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**DIFFERENT CONCEPTS  
DIFFERENT APPROACHES  
PROSPECTS FOR BUILDING A COMMON LANGUAGE**

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DIFFERENT CONCEPTS. DIFFERENT APPROACHES  
PROSPECTS FOR BUILDING A COMMON LANGUAGE

What prevails in Europe today is a culture of peace and co-operation. This state of affairs is relatively new in its history. It is the product, first, of the objective conditions for peace and co-operation that emerged after the Second World War and, second, of the Western victory at the end of the Cold War. The killings and destruction of the Second World War made European nationalism collapse. The overwhelming threat from the Soviet Union was key in triggering European integration and establishing an intra-European state of democratic peace. Finally, the victorious end of the Cold War is now allowing for integration and democratic peace to be strengthened and enlarged by the inclusion of the European East in that process.

This culture of peace has succeeded in Europe not because of its inner rationality or an inner European cultural propensity to develop such culture. Nor did it because of the handfuls of idealists and liberals who supported it. Its success has definitely took advantage of the factors just mentioned about, especially from European “prophets”. However, it was made possible essentially by the emergence of favourable environmental conditions, i.e. an economic, social, cultural, and political context fitting with the development of a culture of peace.

This prominence of environmental conditions must be kept in mind when assessing the fact that today state of affairs in the Middle East and North Africa is in contrast dominated by a culture of force. Again, this culture of force is not stemming from inner or basic factors. It is the product of environmental and historical reasons, where the conflict between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab countries has been a major stumbling block on the road towards a more peaceful and democratic region, definitely the stumbling block that has triggered a set of vicious circles. Whatever the causes, conflict is prevailing in the contemporary Middle Eastern and North African region and such conflict, while strengthening the culture of force with a view to deal with it, it is preventing whatever culture of peace from emerging.

The two shores of the Mediterranean - the present Euro-Mediterranean format - are thus permeated by two different cultures: one of peace and another of force. As things stand today, the Euro-Med area cannot be defined as a security complex - according to the concept set out by Buzan and Wæver. That they are not means that the Northern and Southern areas have two different, not matching security agendas. Consequently, they can hardly come to a full-fledged security co-operation, like the OSCE in Europe, although they can achieve some limited, still significant measures of co-operation specifically aimed at increasing transparency, confidence and partnership.

The opposition between a culture of force and one of peace is part of a wider cultural gap, whose extent is largely due to that very opposition and to the strong gap in environmental conditions. Because of this wider cultural gap, the Euro-Med format does not identify a community of states in the Deutschian sense either. In fact, for such community to exist, it must be based on the same pluralistic values system.

Existing gaps do not ease the definition and working of a Euro-Med security common ground. They do not exclude it, however. How can such gaps between different concepts and approaches be narrowed? Three clusters of measures can be suggested.

1. Contributing to changing the environment in the Southern regions, by relaxing and eliminating most significant constraints; for example, contributing to easing and solving the Arab-Israeli conflict in its varying dimensions;
2. Understanding perceptions as extensively and deeply as possible, so as to help dispel such perceptions and introduce measures and changes aimed at modifying them; for example, achieving transparency and as many declaratory confidence-building measures as possible;
3. Customising relations by enhancing common work on concepts, values, doctrines and languages; for example, by multiplying “people-to-people” relations and increasing educational exchanges.

While measures under 1 refer essentially to international relations and governmental policies and are directed at changing the environment, the clusters under 2 and 3 need a strong involvement of civil societies and the enhancement of dialogue - be it governmental or not - in a dialectical perspective. i.e. in the perspective of preparing and accepting changes and adaptations.

Measures of dialogue involving civil societies are mostly important because they introduce that process of “social learning” that is key to mutual adaptation in values, concepts and language and, by the same token, to the chance of shaping a cohesive community of states in the Deutschian sense within the Euro-Med framework.

All the measures geared to provide mutual clarification and information about concepts and values are the necessary premise to start any kind of dialogue and set a chance to dispel or modify perceptions and narrow gaps. By carrying out such measures, the Euro-Med Partners may have the chance to come to a common language. This common language does not mean the homologation of concepts and values but a situation whereby they can cohabit even if they remain different from one another.

To conclude, it must be stressed, however, that the process of dialogue which can enable concepts and values to cohabit ought to be coupled by a successful modifications in the environment. At the end of the day, context remains the key factor on any process whereby cultures are expected to change.