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**STATUS OF THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY  
PARTNERSHIP**

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## STATUS OF THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

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### **The concept of the Euro-Med “area of peace and stability”**

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), established by the Barcelona Declaration<sup>1</sup>, is an inclusive scheme of co-operation envisaging regular consultations, both multilateral and bilateral, aimed at achieving common measures and policies in the realms of security, economic development and society (i.e., trends as different as cultural relations, education, struggle to international criminality, terrorism, drug trafficking as well as migration and other movements of people in the region).

The three realms we have just mentioned correspond to the three “pillars” of the Declaration. The first pillar is directed at implementing the “Political and Security Partnership”, or -as the Declaration says- at “establishing “a common area of peace and stability”. Beside the principles and mechanisms to pursue common security, it contemplates the basic principle of political consultation and co-operation as well, a principle which is supposed to be the mover of the entire scheme. The partners “agree to conduct a strengthened political dialogue at regular intervals”.

From the point of view of security, particularly if the latter is understood in a narrower sense (i.e. in a military or military-related sense), the EMP belongs to the family of the “co-operative security” schemes [Nolan; Handler Chayes, Chayes]. Such a scheme is primarily referred to by the Barcelona Declaration as the task of implementing a Euro-Mediterranean “area of peace and stability”. Janne E. Nolan defines “co-operative security” in the following way [4-5]:

Co-operative engagement is a strategic principle that seeks to accomplish its purposes through institutionalized consent rather than through threats of material or physical coercion. It presupposes fundamentally compatible security objectives and seeks to establish collaborative rather than confrontational relationships among national military establishments. The basis of such collaboration is mutual acceptance of and support for the defence of home territory as the exclusive military objective and the subordination of power projection to the constraints of international consensus. ... Reassurance would be the principal objective, as distinct from deterrence and containment, although as a practical matter both of the latter objectives would be securely accomplished.

Though in this paper we deal with security in the narrower sense which pertains to the Barcelona Declaration first “pillar”, i.e. the implementation of an area of peace and security, it must be pointed out that the EMP must be regarded as a process predicated on a concept of broad security. In this sense, the economic and socio-cultural goals of the

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<sup>1</sup> The English text of the Declaration is published by *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No 1, Summer 1997, pp. 177-87.

Barcelona process are as relevant as the implementation of the “area of peace and security”. The broad notion of security to which the Barcelona process is related deserves some elaboration.

The EMP was initiated by the EU as a balancing act between its strong drive towards integration and co-operation in the European East and the risk of a progressive neglect towards its southern approaches. Such balancing act between East and South was primarily directed at securing cohesion between the Northern and Southern members of the EU by establishing a more balanced common external policy and asserting the “indivisibility of security” among the EU members. The concept of an “indivisible security is part and parcel of the very basic security concept of the EU and therefore it applies to EU’s partners as well, to the European East as well as the Mediterranean.

On the other hand, the EMP reflects the long-standing European debate on security as it includes not only the concept of “indivisibility of security” but also that of “comprehensive security”, i.e. the necessity to integrate military as well as non-military factors in order for international security to be attained. For a “civilian power” like the Union, especially after its enlargement to a number of European countries practising varying forms of “neutral” foreign policies, “comprehensive security” is important as an ingredient of its foreign and security policy as well as a factor of its identity.

Also reflected in the EMP is the European experience in security co-operation within the CSCE and OSCE. An early proposal for introducing in the Mediterranean area a “co-operative security” approach similar to that developed in Europe in the CSCE was put forward by the never implemented 1990 Spanish-Italian proposal to set up a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). This same approach was also largely present in the short-lived scheme of Western Mediterranean co-operation established in that same year, better known as “Five + Five” group. In a sense, the EMP is the son of the CSCM. This son is thus a kind of co-operative security scheme, predicated on the idea that Euro-Mediterranean security must be indivisible (in both EU and Euro-Med relations) and secured by a concept of comprehensive security policies.

### **Purposes of the “area of peace and stability”**

The section of the Declaration concerning the pillar of political consultation and security, repetitious and confused, is substantially divided into two parts, one dealing with general principles which are supposed to direct political and international co-operation among EMP members, and another one dealing with principles and purposes directed at the establishment of security co-operation in a narrower sense.

The part on principles is similar to the “Stability Pact” initiated by the EU in the framework of the CSCE/OSCE<sup>2</sup>: partners are engaged to comply with a set of principles related to the achievement of democracy and the rule of law; the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms; the respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference; the peaceful settlement of disputes; and the respect of diversities and pluralism through the rule of tolerance. The latter, in an area as culturally variegated as

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<sup>2</sup> The Stability Pact, established within the OSCE framework, comes from an earlier French proposal adopted subsequently by the EU as a “joint action” in the framework of the CFSP; see: “French Proposal for a pact of Stability in Europe”, in *SIPRI Yearbook 1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994) pp. 247-9.

the Mediterranean is particularly relevant to the achievement of co-operation. In fact, a much more articulated statement of tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue opens the section of the Barcelona Declaration dedicated to the third pillar and can be considered as an important qualification of the “list” contemplated by the first pillar.

The part more specifically devoted to security and its military component engages the partners to:

- consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms;
- 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 CCW;
- promote conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, security, prosperity and regional and sub-regional co-operation;
- 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.
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### **EMP talks on security: proposals and achievements**

In the talks conducted in 1996, the Committee of the Senior Officials of the member countries - one of the guiding institutions of the security pillar, the other one being the biennial Meeting of Foreign Ministers- has developed the principles set out by the EMP agenda by mean of three more specific agendas, whose content is included in as many documents: (a) the “Action Plan”, which identifies actions and groups of actions to be carried out for the EMP agenda to be implemented; (b) an inventory of CBMs and CSBMs; (c) a “Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability” which sets out a number of rules and principles intended “to provide the Euro-Med Community with a normative or institutional framework for dialogue and crisis prevention” [Tanner 1997: 6].

Let’s consider very briefly the proposals put forward by the Senior Officials in these three documents.

The Action Plan contains six annexes, i.e. areas in which common security policies are expected to be elaborated:

- Enhancement of stability and reinforcement of democratic institutions;
- Preventive diplomacy and good neighbourly relations;
- Confidence- and Security-Building Measures;
- Ways and Means of arriving at regional security, arms control and disarmament arrangements;
- Prevention of and fight against terrorism;
- Fight against organised crime and drug trafficking.

Each area is defined by a conceptual framework, setting out goals and directions for any concerned area, and by a list of operational steps to be taken in order for the area to be implemented.

For example, the conceptual framework on which the preventive diplomacy and good neighbourly area is predicated asks for the participant states to “engage in reflections on the methods which would allow exchange of information, on a voluntary basis, on the situation in the region and on security issues and explore the means of establishing a well structured, gradually evolving political consultation process, which will be underpinned by the principles of the Barcelona Declaration”. In this perspective, four operational aspects are envisaged: (a) the establishment of communication networks among focal points; (b) strengthening the dialogue as an early warning procedure (by setting up a Euro-Med “Situation Centre”) and establishing a dispute prevention mechanism; (c) the appointment of conciliators to facilitate political conciliation procedures; (d) peaceful settlement of disputes by *ad hoc* Euro-Med instruments (i.e. different from other available international instruments of the same kind).

As for the inventory of CBMs and CSBMs we have to refer here to the progress report issued by the European Commission in preparation of the second ministerial meeting in Malta on 15-16 April 1997 [Commission of the European Communities] as well as to the “Conclusions” of the ministerial meeting in Malta<sup>3</sup>. While the latter provide the list of the measures in operation, the former lists a number of measures which at the time Malta’s Conclusions were adopted were in the process of being agreed or implemented or under active consideration or analysis.

The following CBMs/CSBMs are listed in the “Conclusions” approved by the Ministers in Malta: (a) setting up a network of contact points for political and security matters; (b) exchange of information on adherence to international human rights instruments; (c) exchange of information on adherence to international legal instruments in the field of disarmament and arms control; (d) exchange of information on adherence to international instruments in the field of prevention of and fight against terrorism; (e) convening of diplomat seminars; (f) establishment<sup>4</sup> of EuroMeSCo network of foreign policy institutes.

The measures listed by the European Commission in its progress report, which at Malta were kept on hold however, are the following: “... a mechanism for co-operation in the event of natural and human disasters will be set up to ensure there is effective liaison between the disaster prevention and relief services in the region. The establishment of a network of defence institutes and the organisation of a seminar on the deployment of armed forces for humanitarian work ...” [7]. It must be noted that this list is reduced with respect to the list circulated on March 13, 1997 after the 7th Senior Officials meeting. In the latter list three more relevant measures had been pointed out: an Encyclopaedia of terminology on defence, security and stability issues (put forward by Italy); a Euro-Med regional yearbook on security (France); a framework for regular (1) meetings seminar, information exchanges, (2) visits, events of officials with politico-military responsibilities on a non-exhaustive list of themes (Ireland).

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<sup>3</sup> Malta’s “Conclusions” are published as an appendix to Calleya [15-22].

<sup>4</sup> EuroMeSCo enjoys the political and financial support of the Commission. Being a network of non-governmental institutions, it must be pointed out, however, that -contrary to repeated statements in the EU and EMP documents- it was established by its members and not by the Commission or the EMP governments.

What must be stressed in relation to CBMs/CSBMs -whether enforced or not- is that none of them goes clearly beyond the aim of increasing transparency and consolidating broad mutual confidence within the EMP framework. They are exclusively of declaratory nature, measures possessing an even incipient operational and structural character being ruled out from the EMP, at least for the time being.

The draft of the Charter that was taken into consideration prior to the Malta meeting envisages three main elements: (a) the principle of a strengthened political dialogue; (b) the engagement to promote the rule of law, democracy and human rights in the respective countries by complying with the international instruments listed in a first annex to the Charter (in practice the same principles which are mentioned in the Barcelona Declaration); (c) the engagement to promote a set of CBMs, to be included in a second annex.

While an inventory of CBMs and CSBMs is an element of both the Action Plan and the Charter, it is important to understand the difference between these two broad policy-frameworks.

A first difference is that the Action Plan is more pragmatic and flexible than the Charter, the latter being understood as an institutional framework with a normative character. Most important, however, is that the Charter is a framework essentially geared to prevent conflicts. In this sense, the Charter would not commit partners to deal with ongoing conflicts and related confidence-building and arms control issues. It would be a foundation for future regional security architecture [Daguzan: 5]. "The loose character of the proposals [of the Charter] would allow a security forum to emerge in the Mediterranean without a need for the military rivalries in the region (Israeli-Arab, Greek-Turkish) to be defused before co-operative security can take a foothold in the region" [Tanner 1996: 284-5]. According to the Charter's promoters, these features would make the Charter acceptable to the Arab partners. In fact, what happens is that the latter don't want to sign commitments in the EMP framework that are still to be negotiated or clarified with Israel in other frameworks.

Lastly, from an operational point of view, it must be added that, the Charter being adopted as the leading agenda of the process, the Action Plan results downgraded to a rolling list of topics to be picked up just in case, i.e. whether in relation to negotiations on the Charter or for other reasons.

This being a brief description of what was tabled in the course of the 1996-97 talks in the Senior Officials Committee, it must be said that the second ministerial meeting of the process, held in Malta on 15-16 April 1997, approved only a limited number of CSBMs and left aside both the Action Plan and the Charter. In fact, because of the adverse political conditions created in the meantime by the standstill of the Middle East peace process, the Arab partners refused to make the Barcelona process to take-off for the very reasons already pointed out in the above: as a matter of fact, establishing co-operative relations in the EMP whereas conflict is persisting in the Middle East peace process would be a non-sense.

## **The work ahead**

Despite these difficulties, the process remains alive. The will to keep it on has been evident in the Malta meeting [Calleya]. Besides, the complex nature of the process, i.e. the fact that it includes important economic and social dimensions further to security,

leaves enough room for some results to be achieved anyway, while waiting for the re-establishment of conditions more conducive to political and security co-operation in the Mediterranean.

While talks are resuming, two leading ideas are circulated in the Senior Officials Committee at the time this paper is being written: (a) coming to the approval of the Euro-Mediterranean-Charter and (b) giving substance to the latter by setting up a conflict prevention centre (which prior to Malta was contemplated in the Senior Officials' inventory of CSBMs as a "Euro-Med arrangements on conflict prevention and crisis management" proposed by Italy, Jordan and Egypt).

The Charter supposes a strengthening of the political dialogue. Such strengthening supposes, in turn, that early warning would become a full and regular function of the Senior Official Committee, similarly to what happens with the OSCE Permanent Council. The setting up of a centre for conflict prevention would be in tune with such development. As a consequence of these developments, the EMP, seated on the "cornerstone" provided by the Charter, would concentrate on conflict prevention. This would be a wise and helpful course. However, it remains to be seen whether, in the very limited breathing space left by the objectively weak political conditions for the EMP security co-operation to grow up, the Senior Officials would be able to follow up early warning by actually intervening on crises to prevent conflicts.

Past drafts of the Charter add to the general purpose of strengthening political dialogue a mechanism for addressing crises in case the partners wish to, i.e. the possibility for the Senior Officials Committee to hold "special meetings" in cases of tensions or crises at the demand of one or more partners. Another solution was planned by an earlier Malta's proposal for a Stability Pact in the Mediterranean [Tanner 1996: 284-5]. Malta's plan advocated the establishment of "round-tables" devoted to specific crises, upon demand of concerned parties, which would take place, however, outside the EMP framework. Needless to say, in the weak post-Malta political context, Malta plan may represent a more prudent and sensible solution.

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