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**POLICY ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC POLICY  
IN THE EURO-MED CONTEXT:  
EUROMESCO AS A CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURE**

*by Roberto Aliboni*

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***MeSCo and EuroMeSCo***

EuroMeSCo (Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) is a network of institutes of international relations dealing with political and security issues and Mediterranean affairs. The network was founded in Sesimbra (Portugal) on 7-8 June 1996 on the occasion of the third annual meeting of MeSCo, the Mediterranean Study Commission. In Sesimbra, MeSCo's members took note of the fact that a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) had meanwhile been established by the Barcelona Declaration in November 1995 and transformed MeSCo into EuroMeSCo by adopting the EMP's geographic and political format.

While members in the MeSCo did not amount to more than 18 institutes (one from each of the following countries: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey), EuroMeSCo members come from 26 countries plus the Palestinian National Authority, basically, the members of the EMP. Furthermore, "national" affiliation is no longer limited to one institute per country. Final decisions about by-laws and membership will be taken at the annual meeting of the network that will take place in Tunis at the end of September 1997. At that time, the passage from MeSCo to EuroMeSCo will be completed and the network will assume the shape of a full-fledged association with an international status and a number of member institutes which promises to be high (ca. 100-120).

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What is the purpose of EuroMeSCo? In order for the tasks and goals of EuroMeSCo to be understood, a first reference should be made to Article 3 of the draft of EuroMeSCo's by-laws: "The purpose of EuroMeSCo is to study and to encourage the study of all issues pertaining to the relationship between the countries of Europe and the Mediterranean, to make proposals designed to facilitate and develop that relationship and to submit them to private and public organisations, both national and multilateral, as well as disseminate information about both as widely as possible."

The by-laws point out two important aims of the network: (a) to carry out policy-oriented activities and (b) to disseminate information inside and outside the network itself. However, a more complete and substantive idea of the aims of EuroMeSCo can only be obtained by going back to the debates and ideas which presided over the establishment of MeSCo and which were subsequently inherited by EuroMeSCo.

The early papers through which MeSCo was promoted reveal very clearly that such a network was expected to help the promotion of dialogue and understanding between the countries of the Mediterranean area by encouraging both among institutes of foreign affairs at once rooted in their respective civil societies and having an impact on public policy. For this reason, the network was intended to provide information, to support research, institution-building and technical training, and to improve communication among the institutes involved. A number of more detailed goals were listed, among which the following may be worth mentioning:

- (a) to enhance mutual awareness of perceptions and concepts of security by countries involved;
- (b) to create a locus for integrating analyses on the different dimensions of "Mediterranean" security;
- (c) to encourage the coordination of research programmes and pave the way towards greater

compatibility in approaches to strategic studies;

(d) to facilitate exchange, collaboration and technical aid among institutes;

(e) to increase the independence of institutes and centres for international and strategic studies;

(f) to encourage the creation of institutes of international relations and centres for strategic studies of a private nature in the countries where they are lacking.

The basic idea underlying MeSCo, therefore, was that of creating a dialogue between civil society-based institutions with a broad role in the making of public policy in order to ease understanding and cooperation between countries in the formulation of international and security policies. This basic goal entailed the attainment of collateral objectives such as improving mutual information and exchanges, encouraging joint research endeavours and supporting institution-building efforts. This legacy has been embodied in EuroMeSCo.

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As is well known, at the beginning of the nineties the European Community -- about to become the European Union -- stressed decentralized cooperation, i. e. cooperation among bodies in civil societies aiming at influencing international intergovernmental relations, as a most important tool in both Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. In fact, the so-called Renewed Mediterranean Policy, worked out by the EU Commission in 1991, already included decentralized cooperation and civil society in its policy framework. These ideas have ultimately been received into the policy framework of the EMP. There is no doubt that MeSCo and EuroMeSCo belong to the same conceptual framework that sustains the EU policy of cooperation, in particular in the context of the Renewed Mediterranean Policy and its subsequent embodiment in the EMP and the Barcelona process.

For these reasons, during the drafting of the Barcelona Declaration, the EU Commission put forward in the Working Plan annexed to the Declaration the idea that -- with respect to the development of the Political and Security Partnership -- "Foreign policy institutes in the Euro-Mediterranean region will be encouraged to establish a network for more intensive cooperation ...?". At the same time the EU Commission contacted MeSCo and encouraged it to expand into EuroMeSCo. It was this expansion that was implemented in Sesimbra six months after the November 1995 conference in Barcelona.

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In the Revised Draft of the Plan of Action (RDAP), currently being negotiated by the Senior Officials Committee of the EMP, EuroMeSCo is correctly identified as a Confidence-Building Measure. First of all, the RDAP describes the appropriate context for confidence-building: "Greater confidence in the Euro-Med region should be sought by enhancing mutual understanding and broadening the spectrum of common understanding on important issues in order to promote regional stability. The political dimension of cultural interchanges is to be seized upon to highlight shared values and common aspirations." With respect to this conceptual framework, it lists four possible CBMs, one of which is the "establishment of a network of foreign policy institutes (EuroMeSCo)". (It must be noted that this expression is not correct, since EuroMeSCo, as encouraged as it may have been by the Eu Commission, is an independent association established by its members independently of the Commission (or anyone else): the right expression should be "collaboration with and support of the EuroMeSCo network").

How can EuroMeSCo actually work in its capacity as a Confidence-Building Measure related to the Barcelona process?

### ***Policy analysis and public policy in the Euro-Med context***

In order to answer this question, some reflection is needed about policy analysis and public policy in the Euro-Mediterranean context: how are international and security policies analysed in that context? in which institutional framework are policies studied? and, how is the implementation of

policies influenced by such analyses and institutions at the governmental level?

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Willson states that, even if nobody believes in a substantive and clear distinction between "policy" and its "execution", "the democratic theory of government still presupposes its existence and acceptance" (1). As arbitrary or imaginary as these two policy levels may be, it is true that they are important from the point of view of a democratic vision of government and society, as the distinction leaves room for theorizing about the interaction between government and civil society in policy analysis (the way in which policies are worked out and their performance evaluated) and public policy (the policies pertaining to steering and governing polities).

Two different approaches can perhaps be devised in looking at the rationale of such interaction. By far the most important approach used today comes from the experience of the English-speaking world which concentrates on how *interactions* between egoistic interests, analytical contributions and policy-makers manage to influence policy-making and, as a result, coalesce into public policy. Another, more "classical" approach, emphasises *rationality* as the factor that affects (or ought to affect) public policy-making. For example, the founder of the Italian International Affairs Institute (IAI), Altiero Spinelli, explains in his memoirs the rationale underlying the establishment of the IAI (a typical public policy institution) as follow: "This institute must be, as far as international politics is concerned, a permanent seminar for political intellectuals and a machine for them to be able to exercise political influence. Ultimately, that was Plato's agenda when he founded the Academy" (2). Though Mr. Spinelli's approach may appear more fascinating from a Mediterranean/classical perspective, it is the approach of the English-speaking world which has prevailed with a format closer to what is widely known as "think tanks" than to the Platonian Academy.

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What is a "think tank"? According to the definition of James A. Smith: "The more mundane reality is a warren of rented offices in which a handful of researchers monitor the latest political developments, pursue short-term research projects, organizes seminars and conferences, publish occasional books or reports, field telephone calls from reporters, and work hard to obtain foundation grants or corporate support to keep their enterprise afloat" (3). Though this picture may have a vivid existential flavour for all those who work in a think tank, the social and political relevance of "think tanks" is explained rather more precisely as the task of conducting policy analysis aimed at influencing public policy-making, or -- stated more simply -- policy-oriented research reflecting both rationality and varying interests and orientations coming from the civil society. Craufurd D. Goodwin has given a significant title to his contribution in a book devoted to public policy-making: "The Fifth State. Institutions for Extending Public Policy Debate in Emerging Democracies" (4). Very aptly this title points out that "think tanks" have the role of "extending public debate" beyond the mere executive governmental level and that, in doing so, they act as a "fifth state" or power (the media being, as is well known, the fourth). Twenty years earlier, Willson had come to the same conclusions in analysing the process of policy-making in Britain and the role played in it by interest groups, the press and policy-analysis institutions (5): "... such a layer of people and institutions has some significance: for this is the only segment of politically inclined British society which has the time to devote thought and action to policy-making of the relatively long-term sort" and adds that such institutions have the merit of attempting "to reduce the facts and the powers of public affairs to some sort of rationality (albeit a biased rationality)" and of bringing forward "some compelling new ideas" (6).

Taking into account the varying elements of the debate on the nature and role of today's institutions for policy analysis and public policy, Giuseppe Zampaglione comes to the following definition of "think tank": "Think tanks are independent, non-profit, private organizations, separate from political parties and working outside universities and public administrations. Think tanks analyse, plan and submit both specific and general proposals, mostly in the economic,

political and legal realms, at the national as well as international levels. The principal task of think tanks is to disseminate, through varying channels, the outcome of the analyses and reflections made in house by external collaborators" (7).

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Though with a view limited to international and security relations, this was more or less the notion which presided over the first selection of institutes made when MeSCo was created. Subsequently, the document that introduced the notion of EuroMeSCo's membership maintained MeSCo's conceptual framework: "The Institutes belonging to the network reflect in principle the following characteristics: they are institutions (a) dealing with international relations and especially international security, (b) carrying out policy-oriented research, (c) with a domestically and internationally recognized "national" reputation and character; (d) with an important and regular, though not exclusive, Mediterranean programme of activities; (e) of a mostly private and non-governmental character and, whenever government-related, with a substantial degree of independence in pursuing their research activity" (8).

The notion that will ultimately be retained through approval of the EuroMeSCo statutes may reflect a wider and looser definition of membership: there is a tendency to include not only university centers on Mediterranean affairs (normally not related to the public policy process in the sense that think tanks are), but also a number of governmental or government-related think tanks, especially from the southern Mediterranean countries and Scandinavia. This tendency stems from the fact that this kind of institution has been widely supported by governments in the Scandinavian countries in the framework of their neutral and peace-related foreign policy goals. On the other hand, this kind of institution is either totally lacking in some Mediterranean countries (with the exceptions of Israel and remarkable exceptions in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia), as a consequence of the underdevelopment of civil societies, or it is organically linked to governments, such as in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Syria.

To some extent, these facts of life must be accepted, although EuroMeSCo policy should contribute to triggering middle-term changes by encouraging a drive towards privatization, for only when these institutes are private will their dialectic contribution and role in democratic society makes sense in terms of public policy-making.

### ***EuroMeSCo as a confidence-building measure***

Let's go back now to our question: how can EuroMeSCo actually work in its capacity as a confidence-building measure related to the Barcelona process?

The ways EuroMeSCo can build confidence are manifold: (a) by improving and spreading information on Mediterranean-related international and security affairs in the civil societies of the countries concerned; (b) by upgrading information and awareness about strategic perspectives and security perceptions in the public opinion and those "layers" of civil society which are committed to policy analysis and have an impact on public policy-making; (c) by encouraging long-term convergence in strategic and security thinking in civil society as well as in public policy-making; (d) by increasing understanding in international circles, particularly among diplomats, negotiators and other inter-governmental envoys; finally, (e) by strengthening the civil society in the EMP circle, thanks to the reinforcement of the institutes of foreign policy and their independence. Let's look into some of these points.

Despite diversities in character, on average, EuroMeSCo members will work in their respective countries as elements of public policy-making. Their international networking is in itself a factor of international cooperation because joint work within the network will be reflected in the national processes of public policy-making and will in turn help inter-governmental relations to converge. But the way in which EuroMeSCo members will work together and the goals they will try to attain will also be very important, not only in influencing international

relations through their impact on national public policy-making but also, and more importantly, in creating the grass-root analytical and intellectual factors needed for governments to converge inside the EMP framework. Furthermore, there are many things that cannot be easily done or discussed in inter-governmental circles and that can, on the contrary, be put forward easily in an informal and non-committal framework such as EuroMeSCo. This brings us to a more detailed discussion of EuroMeSCo's specific tasks and methodologies.

Probably the most important contribution that EuroMeSCo can make lies in its ability to increase transparency in the security relations among EMP countries.

Because of its informal character, EuroMeSCo may be able to foster an in-depth dialogue about strategic perspectives and security perceptions. There are fundamental differences in perspectives and perceptions within the EMP sphere. From a conceptual and ideological point of view, these differences are more extensive and important in the Mediterranean than they used to be in East-West relations. Furthermore, the Euro-Mediterranean environment is very fragmented and its security is affected by a constellation of actors and factors which are external to the area itself. As a result, there is a multiplicity of focuses and oppositions in the Mediterranean area (North-South, South-South, Arab-Israeli, Arab-European, pan-Arab - trans-Atlantic, etc.), making dialogue among them especially necessary and helpful.

Joint research, like that presently carried out by the two Working Groups set up within EuroMeSCo with the task of analysing and reporting about security conditions in the Mediterranean area and the outlook for confidence-building, conflict prevention and arms control, is certainly suited to the aim of increasing transparency and building confidence. The habit of analysing and comparing different strategic perspectives is bound to be an important factor of convergence. If the civil society-based dialogue succeeds in narrowing the gap between strategic visions and security perceptions, EuroMeSCo will have acted as a crucial CBM and the result will be a fundamental convergence in inter-state Mediterranean relations.

However, in order to succeed in fostering convergence in strategic thinking and awareness, of no less importance is public debate, which can combine with the research process and its results in civil society and in relations between civil society and governments. In this sense, meetings and information play a strong and indispensable role.

Transparency can be strengthened by EuroMeSCo in two other ways: by contributing to seminar diplomacy and by arranging exchanges of staff and personnel among the institutes involved within the framework of simple stages, longer stays for research purposes and on-the-job training for junior researchers. Such exchanges have been used successfully in developing the EU countries' relations with Eastern Europe; the institutes of foreign affairs have been involved in these programmes and projects. Similar endeavours could be developed through EuroMeSCo or with its help in the EMP sphere.

Another kind of contribution by EuroMeSCo is related to policy-analysis and policy-oriented research. Joint suggestions from EuroMeSCo work can help the Barcelona process in its search for joint policies and analyses and can also contribute to EMP convergence and cohesion.

Finally, EuroMeSCo can contribute to strengthening civil society by fostering independence and institution-building. As already mentioned, while think tanks and similar institutions play a full and independent role in some EMP countries, in others, this role is weak or too closely dependent on governments. In developing its role of cooperating with governments in the EMP, EuroMeSCo may be tempted to accept members organically linked to governments or having excessive involvement in governmental or official action. This would be a mistake. In order to utilise its CBM capacity and comply with its role as an element of civil society, EuroMeSCo must strengthen the ability of its members to provide independent evaluations of both public policy and international relations and provide the technical cooperation and advice needed to make its members strong and independent. This is not only in the interests of EuroMeSCo but also of the EMP because the fundamental factor that makes EuroMeSCo work as a CBM is its

independence in the process of policy analysis and public policy-making. If this role is not independent, dialectic and based on dialogue and if it proves unable, in the end, to give civil society a role in the Barcelona process, EuroMeSCo will become a weak duplicate of governmental policy-planning units and, as such, unable to act as a factor in building confidence in the Euro-Mediterranean sphere.

### Notes

(1) F.M.G. Willson, "Policy-Making and Policy-Makers", in Richard Rose (ed.), *Policy-Making in Britain. A Reader in Government*, MacMillan, London, Melbourne, Toronto, 1969, pp. 355-68.

(2) Altiero Spinelli, *Diario Europeo 1948/1969*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1989, p. 487.

(3) James A. Smith, *The Idea Brokers. Think Tanks and the Role of New Policy Elite*, New York City, The Free Press, 1993, p. xv.

(4) The chapter is published in Craufurd D. Goodwin, Michael Nacht (eds.), *Beyond Government. Extending the Public Policy Debate in Emerging Democracies*, quoted as forthcoming in Giuseppe Zampaglione, *Think Tanks. Ruolo, organizzazione e finanziamento dei Think Tanks americani*, unpublished manuscript. See also Alberto P. Martini, *Aiutare lo stato a pensare (e il pubblico a capire). L'esperienza americana della policy analysis*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, May 1996.

(5) Lawrence W. Martin, "The Market for Strategic Ideas in Britain", in Richard Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-72, who provides some insight into the public relevance of the then emerging Institute of Strategic Studies as a kind of institution allowing "commentators" on security and defence affairs (such as Alastair Buchanan) to enhance their influence and advice on public policy.

(6) Willson, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

(7) Zampaglione, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

(8) MeSCo Secretariat, IEEI, *Building a TransMediterranean Network for Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean. EuroMeSCo Activities 1996-97*, Sesimbra 7-8 June 1996.