of division of spoils.

From the EU's point of view, an increase in prosperity would be as convincingly conducive to democracy (and democratic peace) as based on definite and strong domestic economic liberalisation and pluralism (though it is not at all to be excluded that a well and economically managed state-owned sector, especially in first stages of growth and change, can be of great help).

The social consequence of economic liberalisation and pluralism would be the emergence or strengthening of a politically self-reliant middle class. By shifting the

domestic balance of power, the emergence of a modern bourgeoisie or middle class - be it entirely rooted in the private sector or even in state-owned sectors of the economy, be it secular or religious - is the essential move to set in motion a course of political change or come to a compromise with incumbent regimes as a first step to reach a fully democratic regime later on (according to the models of Rustow and Przeworski as adapted to the MENA region by John Waterbury²).

To ease this new course, EU economic co-operation in the EMP should emphasise structural changes in economic institutions and laws, privatisation, more internal competition and overall liberalisation.

4. A successful emerging bourgeoisie would somehow bring about the rule of law, accountability and good governance in a more articulated and pluralist society. This would lay by itself the foundations of a political democracy. Whether this domestic democracy would comply with Kant's requirements for establishing a "perpetual peace" or - to use today's expression - a democratic peace, would also depend on the ideological and political context, however.

When coming to that context, liberals are very few in the ranks of present Arab middle classes. Nationalism, in secular or religious clothes, is by far the predominating ideology. If the middle classes will be able to establish a winning national social bloc (as suggested, for instance, by Binder's Gramscian model³), the political discourse of such bloc may easily aim at using prosperity to assert ideological and political interests regionally or internationally rather than consolidating Arab role in a globalising and interdependent international economy - as recommended by Abdel Monem Said Aly's geo-economics⁴.

Economic liberal reforms are definitely necessary if prosperity is to be made possible and the germs of political democracy introduced in the Mediterranean societies. Still, with respect to inter-state relations, the new ruling classes that would achieve this change in domestic arenas, may also prove more intransigent and assertive than present regimes. This remark suggests that, while the link established by the EU model between prosperity, domestic stability and democracy may well emerge, the link between the latter and international security (i.e. democratic peace) may be less certain, in contrast. There are "open questions" in the region - very similar to the "national questions" that used to characterise the two world wars European environment - that to a large extent remains insensitive to changes in prosperity and domestic democracy.

5. The conclusion just illustrated allows for further comments on the link between prosperity and inter-state security. On this link the EU response is well exemplified by a statement the European Commission made in 1993, when Brussels was preparing the renewal of its Mediterranean policy:

² John Waterbury, "Democracy Without Democrats?: the potential for political liberalization in the Middle East", in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London & New York, 1994, pp. 23-47.

³ Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: a Critique of Development Ideologies*, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

⁴ Abdel Monem Said Aly, "The Shattered Consensus. Arab Perceptions of Security", *The International Spectator*, Vol. 31, No. 4, October-December 1996, pp. 23-52.

The Community own experience demonstrates that war between previously hostile parties can be made unthinkable through economic integration. While this model cannot easily be transposed to the Middle East, it does suggest that the development of regional economic co-operation can be a powerful tool in reducing the level of conflict, making peace irreversible and encouraging the people of the region to learn to live in peace.⁵

This self-complacent statement provides the opportunity to mark differences between European and the Mediterranean situations and articulate in more detail the links between prosperity, democracy and security.

The interdependence created by economic integration has certainly made war unthinkable between European states. Starting economic integration, however, was at first made possible by the defeat of aggressive nationalism in Europe, the military occupation of Germany and Italy and their education to democracy by Western victorious powers (a chance today denied to Iraqis and conversely provided to Bosnians, Serbs and Kosovaris), and the compellence of Communist pressure from the East. The complex results of the Second World War established the conditions in Europe to solve the various “national questions” (in particular Germany’s). Without these developments, the necessary conditions to start economic integration would have been not there. For sure, such conditions were not sufficient as well, and in fact the success of European prosperity, democracy and security after the war must be ascribed to other factors as well. Still, the process could not have initiated without the necessary resolution of European long-standing political conflicts.

For these reasons, one cannot overlook that the transposition of the European model to the MENA area - the Middle East, in particular - is not only uneasy, as suggested by the Commission’s statement in the above, but hardly feasible until MENA “national questions”, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, doesn’t come to an accepted solution. Inter-state economic integration and other functionalist models look like a *posterius* rather than a *prius* with respect to existing political conditions in the region. This is not to say that inter-state economic integration and co-operation has to be excluded. We must be aware, however, that results will be very limited, unstable and contradictory. Integration will provide discrete results, still it would be unable to set in motion the virtuous Europe-like circle of prosperity, democracy and security. It may bring about some prosperity without democratic peace, or some domestic democracy without inter-state security.

6. Conditions to give way to the European experience would have not be sufficient either, without a number of characters the European founding fathers wanted to impress on their functional model of co-operation. The most important such characters is institutionalisation and the establishment of supranational powers. The application of this character to the early European Coal and Steel Community (that brought together the very symbols of the long-standing German-French dispute) was the factor that made the new Community succeed and, most important, opened the way to the successive communities.

⁵ COM 93 (375) Sept. 8, 1993.

Institutions and the empowerment of supranational bodies are the basis of present international co-operative regimes. In this sense, the establishment in the MENA of a Europe-like virtuous circle would need both institutions and supranational empowerment to be set in motion. Institutions, however, ought to emerge primarily in the MENA region itself - e.g. under the security and co-operative regimes envisaged by the Arms Control and Regional Security-ACRS Working Group in the multilateral track of the Middle East Peace Process or under the umbrella of regional organisations like the Arab Maghreb Union. They cannot be surrogated by EMP's institutions. For sure, co-operation in the EMP can help Southern institutions to emerge, but it would be unable to generate significant results unless Southern indigenous institutions do come into existence.

7. The last points discussed here suggest that, unless basic political conditions in the region are changed by peace among regional states, attempts at international economic co-operation and integration will remain weak. Even if these attempts will manage to increase prosperity, still democracy and - most of all - security will not necessarily follow suit.

A final argument concerns the asymmetrical effects of economic interdependence and inter-state integration. This argument, while giving somehow for granted a positive correlation between prosperity, democracy and security, puts in question a necessary positive relationship between interdependence and integration, on one hand, and prosperity, on the other.

The liberal model puts forward by the EU in the EMP may have - as already pointed out - good results in stimulating the social and political ingredients for domestic democratic regimes to be set up in Southern Mediterranean countries. The same model, though, is also ultra-liberist with respect to inter-state economic relations. It suggests a quick liberalisation and globalisation of the economies concerned, with a view to stimulate a fast and substantial inroad of private investment. It is directed at working as a powerful externality with respect to present somnolent and backward economies.

This is not the place to discuss whether globalisation and its inherent ultra-liberist approach are - to use John Gray's definition - a "false dawn"⁶ (also because, by now, the global sun is well advanced in its sky). As a matter of fact, the state of economic weakness and fragmentation in the MENA areas may require graduality, differentiation and a case-by-case approach.

In the end, a successful economic co-operation towards the South of the Mediterranean Sea remains the keystone to any chance that a virtuous circle between prosperity, democracy and security is set in motion. If economic co-operation failed, not only any virtuous circle wouldn't start, but the Southern state of economic insecurity - as identified by the neo-liberal school of thought in the eighties⁷ - with its consequences in terms of vulnerability, political turmoil, propensity to external conflict, etc., would

⁶ John Gray, *False Dawn. The Delusions of Global Capitalism*, Granta Publications, 1998.

⁷ See Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Liberalism and Security. The Contradictions of the Liberal Leviathan*, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute-COPRI, Working Papers, No. 23, Copenhagen, 1998 (mimeo); Bas de Gaay Fortman and Gonwongbay A. Myers, *Political Economy of Security Revisited*, Institute of Social Studies, Working Papers, No 137, The Hague, November 1992 (mimeo).

increase and make EU and Mediterranean security even more distant than it may appear today.