

**DOCUMENTI
IAI**

**WEU'S ROLE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
AND EURO-MED PARTNERSHIP**

by Jorge Montealegre Buire

Paper presented at the conference on
"WEU's role in the Mediterranean and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership"
Rome, IAI, 4-5 December 1998

IAI9839

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

WEU'S ROLE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND EURO-MED PARTNERSHIP

by Jorge Montealegre Buire

Session I: the institutional framework

The institutional frameworks in which the initiatives that are undertaken in order to further euro-med collaboration are diverse and they include the WEU's euromediterranean conference which is also called the "Barcelona process", Nato's Mediterranean dialogue, the Mediterranean cooperation of the OSCE, the Mediterranean forum and last but not least WEU's Mediterranean dialogue.

I will now carry out a quick review of the EU's and Nato's institutional frameworks, and later on, I will dwell more extensively on the institutional framework which is the subject of this seminar: WEU's Mediterranean dialogue. As regards the initiatives domino from the OSCE and the Mediterranean forum, I will not comment on them although they are important, due to lack of time.

The European Union's institutional framework: the Barcelona process

This is the basic and larger framework. It was started in the Euro-Mediterranean conference which gathered, from the 27th to the 28th of November 1995, the foreign ministers of the countries of the EU and those of the 12 Mediterranean countries which are institutionally associated with the EU (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Palestine autonomous authority, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Malta and Cyprus). The conference allows for an in-depth discussion on Euro-Mediterranean relations, touching on all the important political, economic, social and cultural issues trying to reach agreement on the economic and political guidelines for next century's Euro-Med Cooperation and establishing a regular and permanent dialogue on common interest issues.

The conference organizes its work in three main chapters:

- 1) **The political and security partnership:** it establishes a group to group dialogue starting with a list of confidence building measures and a list of principles including respect for international law, democracy and the rule of law.
- 2) **The economic and security partnership:** it develops the free trade area for establishment by 2010 through a process of negotiation of bilateral association agreements encouraging the right climate for investment, and co-operation on shared problems such as the environment and the use of energy resources.
- 3) **The partnership in social, cultural and human affairs.**

In my opinion, the important innovation of the Barcelona process is the admission that the stability in the Mediterranean region is closely linked to its economic and social development.

Initially the security aspect did not have its own specific dimension in the conference, and at present it is still limited at establishing, in the political and security partnership chapter, some general compromises for the strengthening of regional stability quoting in this regard the principles established by the United Nations and also some other principles of a more Mediterranean nature (i.e. the existence of full diplomatic relations between all the countries concerned, condemnation of terrorism and of drug trafficking, or the security principles defined by WEU for this region, transparency, confidence building measures, non-proliferation etc. . .).

Without a doubt the Middle East peace process continues to exert a great influence on the security related questions of the conference (which explains the delays that these questions are experiencing), even though several attempts have been made to try and separate both issues.

The continuity of the Barcelona process is guaranteed thanks to the different sectorial meetings which are taking place on each one of the abovementioned chapters, although we must be on the look out so that the security aspect does not languish. As regards this political and security chapter, two projects which were mentioned in the Barcelona declaration are still being discussed nowadays. The first one is a French proposal that endeavours to put into place a "stability charter", which would be applied gradually and which would imply the setting-up of a security related dialogue with the Mediterranean countries, dialogue through which, issues such as confidence building measures, political mechanisms that could prevent conflicts and the establishment of financial instruments that could boost the aims of the Euro-Mediterranean association in this field, would be discussed. The second one is an "action plan" which must establish concrete cooperation measures in the security field between the 27 countries.

May I just add that Mr Alexandre Zafiriou, principal administrator, CFSP unit, EU Council Secretariat will brief us during tonight's dinner, on the latest developments regarding the first chapter of the Barcelona process.

Nato's institutional framework

In December 1994 NATO foreign ministers stated their willingness "to establish contacts on a case by case basis between the alliance and Mediterranean non-member countries with a view to contributing to the strengthening of regional stability". On 8 February 1995 the North Atlantic Council invited Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia to participate in the initial round of dialogue, in November 1995 Jordan was also invited to join. The dialogue is conducted bilaterally.

The dialogue consists of two dimensions: a political dialogue and participation in specific activities. the political dialogue consists of regular bilateral political discussions which provide briefings on Nato activities and an exchange of views on stability and security in the Mediterranean

On the basis of the recommendation of the Nato foreign ministers meeting in Sintra, Portugal, in may 1997, the heads of state and government meeting in Madrid during July 1997 agreed to establish a new committee to have overall responsibility for the Mediterranean dialogue and to both widen the scope and enhance the dialogue. consequently, the Mediterranean cooperation group (MCG) was created at the Madrid summit and has overall responsibility for the Mediterranean dialogue under the authority of the north atlantic council.

The MCG conducts the dialogue in a 16+1 format with third parties: with whom discussions are envisaged as taking place once a year but with additional meetings possible on an ad hoc basis the specific activities open to non-Nato dialogue partners allow for participation in science, information civil emergency planning and attendance of courses at Nato schools , more recently co-operation activities have been added in the military domain. Lastly, it should also be pointed out that Nato has approved an initiative called the "contact point embassies" by which the embassies of allied nations can perform as Nato's permanent information office in the corresponding Mediterranean dialogue countries.

WEU's institutional framework

WEU has also wished to further the dialogue and cooperation between its nations and the southern litoral Mediterranean countries. due to this wish, wed began in 92 to develop an institutional framework based on wed Mediterranean group.

This group has the task of contributing to the stability in the Mediterranean area by maintaining direct contacts which allow for an exchange of information and of opinions on security matters of mutual interest and to complement in this framework, taking into account WEU's future condition as the defence component of the European union. the relations which exist between the EU and those countries on matters related to political, economical and other questions this group continues to develop political exchanges with the 7 nations which form part of "WEU's Mediterranean dialogue" (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco Mauritania and Tunisia) and coordinates and promotes the foreseeable cooperation activities the group meetings are attended by the 28 countries of WEU. that is to say it includes great ill member countries associate members, observers and associate partners.

According to the present mandate which was approved by the council of ministers in may 1994. this dialogue is underatken through individual contacts with each one of the 7 above mentioned countries. these contacts take place once every six months and at different levels: at the diplomatic level (meetings in Brussels between the presidency plus the secretary-general and the ambassador of each one of those nations) at government experts level)WEU Mediterranean group meetings with the representatives of ministries of foreign affairs and defence of those countries: this practice has all but been forgotten at the present tine) and at the academic level (invitation to seminars at the WEU's institute for security studies - Paris)

In contrast to what happens in Nato, the 28 WEU nations do not meet with those countries.

This dialogue basically contains information on WEU's activities the exchange of opinions on security matters of mutual interest, always taking care that the latter an included cord in WEU's field of taskings and mandates.

Logically WEU's domain lies in security and defence matters, but the emphases must not be purely military and must not address in any way, a confrontational strategy in the face of supposed threats coming from the southern litoral of the Mediterranean.

On the contrary the best way of maintaining general security in the area is achievable only through an open dialogue that allows a better understanding of the different nations, reducing, in this way, the possibility of misunderstandings and false perception of threats, contributing in this way to the stability of whole region.

Moreover, WEU endeavours that this dialogue serves to promote among our Mediterranean dialogue partners those principles which we consider are capable of contributing to the security and stability in the whole region in particular the peaceful solution of conflicts; the transparency of military activities aid doctrines; the non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of the means to use them; and the need to avoid conventional armaments beyond what is reasonable for defence purposes.

For the time being, we must concentrate in fully developing the present contacts nevertheless, and in view of the future it is convenient that WEU prepares itself in order to be capable of completing in the defence aspect, if the EU so requires it, the and security dialogue established in the framework of the Barcelona Euromediterranean conference.

In this respect, my country proposed that the WEU should anticipate the possible requests coming from the EU, initiating an in depth study of the military aspects of chapter I of the Barcelona process. As a result of this proposal, WEU has initiated a process of reflection on how it could contribute to the said chapter of the Barcelona process, a good example of which is the present seminar in Genoa.

In comparison to the extensive list of cooperation activities already approved by Nato, WEU has more limitations on this subject as it does not have its own forces, or military installation and academies to which it can invite visitors. Nevertheless, the WEU has at its disposal (not assigned to it) a series of European forces, the so called FAWEU, among which some have a multilateral character and are manned and staffed by troops coming from European-Mediterranean countries: these are the Eurofor and the Euromarfor. These euroforces are paying attention to their relations with the countries of the WEU's Mediterranean dialogue and they can maintain (as opposed to what the WEU can do) a cooperation program with them, which could include among other initiatives an exchange of visits by naval unit and of observers to the different exercises that might be undertaken

The nations of WEU's Mediterranean dialogue have received briefings after every important decision taken at WEU and after each ministerial meeting. Their representatives have visited WEU's military staff in Brussels, WEU's satellite centre in Torrejon de Ardoz-Madrid, the

situation centre. and have received extensive information on the latest crisis management exercise, the so called Crisex 98.

In the same way, WEU's institute for security studies, also organizes additional activities with participation of countries from the southern litoral of the Mediterranean basin. A good example of this is their presence and contribution to this seminar to the information seminar for high ranking officers from Mediterranean countries which took place last September in Paris on the subject "European cooperative security and the Mediterranean".

At present WEU is trying to reactivate the meetings which used to take place with experts on a specific subject looking at different options which would allow mutual exchange of information on a topic of common interest.

Conclusion

This is the institutional framework which should be taken into account during our discussions in the first session of this seminar. I believe that one of our main objectives will be to study how WEU's Mediterranean dialogue could be brought nearer to the Barcelona process.