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## THE ENHANCED POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

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The Barcelona Declaration envisaged political dialogue as an important instrument available to the institutions of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) for attainment of its purposes. The subsequent debate on the establishment of a Euro-Med Charter for Peace and Stability as “a functional instrument for the implementation of the principles of the Barcelona Declaration” has come to the firm conclusion to set up an “Enhanced Political Dialogue” (EPD) as the key instrument for the implementation of the EMP.

The idea of an intergovernmental political dialogue is embedded in many international organisations. A political dialogue is included among the tasks of the Council of the Arab League. A stronger and more engaging form of political dialogue has been developed by the member states of the European Community/European Union (EU), first in the shape of an intergovernmental and diplomatic European Political Co-operation, subsequently as incremental attempts at establishing a Common Foreign and Security Policy. An intergovernmental form of political co-operation operates in the framework of the EU enlargement to countries in the European East. This kind of co-operation was contemplated across the Mediterranean by the “5 + 5” Group of Western Mediterranean countries, which operated very briefly at the beginning of the nineties. It is currently working in the Mediterranean Forum as well as in the Barcelona process.

In these various, more or less institutionalised organisations, political co-operation plays different roles, is conducted in different ways and is supported by inputs of political will of very different intensity and character. The first part of this paper discusses a number of possible models of Euro-Med political dialogue and tries to ascertain which one appears more in tune with the broad goals of the EMP as well as sustainable with respect to political conditions prevailing in the EMP circle.

In discussing these models, the semi-institutional character of any political dialogue must not be overlooked. To be sure, political dialogue is but one of the instruments by which international institutions co-operate to achieve their goals. Still, the interrelation of international institutions with their instruments of political dialogue is not the same as with other instruments available to such institutions. For political dialogue mediates the implementation of the other instruments as well as the effectiveness of such implementation. Political dialogue is an instrument in itself as well as the “instrument of instruments”. Consequently, in our discussion the EPD will be taken into consideration in itself and as a mover of other instruments.

On the assumption that, at least in the foreseeable future, the most important and attainable goal of the EMP is conflict prevention, in the second part of the paper EPD is considered as a mechanism of conflict prevention in itself as well as a mover of other instruments for conflict prevention.

## The mechanism for political dialogue

We can distinguish between different possible models for the Euro-Med political dialogue. The differences are the result of the different functions and contents of the various models. According to their ultimate purpose, we can envisage three such models, in a range in which political will and cohesion tend to increase and the timeframe moves from short- to long-term.

The first model is political dialogue as a kind of macro-partnership-building measure. This model is geared to narrowing the gap in political trust or confidence that separates EU from non -EU countries across the Mediterranean today. An in-depth analysis of security perceptions can easily illustrate that Northern and Southern Partners in the Mediterranean are not opposed by threat perceptions but separated by a set of perceived risks of spillover effects (on the Northern side) and intrusion, interdiction and coercion (on the Southern side)<sup>1</sup>. If these perceptions are taken into account, building broad confidence and trust looks like an inescapable preliminary necessity and should provide the basic substance of the partnership. A regular, substantive and institutionalised political dialogue is provided by this model as the primary measure to achieve a higher level of confidence and give substance to the partnership in the Euro-Med context with a view to making security co-operation and the application of co-operative security schemes possible in a more or less distant future.

To some extent, this is the model of political dialogue envisaged by the most recent proposal of the Euro-Med Charter, i.e. the “Guidelines for Elaborating a Euro-Med Charter for Peace and Stability” approved in April 1999 by the EPM Ministers in Stuttgart (hereafter “Guidelines”). The adjective “Enhanced” (pertaining to the previous Charter’s proposals as well) reflects the wish to expand confidence and mutual trust as the primary means to reinforce the Euro-Med Partnership.

In this sense, the model sets out an instrument less geared to intervention than to information, transparency and the creation of systemic confidence. It does not exclude operational modes by resorting to the instruments envisaged by the Charter or *ad hoc* instruments. These modes, however, would be introduced by a “gradual and evolutionary implementation of individual clauses by agreement”, on the basis of consensus, in a non-binding institutional environment. Thus the tasks envisaged by this model include political monitoring and exchanges to promote stability and prevent conflict by means of soft, consensus-based measures and perhaps a little bit of common declaratory policy, in accordance with the blueprint provided by the old European Political Co-operation.

A second model would emphasise the political dialogue as an instrument of conflict prevention and crisis management. This model - which obviously would include the functions of the first one and put them to work more concretely - can be implemented according to different degrees of cogency and consensus. A lower degree would make it similar to the Pact of Stability in Europe. In this sense, it would be very close to what was proposed in the first (Irish) version of the Charter: a reinforced mechanism of political

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<sup>1</sup> Roberto Aliboni, *Security Co-operation in the Mediterranean: Perceptions and Notions in Mediterranean Arab Countries*, paper presented to the Conference on “Building the Euro-American Partnership in the Mediterranean”, Oporto, 22-23 June 1998 (mimeographed) [this paper will be published by the Rand Co. in a collective book edited by Steve Larrabee and Álvaro Vasconcelos].

dialogue resting on two pillars, (a) a set of principles and conventions destined to be integrated by all the members and (b) a set of CBMs/PBMs to be gradually expanded.

A higher degree would make the EMP mechanism for political dialogue similar to the Permanent Council in the OSCE. What characterises the Permanent Council in the OSCE context is its important operational role with respect to conflict prevention. It provides quick reactions to early warning stimuli coming from the different institutional and intergovernmental branches of the organisations. Furthermore, and more importantly, it works as an instrument through which governments can channel early warning and their consensus with a view to looking for acceptable and desired actions. On this basis, actions can be quickly indicated by the Council and, judging on a case-by-case basis, implemented.

In the EMP, the application of this model would entail the full and rapid development of the specific instruments envisaged by the Charter (Euro-Med instruments proper) and/or the consensus for acceding to operational facilities made available by other institutions (e.g. the EU, the Arab League, the WEU, etc.). Thus, this kind of model would require a considerable strengthening of the EMP on institutional grounds as well as increased logistical support to EMP institutions in the short term.

A third model is the political dialogue as an instrument for decision-making and consequent implementation. This model would see a full-fledged, well balanced and institutionalised Euro-Mediterranean entity, in full command of instruments and procedures to achieve security co-operation and thus the implementation of the “area of peace and stability” envisaged by the Barcelona Declaration. In this model, the EMP should be far more politically and organisationally autonomous from the EU than it is today. It would require a strong regional Euro-Med identity allowing for joint decisions to conduct a variety of conflict prevention and peace support operations.

### **Political sustainability**

While the achievement of the third model is out of the question today, conditions of political sustainability must be ascertained with respect to the first and second model. Three principal factors shaping political sustainability can be identified: (1) indivisibility of security in relations among EMP Partners; (2) comprehensiveness or globality in the EMP overall approach to security and co-operation; (3) respect of sovereignty and jurisdiction, i.e. reassurance against interference. These three points will be discussed very briefly here, on the basis of the debate on the Barcelona process started at the Malta Ministerial Conference in April 1997<sup>2</sup>. This discussion will make it possible to define the scope of the EPD as warranted by current political conditions and, consequently, to identify what kind of political dialogue is feasible.

Indivisibility of security - The indivisible character of security is an obvious cornerstone of any scheme of security co-operation. It is explicitly enumerated among the principles of the “Guidelines”. However, political trends currently prevailing within the EMP sphere

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen C. Calleya, “The Euro-Mediterranean Process After Malta: What Prospects?”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn 1997, pp. 1-22; Claire Spencer, “A Tale of Two Cities”, *The World Today*, March 1997, pp. 79-82; Roberto Aliboni, “Re-Setting the Euro-Mediterranean Security Agenda”, in G: Kostakos (ed.), *Democratic Elections and the Mediterranean*, Eliamep, Athens, 1999, pp. 27-32.

do not facilitate attainment of security indivisibility in the area. Three adverse political trends deserve particular consideration:

- (a) the terminated but unsolved status of the Arab-Israeli conflict; besides its relevance for international security, the solution of this long-standing conflict is an essential building-block in terms of domestic stability and political legitimisation in the Mashreq countries;
- (b) the protracted domestic crisis in Algeria and the equally protracted international isolation of Libya, as well as the weakening of regional relations both trends have brought about;
- (c) the nationalist trend and activism prevailing in Turkey as a consequence of changes with respect to its identity and regional role stirred by the end of the Cold War.

These political conditions are generating fragmentation within the EMP. In fact, there is a renewed tendency toward pan-Arab or inter-Arab relations excluding Israel and Turkey. Once again, there is an Israeli tendency to go its own way both politically and economically. There is a renewed tendency among Maghreb countries to avoid being embroiled in the Mashreq's affairs and to promote their own relations with the EU. Finally, there is a tendency toward the regrouping of the "peripheral" countries, Turkey and Israel. These tendencies are furthering divergence among national security agendas that are already very different from one another and, finally, are making indivisible security more difficult rather than easier to attain.

A comprehensive approach - Besides the indivisibility of security, a comprehensive (multi-dimensional or holistic) approach to security and co-operation is considered another cornerstone of the Barcelona process.

So far, the experience in the EMP is that the basic groupings of Partners have different priorities. They assign very different importance to economic development vs. security or to democratisation vs. stability, etc. Most of these distinctions involve different notions with respect to key targets, such as human rights, democracy, globalisation, cultural values, etc.

A first contrast worth mentioning is between concerns for human rights and democratisation, on one hand, and for jurisdiction and legitimacy, on the other. Another is between some mainly European temptations towards globalist absolutism and some mainly non-EU Mediterranean attempts to disguise protectionism and state intervention behind the need to preserve cultural authenticity. A third contrast concerns the need for respect for human rights and minorities in the non-EU Mediterranean Partners vs. a concrete and effective policy towards immigration in the EU countries.

These contrasts have proved resilient to both compromise and issue-linkages, thus downgrading Euro-Med consensus to a minimum.

Sovereignty and interference - Security co-operation in the military or military-related realm has proved more difficult to achieve than was perhaps thought in European circles when the Barcelona process was initiated. In fact, on this point political conditions remain notably backward with respect to EU expectations and far from those needed to allow for the beginning of a structured co-operative security scheme. Military security has been shifted to the background in EMP. The Palermo decision to replace the concept of CBM with that of PBM was a first decisive and significant step in this direction. The

“Guidelines” suggest that the military security requirements of the Partnership will be advanced “ at the appropriate time”.

Non-EU Partners’ uneasiness with respect to security co-operation has different roots. Most of them, however, are concerned with sovereignty and interference. The Arab countries in particular are concerned by their perception of European unilateralism. European unilateralism is regarded as part of the wider Western unilateralism in dealing with international security in the post-Cold War context. In Arab perceptions, it is reflected by the fact that Europe and the US make available their own security instruments and institutions to manage or prevent crises, whereas in a co-operative security perspective the creation of common instruments and institutions should come first. This point clearly emerged in the minor diplomatic crisis raised by the creation of the Euroforces. To be sure, these forces are not directed against the Arabs, but they cannot be sold as an element of Euro-Mediterranean security co-operation either.

This unilateralism reinforces the second and most important objection (or perplexity) the Arab countries have with respect to European (and Western) proposals of co-operation. This objection or perplexity concerns the tendency of Europe (and the West) to change the foundations of sovereignty by introducing a new concept of legitimacy predicated on moral factors rather than on recognised jurisdiction. Whenever this tendency is not framed by a common international institution like the UN, the alternatives may simply be either staying on the “right side” (like Turkey) or facing the risk of gross interference. This dilemma is, thus, strongly linked to the “double standard” which the Arabs feel is being practised by Europe and the West (especially with regard to Israel).

These objections or perplexities do not leave much room for security co-operation within the EMP, even if and when peace is made in the Middle East.

Which model is sustainable - Political and security fragmentation, differences in priorities with respect to the common goal of comprehensive security, and the perceptions of most non-EU Partners of EU trends towards intrusion, interdiction and even coercion, clearly indicate that before any operational security co-operation can be started within the EMP, trust and confidence must be strongly reinforced and more uniformly expanded to all the Partners. In this sense, the model aiming at establishing an EPD as a macro-partnership-building measure definitely fits the prevailing Euro-Med political conditions. This kind of political dialogue would allow for the introduction of PBMs directed at improving information and access in the political, economic, social and cultural fields. The enhancement of broad confidence secured by the working of PBMs would prepare for more engaging joint activities and decisions with respect to Euro-Med co-operation.

In principle, the second model may appear premature, because of its interventionist character with respect to tensions and conflicts. It has already been pointed out, however, that this interventionist character can be modulated according to varying degrees of action.

The “Guidelines”, which represent the first consensus-based and coherent statement about the Charter drafted by the Senior Officials Committee in the last three years, indicate a number of actions the EMP could undertake, even though they are surrounded by strong caveats and limitations. Beside generating and implementing PBMs, the EMP, as envisaged by the “Guidelines”, could take action in the field of good neighbourly relations and regional co-operation and, most importantly, in that of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

They also call for EMP crisis management measures, though this hardly seems feasible in terms of political sustainability. By the same token, joint actions of peace-keeping – also mentioned in the “Guidelines” – can hardly be contemplated, unless they consist of limited actions directed at preventing conflict or other non-operational tasks.

Current political conditions do not allow for rapid and determined implementation of these instruments and means, but they do not exclude some steps forward, as cautious and limited as they may be. Instruments will likely refer essentially to conflict prevention. Conflict prevention in turn could refer, especially in a first stage, to longer-term actions of a structural and systemic character rather than to preventive diplomacy actions proper. The model cannot be that of the OSCE Permanent Council, yet it cannot differ too much from the model provided by the Pact of Stability in Europe. Furthermore, in handling a successful EPD, the Senior Officials and the Ministers could come to use the EMP institutions as a channel of early warning and consensus. Achieving this model would be gradual and incremental. Its strengthening would be determined by a virtuous circle between the will concretely expressed by governments in the EMP institutions and the success of the EPD in increasing mutual trust and acting as a mover with respect to the Charter. The working of such a circle would help to reinforce and expand the limited instruments available at the outset and to bring new ones in over time.

A serious limitation to the political dialogue’s ability to set in motion other instruments and make the EMP advance is the constraint provided by the strict interpretation of the indivisibility of security prevailing today. Conventional and stolid application of this principle could sharply limit EMP dialogue and its effectiveness by preventing helpful sub-regional interventions<sup>3</sup>. In order to avoid such a risk, it must be pointed out that the notion of security indivisibility can be understood more in a functional than in a territorial or regional sense. Functionally, the indivisibility of security is not affected if and when EMP policies improve the security of a group of members without worsening, or basically changing, the security of other EMP members. If this (second best) Paretian rule of thumb is respected, specific local or sub-regional security policies may be feasible and can contribute to upgrading the political dialogue model of the EMP.

In conclusion, the sustainable model of political dialogue is an attenuated variation of the second model examined above. It promises to secure an incremental strengthening of the EPD by making the first model work, particularly in the field of conflict prevention. It can be defined as an instrument of partnership-building and conflict prevention directed at securing broad stability and comprehensive co-operation. The way and the extent to which such a function can be carried out must be considered in more detail. This is essentially the purpose of the next section.

### **Enhanced Political Dialogue and Conflict Prevention**

The experience of the first three years has clearly revealed that the political will currently available to the EMP can basically sustain no more than an EPD geared to reinforcing confidence and setting in motion policies of conflict prevention. From the EMP

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<sup>3</sup> Claire Spencer, “Building Confidence in the Mediterranean”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn 1997, pp. 23-48; Fred Tanner, “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Prospects for Arms Limitation and Confidence-Building after Malta”, *The International Spectator* (Rome), Vol. 32, No. 2, April-June 1997, pp. 3-25; see also Jean-François Daguzan’s paper in the Halki Seminar folder.

perspective, the latter looks like the most important and pivotal function the Barcelona process will be able to perform through the Charter. This section is thus devoted to analysing the EPD's potential in terms of conflict prevention as well as the conflict prevention means and instruments the Dialogue may be able to put to use.

The preventive role of the Enhanced Political Dialogue - Four ingredients are needed to make preventive diplomacy feasible<sup>4</sup>: (a) consensus-building among concerned parties to make conflict prevention possible; (b) a "convincing" selection of cases deserving intervention; (c) adequate leverage in the hands of preventers; (d) a narrowing of the gaps in principles and values (essentially, in human rights and democracy) and/or in willingness to make state sovereignty and its attributes more penetrable to international action (essentially, interference in domestic affairs in the name of more or less shared principles and values).

According to our previous analysis on the limits of political sustainability in the EMP, it is evident that, for the time being, leverage will be weak because political cohesion in the EMP (as well as in its constituent groups) is not yet consolidated and is still subjected to important limitations. Besides, strong differences in values and principles make EMP Partners particularly opposed to any kind of attenuation of sovereignty and thus to any form of international interference. Consequently, the ingredients left with which to start building a shared system of conflict prevention in the EMP are consensus-building and selection. Are the EMP institutions suited to the task of building consensus for preventive diplomacy action and selection of cases and instruments? Which procedures should these institutions use to introduce requests for action or to stimulate the latter?

The establishment of a communication network amongst designated focal points was already approved as a CBM by the EMP at the 1997 Ministerial Conference in Malta (later renamed PBM after the 1998 Palermo *ad hoc* Ministerial Meeting). The author is not informed about the effective implementation of the measure. Whatever its implementation, however, this PBM is a minimum infrastructure requirement that must be established but cannot surrogate policy-making and joint action.

The most obvious suggestion is that the EMP institutions could adopt a procedure similar to the so-called "Berlin mechanism" (Mechanism for Consultation and Co-operation in Emergency Situations), stipulated in June 1991 by the CSCE members for bringing crises to the attention of the Conference and, if necessary, setting preventive action in motion<sup>5</sup>. In the OSCE, this procedure is tasked with calling emergency meetings of the Ministerial Council.

This idea has already been aired in previous proposals put forward in the EMP's brief history. The Luxembourg draft of the Charter envisaged the possibility of the Senior Officials Committee holding "special meetings" in cases of tensions or crises upon the request of one or more Partners. Another solution was contained in Malta's early proposal for a Stability Pact in the Mediterranean. By using the jargon of the OSCE Stability Pact

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<sup>4</sup> See Ettore Greco, *Conceptual Problems and Policy Dilemmas of Conflict Prevention*, paper presented at the Joint IAI/SWP Project Conference on "Preventing Violent Conflict in Europe", Ebenhausen, 22-23 November 1996, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, 1996 (mimeographed).

<sup>5</sup> See Arie Bloed., "The OSCE Main Political Bodies and Their Role in Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management", in Bothe M., Ronzitti N., Rosas A. (eds.) 1997, *The OSCE in the Maintenance of Peace and Security. Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes*, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, London, Boston, 1997, pp. 35-52.

in Europe, Malta's plan advocated the establishment of "round tables" devoted to specific crises, upon the request of concerned parties, which would take place, however, outside the EMP framework: the round tables would thus have the nature of *ad hoc* conferences, initiated but not run by the EMP, or which could be deferred to other institutions. The commitment to hold such round tables, when needed, has never been appreciated by some non-EU Partners.

While the Malta suggestion looks too demanding with respect to the present level of political will in the EMP, the Luxembourg draft proposal could correspond to the use of some kind of "Berlin mechanism". The sometimes cryptic language of the Stuttgart "Guidelines" could refer to this mechanism where it states that there will be "consultations between countries to establish structures for crisis prevention meetings": the "structures" could correspond to the procedure to place complaints or ask for information contemplated by the "Berlin mechanism" and this procedure could take place in special meetings of the regular EMP institutions.

The "Berlin mechanism" has been used few times only. Its level (ministerial) may not have facilitated its use. It may be interesting to note that this mechanism has been superseded by the increasingly regularity of OSCE Permanent Council meetings. As already noted, in the OSCE today, information and complaints (i.e. early warning) are dealt with on a day-by-day basis by the Permanent Council.

Biad<sup>6</sup> maintains that giving the EMP Senior Officials Committee a more permanent character would be especially important in a conflict prevention policy perspective, as it would provide the EMP with more chances to build up consensus, both in general and with respect to individual crises, by consolidating the habit of working together. The situations in the OSCE and the EMP are different, however. Early warning in today's OSCE web of conflict prevention institutions is of a diffuse nature and is generated not only by the initiative of the members but also by uninterrupted diplomatic interaction in the Permanent Council and between the latter and other relevant bodies of the OSCE. Instead, the institutional autonomy and differentiation of the EMP is minimal.

An evolution of the EMP Senior Official Committee towards a permanent status and a political role similar to that of the OSCE Permanent Council is desirable but can hardly be envisaged in the near future. Still, the argument that the matrix of any possible joint action of conflict prevention remains regular diplomatic and political interaction is a forceful one. Consequently, application of the "Berlin mechanism" would seem to fit with the EMP's stage of political development. However, its effectiveness in the EMP requires two conditions: (a) more regular and frequent gatherings of EMP institutions; and (b) that Senior Officials are enabled to deal with information and complaints to the extent and in cases which the Ministers set out in a limited but precise mandate. In fact, some form of more regular and autonomous interplay is in order and should be secured primarily by both the Senior Officials and the Euro-Med Committee.

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<sup>6</sup> Abdelwahab Biad, "Conflict Prevention in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Challenges and Prospects", *The International Spectator*, Vol. 34, No. 2, April-June 1999, pp. 109-122. The same opinion has been put forward by Antonio Marquina Barrio in an unpublished paper written in the framework of the IAI-USIP-funded research project on "Prospects for crisis prevention within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership": *Conflict prevention in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: a European point of view* (mimeographed).

Euro-Med instruments and means for conflict prevention - As pointed out in the previous section, the EPD is the basis of Euro-Med conflict prevention. By upgrading mutual confidence, it can generate the mix between early warning and consensus that is indispensable for engendering joint action in the field of conflict prevention. Once consensus is there, however, the Charter must establish the necessary means, procedures and instruments to set its preventive actions in motion. A set of such means, procedures and instruments are discussed in the following.

*Situation Centre* - The Action Plan taken into consideration by the Senior Officials in 1996 introduced the idea of “setting up a Euro-Med ‘Situation Centre’” to work as an “early warning procedure”. This idea is not explicitly mentioned in the “Guidelines”, but that does not mean that it has been excluded. The “Guidelines” have deliberately been formulated very generally. They speak of a “Euro-Med mechanism for preventive diplomacy”, thus leaving the task of defining the mechanisms and their scope to subsequent talks. This concerns the Situation Centre as well as other instruments mentioned in the following. This paper speculates about their adoption and its political sustainability.

Such a Euro-Med Situation Centre could take on very different profiles. A first profile could be a situation centre relying substantially on the situation centres and similar instruments operating within the EU, like the situation centre about to come into operation as part of the Cell for Policy Planning and Early Warning under the direction of the Secretary-General of the EU Council of Ministers; the situation centre within the WEU Cell; and the Torrejón Satellite Centre operating within the WEU. The procedure could be arranged through a protocol stating limits, the ways in which the EMP would be enabled to accede and/or the “services” demanded by the EMP. It is very likely that these limits would be considerable or that they could hardly be defined precisely. From a political point of view, such a solution would unnecessarily expose EU unilateralism instead of healing Southern Mediterranean perceptions relating to it. This kind of procedure has an inclusive character if implemented with respect to East European countries with more or less distant prospects of becoming members of the EU; it may take on an exclusive character in relation to countries without those prospects.

A second profile would make Euro-Med information rely on the EU but would ensure access to the EU situation centres by means of a number of PBMs. The latter would have the task of establishing a convincing liaison with and participation in EU situation centres of non-EU Mediterranean officials and officers.

A third profile would try to achieve the networking of EU and non-EU situation centres, by means of protocols defining limits and purposes of co-operation. The problem with this solution would be the asymmetries between the non-national EU system, on one hand, and a number of national systems, on the other, which would not necessarily be willing to enter into direct co-operation with other systems, let alone pool resources or information. Non-EU-situation centres may refer, however, to international organisations’ centres rather than national ones. This would be a relevant and operative profile, particularly if the Partners were to decide to focus on non-military and non-political events, like disasters or environmental developments<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See Stefanova’s paper in the Halki seminar folder.

A fourth solution is establishing a Euro-Med situation centre proper. This solution may be difficult but not unfeasible if, as just pointed out, the situation centre were to focus on non-political and non-military events and work as a centre for gathering information coming from technical-economic centres, in particular international centres. Otherwise, it looks unlikely.

The most feasible profile seems to be a combination of the second and fourth solutions indicated in the above; that is, a combination of Southern access to EU systems and a modest Euro-Med cell based on the networking of information coming from international agencies. To such networking the EU could well volunteer information. This step should be made very cautiously, though. Above all, the risk to be countered with all available diplomatic skills is that of making non-EU Partners feel overwhelmed by EU capacities. This would increase information but at the same time diminish confidence, hence making the information useless.

*Conflict Prevention Centre* - In general, a conflict prevention centre is less an instrument for gathering information than one for managing procedures seeking to prevent latent or potential conflict between more or less consenting parties and to settle disputes.

The conflict prevention centre set up by the 1990 CSCE Vienna decisions was functionally connected to the obligation for consultation and co-operation in case of “unusual and unscheduled” military activities. Similar mechanisms were envisaged in the ACRS, where three such centres were to be established in Amman, Tunis and Qatar. Given the EMP’s willingness to exclude military activities from its scope for the time being, what could be the purpose of a Euro-Med conflict prevention centre in the framework of the Charter?

A conflict prevention centre might be given the task of developing and performing, first of all, the functions outlined by the “Guidelines” as “procedures of clarification, mediation and conciliation for settling disputes between parties by peaceful means of their own choice”. The existence of a number of such sub-regional centres would be helpful. Appropriately located, they could be mandated by the EMP central institutions to proceed on a case-by-case basis. They could be asked to perform fact-finding missions and set up local “round tables for analysis and recommendations” whose outcome would be deferred to the Senior Officials. The sub-regional centres could be directly addressed by parties and thus act as an element of decentralised early warning. In this way, they could be enabled to perform an essential job in securing good neighbourly relations.

Whether in a centralised or decentralised organisation, mediation and clarification can be expected to be more successful than conciliation or the settlement of disputes. This is what is suggested by previous experience with “regional” conciliation and dispute settlement. The OSCE has no less than eight formalised procedures for the latter, according to Lohmann, who says somewhat ironically that “It cannot be said that the OSCE is short of procedural tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes”<sup>8</sup>. Yet, while so numerous, settlement procedures have never been activated in the CSCE/OSCE, either within the OSCE itself in the non-legal form of conciliation (the OSCE, it must be recalled, is a politically rather than legally binding institution) or after being deferred to legal arbitration outside the OSCE (to the Courts in Geneva or the Hague, etc.).

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<sup>8</sup> Page 347 in Torsten Lohmann, “Dispute Settlement Procedures in the OSCE - Genesis and Overview”, in M. Bothe, N. Ronzitti, A. Rosas (eds.), *cit.*, pp. 343-365.

The OSCE's experience suggests that, unless specific circumstances invite political conciliation inside the institution concerned, the institution would be better advised to refer to existing international incumbent bodies like the Court in the Hague. The task of establishing EMP procedures for settling disputes may prove too demanding with respect to the EMP's narrow political breathing space. This procedure is envisaged by the "Guidelines" where they foresee encouragement of "judicial settlement of differences and disputes".

*Political planning and analysis* - Functions of political planning and analysis are generally associated to the situation and conflict prevention centres. In particular, the direction given to such a planning function in the new EU Cell for Political Planning and Early Warning is one which emphasises conflict prevention. Could political planning and analysis be established in the Euro-Med framework with a view to helping prevent conflict? This function requires a high degree of political cohesion, so high that even the EU Cell has dropped any idea of full autonomy and is based on a system of networking among national elements.

The model inspiring political planning for conflict prevention in the EU Cell is derived from the experience of the Conflict Prevention Network (CPN) which operated for a while in the Commission on the basis of earlier ideas and requests put forward by the European Parliament. This model may prove more attractive for the EMP than it was for the EU Cell. In fact, what made the CPN interesting was its deliberate and systemic interaction with think tanks, NGOs and other components of the civil societies. In this sense, the EMP, through its links with the EuroMeSCo and Femise networks of institutions of security and economic analysis, respectively, is already operating an embryonic system of analysis and political planning, a system that Partners would be unwilling to operate jointly at governmental level under present political conditions.

Once collected, however, analyses coming from non-governmental networks must be handled in some way by a dedicated EMP unit (unlikely to be set up) or its Secretariat. The Secretariat is presently managed by the European Commission (which is already handling the very few existing CBMs/PBMs, like the one on disasters and the EuroMeSCo and Femise networks). This is not the best solution politically, for the same reasons indicated in the discussion of a situation centre above. Still, it would allow for a minimum of joint Euro-Med planning and analysis. In this sense, rather than trying vainly to include political planning and analysis in whatever situation and conflict prevention centres may be established, it would be better to foster a strict and well planned co-operation between the EMP institutions and what exists of decentralised co-operation in the Partners' civil societies.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has outlined three kinds of model for an enhanced political dialogue in the EMP and discussed their sustainability under present political conditions. On the basis of its analysis, the sustainable model of political dialogue would combine the task of upgrading systemic confidence and trust amongst EMP Partners with that of gradually setting out and implementing a web of means and instruments to prevent conflict. The achievement of the model would be gradual and incremental. Its strengthening would be determined by a virtuous circle between the will concretely expressed by governments in

the EMP institutions and the success of the EPD in increasing mutual trust and acting as a mover with respect to the Charter's implementation. The working of such a circle would help reinforce and expand the limited instruments available at the outset and bring in new ones over time.

The working of the EPD in itself would set the basis for joint action in preventive diplomacy and, in time, in other peace support operations. To that purpose, the use of a kind of "Berlin mechanism" seems to fit with the EMP's stage of political development. However, its effectiveness in the EMP would require two conditions: (a) more regular and frequent gatherings of the EMP institutions; and (b) the possibility for the Senior Officials to deal with information and complaints to an extent and in cases that the Ministers should set out in a limited but precise mandate. In fact, some form of more regular and autonomous interplay is in order and should be secured primarily by both the Senior Officials and the Euro-Med Committee.

As for the means and instruments with which conflict prevention should be developed within the Charter framework, the paper has discussed the possible achievement of a Euro-Med situation centre, a conflict prevention centre and facilities for joint planning and analysis.

For the situation centre, the most feasible profile seems a combination of Southern access to EU systems through the implementation of PBMs and a modest Euro-Med cell based on the networking of information coming from international agencies.

A conflict prevention centre is regarded as feasible mostly for procedures of clarification, mediation and conciliation and, more broadly speaking, the settlement of disputes. The paper contends that, in the light of other experiences, conciliation and other kinds of dispute settlement seems difficult to achieve. Thus, while disputes should be referred to existing incumbent judicial bodies, like the Court in the Hague, the Euro-Med centres should focus on mediation and clarification. The establishment of sub-regional centres seems highly desirable.

Joint policy planning and analysis under present political conditions seems out of the question. The Partners have the opportunity, however, to use North-South networks of non-governmental institutions, like EuroMeSCo and Femise, limiting themselves to handling incoming information and analysis by means of their secretarial facilities.

The paper warns of the risk of overusing EU facilities to make up for difficulties in setting up joint instruments and procedures. In fact, this could deepen Southern perceptions of EU unilateralism in dealing with the EMP and downgrading confidence-building with respect to non-EU Partners.