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**EUROPEAN UNION SECURITY PERCEPTIONS AND
POLICIES TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN**

by Roberto Aliboni

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EUROPEAN UNION SECURITY PERCEPTIONS AND POLICIES TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN¹

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This paper takes into consideration, first, the security challenges the EU member states perceive with respect to the Mediterranean area, and, second, the policy responses of the EU states to such challenges and perceptions.

Mediterranean security perceptions regard an uneven set of military and non-military challenges, with an emphasis on the latter. The paper begins by examining military challenges and moves then to non-military ones. Finally, it considers the European overall Mediterranean security doctrine which links the two clusters of challenges.

This Mediterranean security doctrine explains policy as well as institutional responses actually undertaken by the EU states in the nineties. Such responses are considered in the last section of the paper. A brief conclusion provides an assessment of the EU Mediterranean policy effectiveness.

Military challenges: proliferation

No state in the Mediterranean areas of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) would be capable to conduct a full military attack on European countries and, in fact, no such threat is minimally perceived or even taken into consideration in the Northern part of the region (maybe with the exception of Turkey with respect to Syria). Military challenges and related risk perceptions in the North concern proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their delivery means.

According to many analysts, WMD and related missiles proliferation is less a threat than a risk for the European countries and the West. Its effects are likely to be less of military than diplomatic and political character. This is due to a number of factors, like:

- the pulling force towards proliferation, irrespective of its actual military effectiveness, is the political necessity to earn some strategic “weight” and status from the possession of WMD and missiles. As noted by Lesser and Tellis², these states want to be “taken seriously” by the West (as well as by neighbors). During the Cold War, these states could obtain strategic weight internationally by aligning or not aligning themselves in the framework of the global East-West confrontation. In a sense, WMD and missiles are a substitute for alignment in the post-Cold War world. By the same token, possessing WMD is regarded, particularly by Arab states, as a proof of their technological capacity, allegedly improving their political and strategic status;
- on the other hand, there is no doubt that many MENA states feel insecure with respect to both regional enemies and the West and for good. In this sense, WMD must be regarded as a form of gross military and political deterrence or as an instrument of interdiction and coercive diplomacy;

¹ Paper presented at the 2nd Annual SSI-Pepperdine Conference on International Security, Florence, 26-27 October 1998.

² Ian O Lesser., Ashley J Tellis, *Strategic Exposure. Proliferation around the Mediterranean*, Santa Monica (Ca): RAND, 1996, p. 7.

- many analysts point out that MENA countries' WMD and missiles are essentially targeted on their Southern neighbors. As a matter of fact, it is in the South-South context that MENA states face real military threats and more often than not have proven to be willing or able to resort to military instruments to solve their disputes, by diplomatic coercion as well as other forms of conflict. The North is not a primary target of Southern WMD and missiles, at least from a narrower military point of view;
- finally, whichever their use and motives, because of MENA's poor industrial and technological background, the military effectiveness of their WMD and related projection capacities are challenged by many analysts.

Despite the importance of non-military motives, their poor effectiveness, the lack of an adequate industrial background, their uneven development and their mostly South-South orientation, there is no doubt that southern proliferation of WMD and related delivery means affects regional stability in a very general sense. From a narrower military angle, it makes the European Union and its principal allies (the US forces deployed in Southern Europe and Turkey) more vulnerable. Southern Europe is already encompassed by a number of delivery vehicles. Even if such exposure remained a minor military threat to EU and EU's allies security, still it would bring about a degree of political and military interdiction. Dealing with a growing instability with less freedom of maneuver might prove very difficult and risky.

The EU states belonging to NATO have recognized the risks put forward by proliferation in the NATO Istanbul Declaration of 1994. In the November 1995 Barcelona Declaration³, signed by the EU states and 12 non-EU Mediterranean partners, there is a joint commitment against proliferation beside other commitments to contain or diminish the level of armaments as well as their offensive or inhumane nature.

Non-military security challenges: migration, terrorism and criminality

Though recognizing proliferation as a major risk, EU states' concerns are focusing on non-military security challenges. First, the basic European feeling is that much of the Mediterranean armed conflict is linked to global rather than regional factors and trends. Proliferation, just to quote an example, is not precisely a regional, Mediterranean trend. Containing such military trends and solving outstanding armed conflicts in the area requires an international management the EU can contribute to but cannot tackle in isolation.

Second, the EU aims at working out the conditions for stability in the Mediterranean area, by acting principally on political, social, economic and cultural factors. In the European vision, instability in the Mediterranean stems essentially from these non-military factors. Economic and social underdevelopment coupled with the rule of authoritarian regimes bring about instability domestically. Such domestic instability turns regionally into spill-over effects which intrude in Europe and affect European security. What is at stake is not national security in a conventional sense, but the security of European democratic polities and the welfare and civic order of the latter as they have developed after the end of the Second World War.

¹³ The English text of the Declaration is published by *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 1997, pp. 177-187.

The most important spill-over effects concerning the EU are related to immigration, terrorism and internationally organized criminality. These issues are contemplated by the third chapter of the Barcelona Declaration. As a matter of fact, rightly or wrongly, they are more and more important and visible in the daily political and social life of the European members of the Union.

Immigration is not a threat to employment, though unemployment is currently raging in Western Europe. With a European demographic growth approaching zero (particularly in Southern Europe) and a very poor propensity by young Europeans to accept menial jobs and mobility, immigrants are in fact almost badly needed economically. Western Europe, however, is not prepared to accept immigration (or more immigration) for political and, most of all, cultural reasons.

As a matter of fact, situations are varying from country to country because of very different legal, historical, political and cultural legacies towards immigration and citizenship. While in Great Britain and in some Northern European countries there is an articulated relationship between communities and the state which allows for the presence of even numerous immigrants' groups and a relatively high degree of cultural-political autonomy of the latter, in Southern Europe and in Germany this same relationship is definitely less flexible. This lack of flexibility makes relations with culturally assertive communities, like Muslim ones, very difficult, for these communities either don't accept assimilation (a mainly French solution) or just feel discriminated and marginalized (like in Germany, Spain and Italy) because, as well as they may be treated (but this is not always the case), they don't get the identitarian recognition they wish.

As a result of difficulties in accommodating a growing migration from the Mediterranean and other numerous areas (among which the Balkans play a political role definitely more important than that played by Mediterranean peoples), in Europe xenophobia and racism are increasing and giving way to organized political movements. Besides exacerbating tensions stemming from migration anyway, these developments put strains on the democratic character of the European polities. This is a first important risk perceived today in Europe by concerned democratic people and leaderships. At the beginning of the nineties, the EU Commission had explicitly warned about such risk and consequently advocated the necessity of a more articulated and important European Mediterranean policy.

A second risk comes from political links between immigrated groups, notably Muslims, and respective sending countries. European inability and unwillingness to integrate immigrated people, increasingly turning into xenophobic and racist criminal attacks to individuals and groups or mistreatments, is resented by Muslim and Arab public opinion in sending countries as an evidence of a wider and fundamental European-Christian hostility towards Islam and Arabs. In this respect it is linked to early European hesitations to intervene in Bosnia to defend Muslims. This alleged European hostility stirs in Muslim communities a sense of danger and reinforces their spontaneous identitarian assertiveness. Islamist activism is diffuse in Europe as a form of defense and identitarian assertiveness backed by substantive relations with religious-political organizations at home. In this way, migration brings the Islamist movements' anti-Western hostility inside Europe and tends to exacerbate difficulties in international relations.

To a large extent, immigration is a source of conflict and instability just because the European states are unable to agree on common policies. Joint policies to control immigration are now operated within the Schengen agreement (which provides for free movements of European citizens among a number of EU member states). Cooperation

within the Schengen agreement remains weak, however, because it is not yet predicated on more articulated joint policies with respect to migrants staying and working in the EU states. This risk to European security is largely due to European inertia.

To some extent, the link between migration and Islamist anti-Western attitude we have just talked about, explains also European involvement with terrorism. Immigration, in fact, brings about an environment in which terrorists are able to move with relative ease. While MENA terrorism is a new development in the United States, Europe is not new to terrorism coming from these regions. Sometime Europe is no more than a logistic base or a battlefield, like in the “Mikonos” affair. In other cases, Europe is more or less directly involved for its past colonial links (as in the case of France with current Algerian terrorism) or because it is regarded as a more or less direct player with respect to Islamists’ domestic and international interests.

Finally, immigration and terrorism link up with international criminality. Though an evil in itself, illegal immigration is more and more becoming a business managed by international criminality, functionally or operationally associated with other kinds of traffics, like drugs and armaments. Illegal traffic organized by international criminal gangs are another effects of instability. Intra-state and inter-state conflict as well as terrorism start the vicious circles of drugs and displaced persons trafficking in order to finance arms transfers. The unfinished cycle of conflict in the Balkans and in Northern Iraq-South-eastern Anatolia have shown the strict and formidable intermingling of criminality, conflicts and migrations.

Structural causes

These challenges are regarded by European analysts and governments as proximate causes of instability and insecurity in the Mediterranean. These proximate causes trace back to structural causes, however, i.e. the roots of instability and insecurity. In the Mediterranean area two main clusters of structural causes can be identified: (a) the weakness of Arab regimes and government on ground of political legitimacy; (b) the lack of good governance and political freedom bringing about political and social disruptions and economic underdevelopment. As the latter is not a secondary source of political radicalism and systemic opposition, the two clusters intermingle.

The chart appended to this paper is an attempt at mapping out the EU vision of the hierarchy of structural causes of instability in the Mediterranean and their linkages⁴. The chart is also a guide to EU policy responses intended to correct such causes or contain their effects. To be sure, the links established by the chart are not necessarily valid from a scientific point of view: on policy ground, however, they are helpful as they point out the political values and expectations which direct EU action. While this section describes the networking of structural causes of instability, as interpreted by the EU, next one will provide an overview of the policies worked out by the EU to attain stability in the Mediterranean.

⁴ This section is a version of part of an earlier study published in Italian by the author: Roberto Aliboni, “Riforme economiche nel Mediterraneo: il contesto politico”[The political context of economic reforms in the Mediterranean], in G. Barba Navaretti, R. Faini (eds.), *Nuove prospettive per la cooperazione allo sviluppo. I processi di integrazione economica e politica con i paesi del Mediterraneo*[New perspectives on development cooperation. Political and economic integrative processes with the Mediterranean countries], Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997, pp. 183-222.

The Barcelona Declaration principles and aims are largely inspired by the model of cooperation and integration of the EU itself. In a 1993 document of the EU Commission related to the “Future Relations and Co-operation between the Community and the Middle East” it was stated that

The Community’s 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 leave in peace.⁵

Strongly influenced by EU’s experience in dealing with post-Communist Central-Eastern Europe, the Barcelona Declaration puts forward a systemic interplay between democracy, integration and peace as the basic ingredients to affect root-causes of instability.

Consequently, the agenda suggested by the Declaration starts from the necessity to use the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) to introduce democracy and pluralism as well as strengthen political legitimacy and its underlying civil society. The emergence of such factors would allow, in turn, the achievement of inter-state relations based on peaceful resolution of disputes and the respect of the fundamental principles of international law (recalled in detail by the Declaration, in the same way as the Helsinki Declaration).

According to the model shown by the chart, the consolidation of peaceful relations between states would bring about stability in international as well as in intra-state relations. The existence of peaceful relations, especially in the Middle East, would open the way to a substantive disarmament and to the possibility of achieving some degree of regional economic integration.

Democratization is understood as a factor that changes and reduces the role of the state in the economy. The lowering of the role of the state in the economy would make it possible to liberalizing the latter and proceeding to privatization. This development would help regional economic integration and cooperation. At the same time, the overall domestic and regional stabilization coupled by the strengthening of the market economy would allow for capital abroad to return home (an extremely significant amount in the MENA region) as well as for foreign capital to come in in the form of direct investments and new technologies.

Economic growth made possible by political stability attained in intra-state as well as inter-state relations would allow for reducing unemployment, particularly in relation to young generations, and lowering poverty. These would be key-factors in discouraging political radicalization as well as emigration.

By indicating the introduction of democracy as the first mover of the virtuous circles just described in the above, the EU with the Barcelona Declaration has pointed out the structural causes of instability in the Mediterranean and the character and primary sources of insecurity in the area, at least from its point of view. The Declaration is not an explicit analysis of such causes but alludes to them indirectly by setting out an agenda directed at eliminating and containing such causes of instability. This is the topic of next section.

The Euro-Mediterranean security agenda

⁵ Communication from the Commission of the European Communities, COM 93 (375), 8 September 1993.

In the Euro-Mediterranean security agenda, as outlined by the Barcelona Declaration, there are two policy layers: a broader one is directed at shaping the structural factors which would allow for stability and, thus, security in the Mediterranean; a narrower one is constituted by specific policies to be implemented jointly and cooperatively by the members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

All in all, the Barcelona process resembles the CSCE/OSCE experience. It is a cooperative security scheme, in which the players are expected to gradually attain security and escape security dilemmas by the use of cooperative instruments (instead of being guided by policies of balance of power and deterrence). The cooperative security scheme envisaged by the Barcelona Declaration is strongly predicated on a concept of comprehensive security, in which both military and non-military factors are included and integrated. This is reflected (and is the outcome) of the EU analysis of the Mediterranean instability on which, as argued in the above, the security scheme is predicated.

It must be added that from the point of view of the EU, the emphasis on non-military factors doesn't come from objective analysis only but also from the very "civilian" nature of the European Union. The Treaty of Amsterdam having failed once again to provide an operational and well integrated Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to the Union, the latter remains more a civilian-economic power than a politico-military one. Having said that, however, it would be wrong to think that the EU is not pursuing military or military-related cooperation in the Mediterranean. Though to a minor extent and with poor effectiveness, military cooperation is anyway tried.

On this backdrop, the broader and structural layer of EPM cooperative security scheme is tasked to provide a common code of conduct which includes a set of basic principles for international cooperation and peaceful relations. The aim is similar to the Helsinki Act: the Barcelona Declaration commits its members to democratization, pluralism, the implementation of the state of law, respect for human rights and minorities, good neighborly relations, etc. as the frame which would make cooperative security work. Like the CSCE, the EMP is politically binding only. Its pivotal mechanism is the political dialogue, which is conducted in its institutions: the biennial Conference of Foreign ministers, the Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona process" (Euro-Med Committee), and the High Officials Committee. The political dialogue is aimed, first, to create cooperation needed to make the cooperative security scheme emerge and, secondly, to manage jointly what cooperation is actually worked out.

The narrower layer makes reference to the three chapters of the Declaration. The first and third chapters envisage a set of specific policies related to security, in practice to the military and non-military factors that have been pointed out in the two previous sections: WMD and missiles proliferation coupled with other military trends, and migration, terrorism and organized international criminality. The second chapter envisage a strong support to economic development and the integration of the Southern Mediterranean economies in the international setting by the creation at 2010 of a free trade area.

As for non-military factors, it is important to note that the Barcelona Declaration emphasizes the necessity of promoting the cultural dialogue between the different parts of the Mediterranean as a tool working across the board, i. e. in relation to the varying social and human dimensions that are involved in the broad notion of Mediterranean security and peaceful relations. The Declaration gives special emphasis to the role of civil society in reinforcing cultural understanding and, most of all, promoting political and economic liberalization and cohesiveness in their respective societies.

Beside the mentioned diplomatic and political instruments that can be used within the political dialogue, incentives to democratization are provided by a small fund devoted to support non-governmental initiatives to reinforce and spread democracy (Meda-Democracy). On the other hand, the fund destined to developmental aid is considerable (a little bit more than 4 billion ECU for concessional aid and as many from the European Investment Bank). The incentives to promote democracy, respect for human rights and law, are supported by a strict scheme of “conditionality” that is related to the disbursement of aid.

As for military factor, the Barcelona Declaration points out the prominent necessity to stop or contain proliferation, At the same time, it stresses other targets of arms control, arms limitation and disarmament as well as the necessity to promote confidence-building measures and introduce conflict prevention capacities into the scheme. The relevant key-passage of the Declaration points out that the Parties will:

- consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive -neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, 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 security, prosperity and regional and subregional cooperation;
- 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.

This set of measure is named by the Declaration “area of peace and stability”. In order to establish the “area of peace and stability”, the Senior Officials have begun setting out two main agendas: the Action Plan and, later on, the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability. While the Action Plan would be a list of measures and policies that the Partners would pick up and negotiate over time according to priorities and modes they would remain free to gradually agree upon, the Charter would be an institutional framework with a normative ambition and a stronger mechanism of political dialogue. In a sense, the Charter would be the “Euro-Mediterranean pact” mentioned at the end of the just-quoted passage and its substance would resemble to the Stability Pact in Europe established by the EU within the CSCE/OSCE.

The Barcelona Declaration is not exhausting the military-instruments available to the EU for achieving security in the Mediterranean. Beside the principles and policies the EU shares with its Mediterranean partners in the framework of the EMP, instruments available to the Union in the framework of the WEU and multinational forces set up by members of the Union, like Eurofor and Euromarfor, must also be taken into consideration (though they are not directed specifically to the Mediterranean). This instruments are part of the defense forces of the Union, its members and its allies and tasked primarily to their national security. There is no doubt, however, that their use is intended to cooperative purposes. These purposes are listed by the 1992 Petersberg Declaration, in which the WEU members have pointed out that military forces answerable to the WEU are to be used eventually for the management of crises as well as for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Eurofor and Euromarfor, made answerable to

the WEU (as well as NATO and other regional security organizations) by the governments of France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, are endowed with a special maritime mobility and for this reason have a natural destination to act in the Mediterranean (though not necessarily there).

Since 1993 the WEU conducts a Mediterranean Dialogue with Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (since 1995). In the first semester of 1998, the WEU Council decided to enlarge its Dialogue to Jordan as well. The Dialogue amounts to biannual meetings with representatives of these countries to exchange information. Recently, the non-WEU Mediterranean partners have been invited to visit, first, the WEU Torrejón Satellite Center (Spain) and, secondly, the WEU Planning Cell in Brussels. Principally because of the EU members reluctance to make the WEU work effectively, this organization's Mediterranean agenda (not unlike other agendas) proved weak. The Mediterranean Dialogue operates as a very broad confidence-building measure directed to enhance transparency. The establishment of Eurofor and Euromarfor, on the other hand, was not welcome by the Mediterranean partners (and countries at large) for these forces are not included in an explicit cooperative framework and would thus operate unilaterally.

Conclusions

EU security perceptions with respect to the Mediterranean are predicated essentially on non-military structural causes. Proximate causes of instability may well be of military nature, like proliferation. Still, non-military proximate causes, as migration or terrorism, are seen as most important. Accordingly, EU instruments to deal with security in the Mediterranean are less military than political, economic, and cultural in their character.

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the EU is overlooking military and military-related instruments and issues. The cooperative security scheme envisaged by what the Barcelona Declaration defines as the "area of peace and stability" is very important not only because the EU is aware of the fact that in the middle-longer term the level and quality of armaments in the region will be decisive for its overall stability (and will be no less important than non-military factors), but also because acquiring a capability to manage military and military-related relations is an important element for EU's ongoing political and defense integration. In fact, from the point of view of the EU, while Barcelona policies directed at improving economic development, containing illegal immigration, and countering terrorism as well as international criminality are of the utmost importance for European security, the implementation of the "area of peace and stability" corresponds to a no less important investment from both the point of view of security in the area and EU's political identity. In the light of these purposes, what is the balance sheet of the Mediterranean policies set out by the EU in the nineties?

In its three-years life the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has duly progressed in implementing its agenda of economic cooperation. Less so in shaping out the varying aspects of the security cooperation envisaged by the first and third chapter of the Barcelona Declaration. In fact, the balance sheet, after the second ministerial meeting in Malta (15-16 April 1997) and the ad hoc ministerial meeting held in Palermo on 4-5 June 1998, is somehow disappointing in this respect. It must be added that it is maybe disappointing more in relation to migration, terrorism and criminality than the "area of peace and stability".

While the standstill in the Middle East peace process has been a serious stumbling block on the road to build up the “area of peace and stability”, the EU and EMP inertia with respect to illegal immigration, terrorism and criminality is explained by the modest level of integration in the Union in relations to such matters, particularly immigration. In more general terms, the weakness of the CFSP is an important factor in slowing down the EU Mediterranean security agenda. It must be also noted, however, that -despite some rhetoric, especially in Southern Europe- EU security concerns concentrate elsewhere than in the Mediterranean, i.e. in the Balkans and in Russia.