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**THE EUROPEAN UNION AND
MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY**

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The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), established by the ministerial conference held in Barcelona on 28-29 November 1995, is the framework in which the European Union (EU) is developing its new Mediterranean policy. Partners to the EU in this undertaking are twelve Mediterranean non-member countries (MNCs) of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area¹ with more or less long-standing relations with Union institutions. This paper takes into consideration (a) the factors which affect EU members' security perceptions; (b) the policy responses provided by the EMP to Mediterranean security challenges; (c) the impact of the EMP on some major EU international relationships, i.e. Turkey, Russia and the United States.

Mediterranean factors affecting EU security

The new relationship the EU is seeking to articulate with the MNCs stems primarily from security and stability concerns.

Security and instability are hardly new problems in the area. However, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the growing role Asian and Latin American countries are acquiring on international markets have added new important dimensions to old challenges. Four main factors have a security impact on the European Union and its members today:

- the quick demographic reversal that is taking place in the basin between North and South;
- the slow economic growth and the large unemployment which prevail in Southern Mediterranean countries;
- the political vacuum coming from the inability of poorly legitimized Arab regimes to broaden political participation and consensus;
- the large number of inter-state and intra-state conflicts stemming from the above mentioned factors, as well as the ensuing strong trends to rearmament and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

These factors confront Europe with a set of challenges like immigration, other spill-over effects (terrorism, drug trafficking, etc.), weapons accumulation and, most of all, that of a proximate regional context that is both economically weak and politically unstable.

Immigration from the Muslim countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean basin generates cultural tensions inside the host countries, which tend to translate into international tensions. It also brings with it a set of political domestic tensions from the sending country which also tend to affect international relations. All in all, immigration presents European societies with thorny adjustments and cultural dilemmas domestically as well as political tensions externally.

Domestically, it exposes European democratic regimes to the risks of enforcing illiberal policies. In intra-EU relations it sheds light on historical and cultural differences with respect to immigrants and makes the implementation of free circulation of persons in the EU more difficult.

¹ Seven Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia) plus the Palestinian National Authority and four other Mediterranean countries (Cyprus, Israel, Malta and Turkey).

Internationally, problems stemming from immigration tend to give cultural factors an undesired weight and lend credibility to doctrines like “the clash of civilizations”.

Economic weakness and demographic trends in neighbouring countries foster migration and other undesired spill-over effects. Political instability contributes to these same effects and creates incentives to rearmament and forms of hostility towards Europe. In fact, rightly or wrongly, Europe (as part of the West) is seen, by opposition groups, especially Islamists, as an instrument of global power and oppression in the disguise of universal values and is believed to support the regimes these same groups are strenuously fighting against.

Moreover, in a globalising international economy in which the development of regional and inter-regional articulations are important factor of competition, the economic weakness of its neighbouring countries is regarded as a danger by the EU. While the American and Japanese economies benefit from solid and well balanced relations with their neighbouring regions, the same is not true for EU’s commercial and economic relations with the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership’s policy response

(a) Regionalisation of economic relations

In order to face these challenges to Mediterranean stability and European security, in addition to a set of more specific policies intended to deal with the social and “soft security” dimensions (immigration, cultural dialogue, crime, etc.), the Declaration approved at Barcelona singles out two main instruments of collective cooperation: (a) the “regionalisation” of Euro-Mediterranean economic cooperation; (b) the establishment of a mechanism for regular political cooperation and the implementation of a common area of peace and stability.

The EMP agenda for economic cooperation is centered on the implementation of a free trade area (FTA) by the year 2010. The FTA, in turn, is expected to set in motion a variety of radical changes which would enable the Arab economies to take advantage of the growth opportunity provided by the free trade area.

The establishment of the EMP will put an end to the non- reciprocal industrial preferences enjoyed so far by the MNCs within the framework of their past agreements with the EU. As a consequence, the MNCs will have to do away with protection and permit free access to EU industrial products.

This agenda is a very serious challenge for the MNCs, for it will produce extensive exposure to EU competition without providing any significant additional market. Indeed, one may wonder why they accepted it. The almost response is that the MNCs had no other choice. As a matter of fact, the agreements made during the Uruguay Round will erode their European preferences and, if they don’t proceed to make their economies reasonably competitive now, they will soon become increasingly marginal and poor. Having no alternative but to enable their economies to compete internationally, the chance of doing it within a regionalist scheme may facilitate the task. In fact, the FTA is regarded as a way of stimulating economies on the supply side, of compelling less developed countries to improve productivity and of creating a “public good” which will generate externalities, thus encouraging private investment and technology inflows. Another opportunity is offered by the fact that they can pursue this option in a framework in which they would be assisted financially and technically by the EU.

For these reasons, the debate is centred, rather, on the strategies the MNCs should adopt- such as deregulation, incentives to domestic and foreign investment, public finance and other

macroeconomic policies--in order to go through such a difficult transition. We won't enter into this debate here, but it must be noted that the EMP contemplates a set of policies to help the MNCs' transition. First, financial aid has been increased considerably (even though per capita aid remains three times lower than that devoted to the Central-Eastern European countries). It now amounts to 4.685 billion ECU (approximately US\$6 billion), which will be coupled with a similar amount in loans from the EIB, the European Investment Bank. Second, unlike what used to happen with the old association agreements, these financial resources will not be allocated immediately on a country-by-country basis but will be engaged and disbursed according to partners' individual ability to perform and succeed in reaching assigned targets. Thirdly, the multilateralisation of the market as well as the establishment of South-South regional links inside the FTA is regarded within the EMP's agenda as an essential condition for the Partnership's success. The simultaneous enlargement of the market to all the non-EU partners should act as an important demand-side advantage emanating from the FTA. For this reason, beside economic restructuring and assistance in reducing socio-economic gaps within the MNCs, part of the EMP's financial aid will be devoted to supporting regional economic cooperation and development. Moreover, the rules of origin will be construed so as to give preference to products including as much import as possible from other FTA partners.

(b) political cooperation for peace and stability

The EMP provides an entirely new element in EU-MNCs relations by establishing a mechanism for Mediterranean political cooperation (MPC) and by planning the implementation of a common area of peace and stability. Though the MPC may be related to all components of the EMP, there is no doubt that it will above all inspire and direct the implementation of the area of peace and stability.

The MPC is a very light mechanism. But it is also very innovative, in that it is not confined to specific objectives and has a regular character. Political consultation is carried out by a permanent Committee of High Officials which reports to the Ministers. The same Committee negotiates the implementation of the Mediterranean area of peace and stability planned by the Barcelona Declaration.

As in the CSCE/OSCE, there are linkages between the "human dimension", democracy, peace, and arms control and limitation. The EMP partners are committed to comply with human rights and the rule of law and democracy in their political systems. On the other hand, they are also committed to comply with international conventions establishing cooperative regimes in the field of weapons and security (NPT, CWC, etc.).

It is difficult to predict whether and to what extent the mostly authoritarian Arab regimes will comply with these principles and enable the common area of peace and stability to materialize. To some extent the principled "common area" approved at Barcelona is the price Arab MNCs had to pay to strengthen economic relations with Europe and retain a say in their relations with it. Hopefully, in order to preserve such a say, they will have to contribute to developing the EMP and, with it, the principled common area that it includes.

What is the substance of the EMP's area of peace and stability? The pursuit of the principles on which peace and stability are predicated within the framework of the EMP means that the EMP will concentrate on attempting to develop and reinforce a Mediterranean framework for crisis management, in particular a capacity for preventive diplomacy and crises prevention. The conditions for such a development in the Mediterranean are different from those prevailing in the OSCE area, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. In most of the OCSE area there are diffuse and vital interests towards developing regional political integration and ensuring the

survival of collective security. Such interests may be absent or much weaker in the Euro-Mediterranean area. Nevertheless, preventive diplomacy and crises prevention are accepted and even welcomed by many MNCs because, while allowing political cooperation with the EU, they are less intrusive than other instruments of cooperative and collective security.

The EMP partners envisage the establishment of CBMs and measures of arms control, including the setting up of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The Declaration says that the Parties will:

- a - consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms;
- b - refrain from developing military capacity beyond their legitimate defence requirements, at the same time reaffirming their resolve to achieve the same degree of security and mutual confidence with the lowest possible levels of troops and weaponry and adherence to CWC;
- c - promote conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, security, prosperity and regional and sub-regional cooperation;
- d - consider any confidence- and security-building measures that could be taken between the Parties with a view to the creation of an 'area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean', including the long-term possibility of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean pact to that end.

EU policy and other international actors

After two years, the EMP balance-sheet--as established at the second ministerial meeting in Malta (April 1997)--appears somewhat disappointing. While the economic and trade dimension of the Partnership is more or less advancing, security and socio-cultural aspects are lagging behind. The stumbling block has been the negative evolution of the peace process in the Middle East, after the turn-about caused by the 1996 spring elections in Israel. It must be pointed out that the Barcelona Declaration itself made progress in the EMP's security policies contingent to the advancement of the Middle Eastern peace process². No wonder, therefore, that the stall in the peace process has immediately been reflected in the security dimension of the Barcelona process.

The relevance of the link between the Barcelona process and the peace process in the Middle East, however, is not a transient incident. As a matter of fact, without a definite and satisfactory political settlement, Arabs are unwilling to implement any confidence-building measures in the Middle East. On the other hand, without CBMs it is not possible to attain measures of arms control or limitation. Furthermore, concerned by Israeli nuclear weapons, Arabs argue that cooperation in the field of CBMs and arms control would be possible in a situation of fair balance of power only. A fair balance of power and the absence of major territorial or political disputes, according to Arab analysts³, were the conditions which made it

² In the preamble of the Declaration the parties state that "the Euro-Mediterranean initiative is not intended to replace the other activities or initiatives undertaken in the interest of the peace ... The participants support the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East ...".

³ For one such statements see Mohammad El-Sayed Selim, "Egypt and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Strategic Choice or Adaptive Mechanism?", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No.1, Summer 1997, p. 87: "It has

possible for European countries to move towards cooperation and gradually build up the CSCE cooperative regime⁴. By the same token, unless and until similar conditions are implemented in the Middle East, the peace process will remain undefined. The evidence is that the EMP area of peace and stability cannot really be implemented either. All this suggests that the EMP security dimension may prove too vulnerable to and dependent on the South-South security situation, and that a cooperative regime in the Mediterranean cannot be established unless a cooperative regime is first established in the Middle Eastern sub-region.

Beside difficulties in establishing the area of peace and stability planned by the Barcelona Declaration, the Mediterranean policy of the EU faces some challenges in its relations with other old and new Mediterranean actors: Turkey, Russia and the United States. With all, there are problems of cooperation and competition in the Mediterranean. Such problems are particularly important with respect to the US, because of the Atlantic Alliance's links and the still undefined security identity of the EU.

At the European Councils of Cannes and Essen in 1995, the EU members drew a line between countries which in time can become members of the Union and countries without any such perspective. While Eastern Europe is destined for membership, Southern Mediterranean countries are not, with the exceptions of Malta (which no longer wants to be a member) and Cyprus ...

Neither the Arab countries nor Israel want to become members of the EU (or NATO). However, this is not the case with Turkey, which has submitted an application and has a long standing relationship with the European Community and the Union but has been put on the other side of the line by the latter. The government in Ankara is not happy about this situation.

It must be kept in mind that Turkey, while not included in the EU group of High Officials which negotiates the setting up of the EMP area of peace and stability with the representatives of the MNCs, is a full member of NATO and an associated member of the Western European Union-WEU (the latter, according to the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, is due to become the military "arm" of the EU, though in Amsterdam such a development was put off--perhaps forever!). What impact will this ambiguous Turkish role have on EMP's security arrangements? Is Turkey going to be a stabiliser, along with the EU members, or will it add to the stabilisation challenge the EU is trying to face through EMP?

Where Turkey is going to sit is not negligible for the chances of the EMP to provide stability and peace to the Mediterranean area. The issue of Cyprus and the growing involvement of Turkey in the Middle Eastern conflicts (its disputes with Syria, the Kurdish issue and its new alliance with Israel), in the Balkans and in the Caucasus (and, to some extent, in Central Asia can become as many stumbling blocks in the EMP circle and multiply the sources of Mediterranean instability which the EMP is supposed to reduce. Furthermore, because of the dispute with Greece, these Turkish embroilments in the Middle East and the Balkans may--unlike the Arab-Israeli conflict--turn into a North-South conflict as well: a kind of conflict that is not included, nor foreseen, by the EMP for the time being. The inclusion of a North-South

worked in Europe because there were no territorial disputes, and because Europe began the process of establishing CBMs from the point of strategic balance". In fact, political and territorial disputes in Europe were not lacking at all (suffice it to think of Poland and Germany). What is true is that these disputes were "suppressed" by the global security challenge of bipolar confrontation.

⁴ A well-noted American analyst like Geoffrey Kemp shares his Arab colleagues' point of view: "...contemporary European history suggests that rapid progress in the Middle East arms control, and security issues must be preceded by advances in the political realm" ("Cooperative Security in the Middle East", in Janne Nolan (ed.), *Global Engagement*, The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1994, p. 410).

conflict would change the strategic context in which the EMP was brought in and probably make it unfeasible.

All this suggests that in some way Turkey should be more clearly associated to the European side of the EMP to prevent this country from becoming part of the problem instead of the solution.

This raises the question of the relation between the EU Mediterranean policy and Russia's interests in the Mediterranean, as such and as a gateway to the Black Sea. Russia too is beyond the line drawn by the EU (and NATO). Russian analysts ask that Russia be a party to or more strictly associated with Western and European arrangements in general, including those in the Mediterranean. The fact that it has not been included is perceived by some Russian analysts as a threat to Russian national security, though seemingly remote.

Early CSCM projects did encompass the Soviet Union and the US in the Mediterranean circle because the CSCM was an extension of the CSCE which includes both superpowers in its membership. However, the EMP and its arrangements (like the area of peace and security and the free trade area) are not an extension of the CSCE, but an independent EU policy. On the other hand, Russia is no longer a superpower with global interests and capacities. While a stakeholder in the Mediterranean, its stake has qualitatively changed and in the eyes of the Southern Mediterranean countries its strategic status is so low that Moscow's co-presidency of the Madrid conference almost amounted to nothing. In the Southern Mediterranean view this status is even narrower than the EU's, because of the economic resources the latter possesses and Russia does not. An argument for Russia's inclusion in the EMP can, therefore, hardly be supported.

It should also be noted that Russia's attitudes towards the Mediterranean area, sometime inspired by religious and nationalist feelings, do not match Western European interests and efforts of stabilisation. Russian support of Serbs with respect to Bosnian Muslims and Greeks with respect to Turkey is a negative factor from the point of view of European policies and interests, not only in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean but in the Arab Mediterranean world as well.

Nonetheless, it is true that Russia has interests and memories in the Mediterranean which deserve respect as well as attention and that there is a geopolitical relationship between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea which requires a political and institutional response. From the point of view of the EU and its members, cooperative Russian involvement in the southern regions could only be helpful and positive. But, such a response cannot involve Russian membership in the EMP. Three suggestions can be made: (1) The Mediterranean and the Black Sea could be explicitly included in the consultations which will take place in pursuance of the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the NATO and the Russian Federation"; (2) Russia could push for a revitalisation of the OSCE's Mediterranean Dimension, which has been completely (and perhaps mistakenly) neglected; (3) many people in Europe would welcome direct and institutionalised consultations between Russia and the EU on Mediterranean and Middle Eastern affairs, which could be reflected in an *ad hoc* agreement between the two entities.

While relations with Russia have a modest impact on the viability and credibility of the EMP security policy, those with the US are crucial to the latter. The EU transatlantic relationship is related to the following question: while there is no doubt that the EU is a credible partner with respect to economic or social and cultural challenges, is the EU credible in the political and military realms as well? In the Mediterranean area, security is dominated by the Arab-Israeli conflict and, with respect to this conflict, the only credible partner to date is the

United States. Consequently, the EU's attempt to set up a Euro-Mediterranean scheme for cooperative security may be doomed to failure if it is not coordinated with the US in the transatlantic framework of relations, especially with respect to NATO.

On this question, one should not be misled by the linkage between the Middle East peace process and the Barcelona process. As we have seen, the Barcelona Declaration recognises that its own process cannot proceed unless the peace process succeeds. The real question stems from the military and political linkage embedded in the Atlantic Alliance. Let us assume that the peace process does advance and that the way to the implementation of the EMP area of peace and stability is open.

In this situation, unless more substance is provided to the WEU and the relations of the latter to NATO are clarified, the implementation of a number of CBMs more related to military security and arms control, as well as arms control in itself, would require European coordination with NATO and/or the United States. Only a limited number and kind of CBMs (like common exercises, joint military training, and so on) could be implemented in the EMP framework, not to speak of arms control or limitation.

In this situation, whenever intervention in conflict is required (and accepted by the Southern Mediterranean partners), the EU may be unable to intervene without the logistical support of NATO and the US. It could also happen that NATO would be preferred to the EU, the EMP notwithstanding. For example, in the event that there were an Israeli-Syrian agreement on the Golan Heights and this agreement asked for an international force of observers, one can easily imagine that the request for setting up such force would more likely be addressed to NATO than to the EMP or EU/WEU.

This is not to argue that there is no room for an EU security role in the Mediterranean and that the EMP area of peace and stability is doomed to failure. The argument here is that, in order to take action on Mediterranean security, more coordination is needed in transatlantic circles: from *ad hoc* coordination to giving WEU more substance (thus solving the enigma of the EU Defense and Security Identity within the Alliance framework and enabling CJTFs to work). If such coordination is not effected, the EU attempt to create a cooperative security scheme in the Mediterranean may be futile or become discredited.