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**MILITARY DIALOGUE IN THE
EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CHARTER:
AN UNJUSTIFIED ABSENCE**

by Martin Ortega

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's (EMP) constitutive texts do not refer expressly to military dialogue, let alone military cooperation. In the Barcelona Declaration, Ministers just stated that they would "consider any CSBMs that could be taken between the parties with a view to the creation of an 'area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean'", as a future possibility. While this intention has not been fulfilled so far, the Guidelines for elaborating a Euro-Mediterranean Charter, agreed as an informal working document at Stuttgart, foresee an enhanced political dialogue whose purpose would be to prevent tensions and crises and to maintain peace and stability by means of comprehensive and cooperative security. However, no mention of military dialogue or other kinds of military measures can be found in the Guidelines. Although a generic scheme of objectives and means is drawn up, which might also include military relationships according to a very broad interpretation, the lack of any specific reference to a military dialogue is significative. In fact, the expressions "military", "defence", and "armed forces" have been avoided in all texts produced by the Barcelona process.¹

The absence of military dialogue and cooperation in the EMP is a gap that should be filled. In one sense, this absence is justified because there have been enormous difficulties to establish a multilateral Euro-Mediterranean dialogue in military and defence issues, and yet, from another point of view, the gap is no longer justifiable, since there are slow but profound developments which are creating an impetus towards such a dialogue. The purpose of this contribution is to argue that the lack of a military dialogue within the Barcelona process is neither coherent with the EMP's global and comprehensive objectives, nor with recent developments in CFSP after the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty and the declaration on a common security and defence policy of the Cologne European Council. In addition, that absence gives the wrong impression that there is no current dialogue in military and defence matters in the Mediterranean. On the contrary, in actual fact, there exists a relatively rich intercourse which has two dimensions: a web of bilateral cooperation schemes, on the one hand, and multilateral dialogues, through NATO's and WEU's Mediterranean initiatives, on the other. The concrete measures at present in place show that the prospect for a Euro-Mediterranean dialogue in military issues within the EMP may be better than the silence of the texts now suggests. The Charter should, consequently, fill the gap and anticipate some sort of military dialogue and cooperation. Nevertheless, following another principle of the

* The views expressed are personal, and not the position of any organization. The author would like to state his gratitude to Mohammed Kadry Said (Al-Ahram Centre, Cairo) with whom part of this work was discussed.

¹ The last but two paragraph of the Barcelona declaration of principles is the only instance in which the terms "military" ("military capacity") and "defence" ("legitimate defence") can be found.

Barcelona process, the establishment of military dialogue and cooperation must be, of course, gradual and progressive.

2. SHOULD THE BARCELONA PROCESS HAVE A MILITARY DIMENSION?

Up to now, military dialogue has been kept apart from the EMP for three main reasons.

Firstly, since 1991 the EU has been a civilian power giving birth to a common foreign policy, but devoid of any real common security and defence policy. At the time of planning the Barcelona conference, and later, the EU could not offer its Mediterranean partners a dialogue on military and defence issues. Instead, the broad term "political and security partnership" was preferred; however, even if "security" could be interpreted in a wide fashion, although isolated references to CSBMs, non-proliferation, and self-defence are contained in the Barcelona declaration, and even if the Stuttgart Guidelines include some references to CSBMs, crisis prevention and management, and peace-keeping, "security" could never be construed as meaning "hard security", or defence issues, given the EU's lack of competence in this respect. At the same time, NATO was, and still is, the main security and defence organisation for the Europeans, as was reaffirmed in its new strategic concept of April 1999. Most of the EU members, along with their allies, started NATO's Mediterranean dialogue with some Mediterranean countries in 1995. NATO having its own Mediterranean dialogue, members of both EU and NATO, along with their colleagues in the EU (and their Mediterranean partners), had to decide what kind of parallel military dimension EMP could eventually have, and this decision has not yet been taken.

Secondly, EMP has no military dimension because the Mediterranean partners' armed forces are rather reluctant to engage in multilateral military cooperation. This is not always clearly stated but some declarations do express sentiments that reveal a perception of neo-interventionism and neo-colonialism, which may be considered as a lack of desire to establish military dialogue and cooperation. Bilateral military relationships allow a greater adaptability on the part of the respective associates, whereas multilateral relations impose general standards to which some military bodies are not used.

Thirdly, international disputes in the Mediterranean region also hamper steady advance in a possible Euro-Mediterranean military dialogue. This applies particularly to the Middle East Peace Process, although this and other disputes do not impede bilateral north-south and south-south military cooperation nor the multilateral dialogues proposed by NATO and WEU. Syria and Lebanon are the two EMP partners which do not take part in other multilateral military dialogues, because international disputes that they maintain with Israel make it impossible, from their point of view, to engage in such dialogues.²

In spite of these main difficulties, there are three reasons that justify attributing a new military dimension to the EMP.

The first reason is the Barcelona declaration's global approach to the Euro-Mediterranean relationship, whereby the partnership applies to a broad range of themes, not only

² See section 6 below for a comment on the difficulties regarding EMP membership.

economic questions but also the political and security fields, as well as social, cultural and human questions. There is no reason to leave the military dimension out of this all-encompassing approach. If EMP's final purpose is to establish a common area of peace, stability and prosperity, through a reinforcement of political dialogue, defence and military matters cannot be neglected.

Secondly, the relevant role of the military in the political systems of many Mediterranean partner countries makes it necessary to give the present political and security dialogue a military dimension. An initial and limited military dialogue would not immediately transform the overall nature of the current political dialogue, but it would surely give a more realistic basis to the EMP.

Thirdly, at the Cologne European Council of June 1999 the EU decided to establish a common security and defence policy (CSDP) to supplement its CFSP, and more specifically to acquire new capabilities for crisis prevention and crisis management. EU's new military scope makes it easier to confer a new military dimension on the various fields covered by CFSP, including the Barcelona Process. This is relevant to EU members, but CSDP may also be of interest to EU's Mediterranean partners for a number of reasons, which equally justifies including gradually some defence and military aspects into the EMP and in the Charter.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A MILITARY AND DEFENCE DIMENSION OF THE EMP?

In the academic debate, there is an ongoing discussion about the real aims of the Barcelona process. The different objectives laid down in the Barcelona declaration are scrutinised and classified. Some experts point out that stability in the region is the main objective for the European partners, while economic cooperation and development is the paramount aim for Southern partners. Others stress either the overriding political objective of democratisation, or the importance of the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs as the most original contribution of the EMP.

Nevertheless, the historical importance of the whole process cannot be found by identifying its various purposes and putting them together, or by defining a hierarchy between its objectives. The more profound significance of the EMP is rather to dispel a historical inertia of misunderstanding and fragmentation in the area, and to inaugurate a new period of closer relationships. In other words, the Barcelona process is the first attempt to constitute a region in the political sense, where formerly only a region in the geographical sense existed. In the preamble of the Barcelona declaration, states affirm that they are "moved by the will to give their future relations a new dimension", and they proclaim the "general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation". Four years after its inception, it is perhaps too soon in historical terms to evaluate EMP's practical achievements. However, leaving aside its bilateral dimension, it is obvious that the Barcelona process's multilateral activities have created a new consciousness regarding the Euro-Mediterranean region; these activities have led to a renewed knowledge of the other side on the part of both shores of the Mediterranean. The various contacts, meetings, networks, and cooperation projects that

have taken place since 1995 within the EMP framework would not have seen the light otherwise.

Bearing this historical significance in mind, the general purpose of the proposed new military dimension should be in tune with the same idea of facilitating a new *rapprochement*. Instead of advancing more ambitious objectives, like the establishment of Mediterranean CSBMs or other types of institutionalised cooperation in the security field, the first objective should be to promote dialogue and mutual knowledge among the politico-military authorities and among the respective armed forces. Of course, the final purpose of the whole process, and more specifically of the Charter, is to promote peace and security in the region or "to prevent tensions and crises and to maintain peace and stability by means of cooperative security", as the Stuttgart conclusions put it. However, the intermediate purpose of military dialogue in the EMP should be to build up new avenues for discussion and mutual understanding in the region.

In a future Euro-Mediterranean relationship in the military and defence fields, the accent should shift from traditional confidence-building to the more modern notion of partnership-building measures (PBMs), a notion that has been conceptualised by Roberto Aliboni.³ At least for the ten first years or so, the EMP should include a number of military partnership- and transparency-building measures which will allow a better understanding between authorities who belong to different political and military traditions. A good example is seminars and other kinds of academic activities and visits, that are carried out currently within NATO's and WEU's Mediterranean dialogues, as will be examined below. Once a better mutual knowledge amongst Euro-Mediterranean politico-military and military authorities has been achieved, new measures in the fields of confidence-building, military cooperation, and even institutionalised cooperation could be envisaged.⁴ Nevertheless, the EMP's military dimension will always be realised within the limits of the EU's security and defence competencies, which will have to be defined, in accordance with NATO's new strategic concept, after the Cologne declaration of June 1999.

4. FIVE MODELS FOR EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MILITARY DIALOGUE

Several principles of the Barcelona declaration have direct implications in the field of state defence: respect for the territorial integrity and unity of each of the other partners, to refrain from any intervention in the internal affairs of another partner in accordance with international law, cooperation in preventing and combating terrorism and organised crime, non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and to promote good-neighbourly relations, among others. Apart from these principles, the only mechanism connected to defence issues that was mentioned in Barcelona was CSBMs. This is understandable because, at that time, the model for multilateral security relations that most probably stimulated the minds of the founders of the EMP was the CSCE

³ See Roberto Aliboni, *Building blocks for the Euro-Med Charter on Peace and Stability*, report of the EuroMeSCo's Working Group on the Charter, October 1999, section 2.

⁴ This gradual approach seems advisable in view of the evolution of the EMP since 1995. For a more determined approach, see the concrete measures suggested in EuroMeSCo, *Joint Report*, (mimeo) April 1997, sections IV-VI.

process. Participants in the Barcelona conference did not set up a system of CSBMs, but the mere mention of the term contributed to establishing in the eye of the observer a tacit parallelism between the recent CSCE experience, from the 1986 Stockholm document onwards, and the probable future development of the EMP. In fact, the first academic analysis of the Barcelona declaration from a security standpoint concentrated on the possibility and feasibility of translating the traditional method of confidence- and security-building measures that had worked well on the European scene to the Mediterranean theatre.

In that academic exchange, scholars demonstrated that the European model did not fit into the Euro-Mediterranean framework. For instance, Claire Spencer has eloquently shown that the CSCE confidence-building scheme was based on certain conditions that were not present in the region.⁵ From the political point of view, the Presidency conclusions of the Palermo meeting in June 1998 confirmed that the approach had changed. The conclusions no longer use the term confidence-building; they encourage instead the development of partnership-building measures not only in the political and security chapter but also in the other two chapters.

For their part, the Stuttgart Guidelines for the Charter again mention CSBMs as a future possibility, but now the accent is definitively on partnership-building as a general concept. As has been pointed out above, the Guidelines for the Charter define first its principles, scope, and objectives, and then a number of means and mechanisms to attain those objectives are described. Five categories of means and mechanisms are set forth: (a) enhanced political dialogue, (b) partnership-building measures (that may be understood as a list of concrete measures but also as the general inspiration of all the means and mechanisms), (c) measures to improve good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, (d) preventive diplomacy, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation,⁶ and (e) joint action modalities.⁷

Although concrete measures in the military and defence fields are not foreseen, they could be added to the framework depicted in the Guidelines, with the same inspiration of creating a new partnership in those matters. In order to realise this exercise, five different models of international relations in the military and defence fields could be taken into account. Contrary to the assumption underlying the initial insistence on confidence-building, there is not just one archetype (that of the CSCE) but five, at the time of planning multilateral relationships in defence matters in the Mediterranean basin.

A general description of the five relevant models may be as follows.

1. CSCE/OSCE confidence-building model. This model was established within the CSCE framework to appease tensions between the Western and Eastern blocs, particularly between 1986 (Stockholm document on CSBMs) and 1994 (Budapest Conference establishing the OSCE). From the 1975 Helsinki Final Act to the 1986

⁵ See Claire Spencer, 'Building confidence in the Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 2, 1997, 23-48.

⁶ This last category "to be developed on a strictly voluntary and consensual basis in the framework of the EMP without interference with other institutions and bilateral efforts".

⁷ This category "to be developed at a later stage".

Stockholm document there were really no practical measures, and from 1990 until 1994 rapid political developments made CSBMs less and less meaningful.⁸ CSBMs were originally conceived as tangible steps to soothe threat perceptions and to make it more difficult the occurrence of incidents and accidents that may cause crises. It is obvious that this is not the present point of departure in the Mediterranean. In Cold War Europe, confidence-building had to precede partnership-building (see fourth model below), which could only be attempted once there was no manifest hostility between European countries. In the Mediterranean, partnership-building comes first because there is no direct military threat. Even so, the CSCE documents offer a wide range of "softer" and "harder" CSBMs, such as annual and more specific exchanges of information, improvement of communications, observation, compliance and verification, points of contact, etc., that could be adapted to the Mediterranean region, and possibly transformed into transparency- and partnership-building measures.

2. Bilateral military cooperation in the Mediterranean. There is a novel but already well established practice of north-south bilateral military relations in the Mediterranean, and there are also some brand-new south-south bilateral exchanges. North-south military cooperation comprises a complex and varied web of heterogeneous relationships. A typical format of these relationships would include a friendship and cooperation treaty developed into more concrete agreements in the defence field which would allow periodic visits of the Ministers of Defence and of chiefs of military staffs. Exchanges in military training, observation of military exercises, military visits, and contacts in military social and cultural events are frequent activities, that may be completed by armaments trade and practical cooperation in military exercises in some cases. South-south military collaboration is starting between some Mediterranean states. Kadry Said has made a thoroughful study of the Egypt-Israel example, showing that this experience in confidence-building may be significant for further cases of bilateral cooperation in the region.⁹

3. NATO's and WEU's Mediterranean dialogues. The objective of both initiatives is basically to increase mutual knowledge and transparency between the respective organisations and their partners, for which reason those initiatives share EMP's general approach, that of cooperative security, that was made explicit in the Stuttgart Guidelines. NATO's and WEU's multilateral dialogues consist of a political dimension and a practical dimension. The political component consists of periodic meetings with representatives from partner countries who express their points of view on security issues and to whom the latest evolutions of the respective organisations are explained. Visits, seminars, and observation of some military exercises are the types of measures that make up the practical dimension.

4. NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). PfP is an original initiative introduced by the North Atlantic Council in January 1994, in order to promote practical military cooperation

⁸ In 1990 alone the following texts were adopted in the CSCE context: First Vienna document on CSBMs, CFE Treaty, and Paris Charter for a new Europe. The Budapest Conference of 1994 changed OSCE's priorities towards dispute settlement, early warning, conciliation, investigation, and supervision of democratic processes.

⁹ See Mohammed Kadry Said, 'Confidence-Building Measures: A Practical Approach', contribution to this same EuroMeSCo's Working Group on the Charter (mimeo), September 1999.

with NATO's partner countries in accordance with their different interests and capabilities. So far, 27 countries have joined the Partnership, which allows them to maintain a fruitful bilateral relationship with NATO. Amongst PfP's objectives are: to facilitate transparency in national defence planning and budgeting processes, to ensure democratic control of defence forces, to maintain the capability to contribute to operations under the authority of the UN and/or the responsibility of the OSCE, and to develop cooperative military relations with NATO for the purpose of joint planning, training and exercises. Some have propounded that NATO could consider attributing a similar content to its Mediterranean initiative. Although this is not an immediate prospect, it is obvious that the PfP experience could be exemplary at the time of developing NATO's Mediterranean dialogue and EMP's military dimension in the future.

5. Institutionalised multilateral military cooperation. This type of cooperation may be established between states which do not necessarily belong to the same military alliance. One example of this cooperation is the multinational forces (MNFs) that are being created in Europe. Some of them, like EUROFOR and EUROMARFOR, are composed of states that belong to both NATO and WEU. But there are also other MNFs, like the Multinational Land Force (MLF) that includes Italian, Hungarian and Slovenian units, or the Polish-Ukrainian battalion. At present there are more than forty MNF in Europe, with varying levels of operability. One cannot dismiss the possibility that MNFs or other types of institutionalised military cooperation will also be created between countries from various shores of the Mediterranean or even within the EMP, at a later stage, once partnership-building measures have been explored and have produced a positive outcome.

After this description, it seems clear that no single model offers a set pattern that could be utilised by the Charter, but some lessons may be drawn particularly from the multilateral dialogues, those of NATO and WEU, and perhaps PfP. The EMP has to find a new approach to regional military relationships, picking and choosing what contributions from former experiences might be used profitably. It is to be expected that a new model will have appeared at the end of this process. In any case, it seems clear that the top-down political process of negotiating, drafting and developing the Charter has to take into account and benefit from the bottom-up process of the existing measures within NATO's and WEU's Mediterranean dialogues but also within the current north-south military bilateral cooperation schemes.

5. CONCRETE MILITARY PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING MEASURES

There are two practical ways of incorporating a new military dialogue in the framework for the Charter established in Stuttgart. Either military PBMs are included in existing categories of means and mechanisms defined in the Guidelines (for instance, under the heading of preventive diplomacy and crisis-management, or else within the list of general PBMs), or a new specific category is set up. If this is the case, a new mechanism called "military partnership- and confidence-building measures", which will realise the same objectives of the Charter, could be created.

Concrete measures should be conceived and approved of, at least in their guidelines, by the Senior Officials of the Barcelona process. Proper financial and human resources

should be allocated to coordinate those measures. The Unit dealing with EMP at the EU Council Secretariat could be in charge of military PBMs. Another possibility would be to establish a specific office, with some degree of independence, to coordinate these and other measures established in the Charter, although this possibility is dependant on the wider decision on whether and to what extent the EMP should be institutionalised. It seems more improbable, however, that the European Commission could act with regard to military PBMs, given its lack of competence in military and defence issues.

The following are some ideas for developing military PBMs in the EMP.

- Seminars and academic meetings
- Information seminars and sessions, specifically focused on security and defence issues, either in European or in Mediterranean capitals.
- Euro-Mediterranean network of institutes of defence studies.
- Visits, fellowships, and other personal exchanges.
- Observation of military exercises.
- Informal and working meetings of governmental experts (diplomats, other officials, and military officers) in military issues.
- Exchange of basic information (documents, procedures, doctrines) on military assistance to the civil authorities, military role in civil emergencies, civil-military relationships, participation in peace-keeping operations, land de-mining, etc.

Such activities conducted continuously will make it possible to design a new background for a more profound dialogue and further military cooperation in the future. As already mentioned, the EMP will only at a later stage be able to consider other kinds of measures, such as more traditional CSBMs, planning and holding of joint exercises, institutionalised multilateral cooperation, establishment of Euro-Mediterranean multinational forces, etc.

6. DIFFICULTIES FOR ESTABLISHING A MILITARY DIMENSION IN THE EMP

Although there are reasons that justify incorporating a military and defence dialogue in the EMP, substantial difficulties remain. These difficulties may be classified in three clusters. Firstly, the definition, planning and execution of concrete measures that are suitable for all EMP's partners will be a complex task. Informal contacts ought to pave the way to more specific negotiations. Concrete measures should be feasible, and have a manifest added value for Mediterranean partners. It seems advisable to start with modest measures that are acceptable to both EU and Mediterranean partners.

The existence of some EMP partners with no experience in multilateral military cooperation in NATO's or WEU's Mediterranean dialogues will be the second difficulty.

Syria and Lebanon do not take part in those dialogues, and are not apparently ready to start a new experiment within the EMP framework, until they have satisfactorily settled their differences with Israel. Cyprus and Malta are candidates for EU membership but do not partake in multilateral security dialogues either, and the final status of the Palestinian Authority has to be established before it can participate in such dialogues. All those Mediterranean partners (and Libya when it becomes a partner in the Barcelona process) may have serious difficulties in engaging themselves in the military dimension of EMP, at least at the outset. One way of overcoming this hurdle is perhaps to allow a system for opting-out in a transitional period.¹⁰

Thirdly, another practical difficulty will be to coordinate this new dimension of the EMP with bilateral military cooperation in the Mediterranean. The existing web of bilateral relations does not satisfactorily achieve the objectives of the Charter, so a number of multilateral partnership- and transparency-building measures could be complementary to the current bilateral relations, which could be continued independently. On the other hand, NATO's Mediterranean dialogue and the military dimension of the EMP are also compatible and mutually reinforcing. Transparency, information, and partnership in security and defence matters are so badly needed in the Mediterranean that EU's and NATO's efforts will continue to be necessary in the foreseeable future. One must also take into account that EMP's military dimension will be limited by the competencies that the EU has in its common security and defence policy, that is to say, in the field of conflict prevention, conflict management, and Petersberg operations. According to its new strategic concept, NATO is the main organisation dealing with security and defence in Europe, for which reason it is only logical that the Alliance continues the dialogue with its Mediterranean partners about such broad issues. NATO's Mediterranean dialogue is an integral part of the Alliance's cooperative approach to international security. Both EMP's future military dimension and NATO's Mediterranean dialogue are useful and compatible and should be designed consequently. Concrete activities of both dialogues will contribute to a better mutual knowledge and a further rapprochement of EU and NATO, on the one hand, and their Mediterranean partners on the other.

As a general observation, one way of surmounting these substantial difficulties will be to start the proposed dialogue with modest steps. The list of concrete military partnership- and transparency-building measures suggested above contains a number of activities whose realisation seem to be neither particularly troublesome nor politically controversial. Another way would be to allow sub-regional dialogue projects within the EMP and the Charter.

CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS

(1) EMP's global approach, the importance of the military component in the Mediterranean political systems, and the establishment of a common security and defence policy by the EU after the Cologne European Council of June 1999 justify the gradual establishment of a military dialogue within EMP. Some Mediterranean partners may have specific motives for also starting this kind of dialogue.

¹⁰ Mauritania takes part in NATO's and WEU's Mediterranean dialogues, but it is not a member of the EMP.

(2) In order to attain the principles and objectives stated in the Guidelines for the Charter (notably comprehensive and cooperative security), dialogue in military and defence issues should be included among the means and mechanisms. The idea is to create modest military partnership-building measures (PBMs) aimed at a better mutual knowledge of security and defence matters, and of officials dealing with these issues in Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, and in the respective armed forces.

(3) When defining concrete multilateral military PBMs within the EMP, the experience of NATO's and WEU's Mediterranean dialogues could be very useful. General descriptions of such concrete measures that could be included in the Charter at a first stage are: joint seminars and other academic activities, military visits and similar exchanges, and exchanges of basic information.

(4) The establishment of EMP's military dimension should be prudent and gradual in order to surmount several difficulties. If some Mediterranean partners find it difficult to participate initially in EMP's military PBMs, they could be allowed to opt out at least for a transitional period.

(5) A new military dimension of EMP would supplement current bilateral military cooperation schemes. At the same time, this new dimension would not affect NATO's Mediterranean dialogue and associated measures. NATO's Mediterranean dialogue has an intrinsic value and is complementary to EMP.