

UNITY IN HETERARCHY: SECURITY COMPLEXITY AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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1. Introduction

The 1989 *annus mirabilis* has been configured as a major turning point in international relations, when the East-West ideological dichotomy evaporated and the focus of European security shifted towards the wider Mediterranean space, which constitutes a zone of socio-economic instability, migration flows, violent religious and cultural conflicts, varying forms of political and economic institutions, differing perceptions of security and, above all, differing cultures and worldviews. Moreover, the post-Cold War symptoms of defederation and ethnic disarray in Eastern Europe and the Balkans has given its place to a new era of conflicts with more grievous symptoms, including September 11th and the wars (against terrorism) in Afghanistan and Iraq. Notwithstanding the successive Yugoslav crises and the Gulf Wars, the renaissance of a wider interest in Mediterranean affairs is based on the growing importance the region enjoys in the strategic calculus of the new European order. While European Union (EU) Members along the northern rim are increasingly prosperous as they find themselves locked in a dual, albeit not linear, process of economic and political integration, most countries located at the southern rim of the Mediterranean seem to be moving in the opposite direction. It is evident that the widening gap between the North and South Mediterranean rims causes dramatic structural instability to Europe's international system, while projecting images of insecurity to the rest of the world.

Issues of Mediterranean stability are not new themes in European diplomacy. Yet, they still rest on considerable variation. Partly as a result of the Community's Mediterranean enlargements in the 1980s, and partly due to the changing conditions post-1989, Mediterranean affairs have come to occupy a significant amount of Europe's external relations. Today, major issues dominating Euro-Mediterranean security affairs include the broader

redefinition of Europe's relations with the Arab world and the "power deficit" between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners. This tension has been escalating since the signing of the Schengen Treaty, conceived by some as the forerunner of a "fortress" Europe and the formation of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The EU is a polity with no historical precedent. Hence our expectations to elevate its current status to the level of a global actor with enhanced military capabilities are difficult to be contextualized¹. Even though the transformation of the EU into a collective security system is an inadequately addressed issue, the deeper integration of foreign, security and defence policies in Europe is bound to influence Euro-Mediterranean affairs. But the creation of an autonomous European defence capacity should not lead to a "fortress" Europe. To the contrary, because the ESDP is better equipped to deal with crisis-management operations, it can complement the Barcelona Process by endowing Mediterranean security affairs with a pluralist and transparent vision. Here, it is important for both projects to arrive at common definitions to security anxieties related to asymmetrical threats such as terrorism, as well as to pertaining asymmetries in issues of justice, tolerance, information-flow, and trust-building. Accordingly, all strategic perceptions in the Mediterranean region should be reconsidered and clarified, so that the open character of both the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the ESDP processes is safeguarded. There is no doubt that important questions are raised for the security-building aspects of the European "militarization" project, given the levels of complexity, heterogeneity and fragmentation that for centuries now shape the physiognomy of this volatile regional order.

2. Mapping complexity

The extent to which the Mediterranean can be seen as a distinct region complicates further the discussion about the appropriate scope and level of the European policy towards this part of the world. Geographically, the Euro-Mediterranean area encompasses at least two mega-regions: the geographical space which borders its North-West sector (EU) and the South-Eastern one, namely the Middle East, and three sub-regional groupings: Southern Europe, the Mashreq and the Maghreb². Although there exist many variations in such

¹ D.K. Xenakis and M.J. Tsinisizelis (eds.) (2006), *Global Europe: The International Dimensions of the European Union* (in Greek), I. Sideris, Athens, forthcoming.

² There is a reluctance to include the Balkans as a Mediterranean sub-regional space, which is instead seen as comprising a separate region in itself. S. Calleya (1997), *Navigating Regional Dynamics in the Post-Cold War World: Patterns of Relations in the Mediterranean Area*,

geographical divisions, it is still useful to think of the Mediterranean as a single security system.

Arguably, no other part of the globe exemplifies better the new symptoms of instability towards the fragmentation and revival of “ancient feuds” than the Mediterranean, with security questions becoming increasingly indivisible, often regardless of its diverse sub-regional features. The Mediterranean area encompasses many possible seats of tension as well as a series of protracted conflicts with a strong historical background (for example the Greek-Turkish dispute over Cyprus and the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine). During the Cold War, Spencer writes, the prevailing view was that the Mediterranean represented «*a region of importance because of its proximity, potential instability and hence exploitation by the erstwhile Soviet Union, but of less importance as an “out of area” region in NATO terms*»³. The Cold War had led to a reductive assessment of Mediterranean security problems, focusing on the means and ends of countering the threat of the Soviet presence⁴ on Euro-American lines of communication, oil and trade routes. But from the late 1980s onwards, a shift in emphasis became manifest from global assessments of security issues to regional ones. The aftermath of the Cold War gave the impression, albeit briefly, that certain protracted conflicts might be resolved. But the easing of East-West tension was not followed by a similar trend in Mediterranean politics. Rather, the removal of bipolar “safety net” and with it the view that wanted the Mediterranean to serve as a sub-theatre of superpower antagonism introduced an idiosyncratic fragility at both regional and sub-regional levels.

Security analysts also point to both real and potential conflicts that originate in or impact on the region. Revisiting their respective causes, Balta has distinguished between conflicts that originate in the distant past and conflicts that emerged during the second half of the last century⁵. Potential conflicts are divided into three categories: those inherited from colonialism (mainly territorial), those stemming from deeply divided societies (*e.g.*,

Dartmouth, Aldershot.

³. C. Spencer (1998), “Rethinking or reorienting Europe’s Mediterranean security focus”, in W. Park and G. Wyn Rees (eds.), *Rethinking Security in Post-Cold War Europe*, Longman, London, p. 139.

⁴. Syria, Libya and the Balkan countries were supported by the former Soviet Union, while the US support was directed toward Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, with both the US and the Soviet Union competing to support Egypt and Algeria. It is worth remembering that in the bipolar distribution of power in the region, the European Community (EC) was supporting Turkey, Malta and Cyprus.

⁵. P. Balta (1997), ‘La Méditerranée en tant que zone de conflits’, *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals*, No. 37: <http://www.cidob.es/castellano/Publicaciones/Afers/balta.html> (23 March 1999).

Lebanon), and those originating in minority issues (e.g., Basques, Corsicans, Kurds, etc.). Conflicts inherited from the past are closely associated with the three monotheistic denominations affecting Mediterranean societies. Taken together, these inheritances exemplify the denominational fractures among Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and the schisms between the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox camps, as well as between the Sunnis and Shiites. Such conflicts are the Arab-Israeli dispute, the Greco-Turkish rivalry, and the associated Cyprus question. The latter, for over a quarter of a century now, continues to frustrate all attempts at inter-communal reconciliation and, eventually, reunification. The Arab-Israeli issue has also featured prominently at the international agenda, due to the intractability of its political and historical complexity, the depth of its emotional intensity, and the recent revival of hope for a negotiated peaceful settlement.

There is no doubt that religion and culture are very important factors in Mediterranean security considerations. The influence of European thinking on the Arab-Muslim world dates back to the 19th century, while the Muslim civilization marked its impact on European-Christian culture for several centuries. But whereas the Hellenic-Judaic tradition, Couloumbis and Veremis note, captured the imagination of the Europeans with relatively little resistance, Islam failed to make any significant inroads in the West. «*The Ottomans left their religious heritage in Bosnia and Albania but the Arabs that preceded them facilitated the transmission of Aristotelian thought into Europe of the 10th century. The subsequent blooming of the Renaissance was assisted by the Byzantine transfusion of classical Greek philosophy and Platonic thought that questioned the established Aristotelian wisdom*»⁶. Not only did European culture have no particular influence on Muslims for over a thousand years, but also benefited from the early Islamic “enlightenment”⁷. Regardless of the socio-cultural and economic entanglements rooted in Mediterranean history, the modern European image of Islam sets its culture outside Europe; also, due to the burdened colonial past of the Europeans, the image of external “otherness” to Europe is mirrored in the Muslim societies of the Mediterranean.

Other issues that are currently involved in regional (in)security date back to the early stages of colonialism. Colonialization was first practised by the

⁶. T. Couloumbis and T. Veremis (1999), “Introduction: The Mediterranean in Perspective”, in S. Stavridis, T. Couloumbis, T. Veremis and N. Waites (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of the European Union's Mediterranean States and Applicant Countries in the 1990s*, Macmillan, London, p. 2.

⁷. H. Köchler (1996), “Muslim-Christian Ties in Europe: Past, Present and Future”, Second International Seminar on Civilizational Dialogue, “Japan, Islam and the West”, Kuala Lumpur, 2-3 September.

South to the North and, later, *vice versa*. The Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek and Persian civilizations, and later the Roman Empire, have all found their way to the Mediterranean and sought to use it as a means of extending their power-base. The split between the Byzantine empire in the East and the Catholic/Germanic kingdoms in the West, the rise of Islamic and Arabic rule in the Middle East, North Africa and Spain, the impact of extra-territorial forces such as the Normans and Crusaders, and the rise of regional powers like Moorish Spain, Venice and Genoa, have all contributed to the fragmentation of the region. Their combined impact has often turned the latter into a potentially explosive area, wherein the divisions and controversies among its peoples intermixed with their historical ties and related destiny. As a result, the Mediterranean has always run the risk of becoming a site of endemic and often protracted conflicts.

Mediterranean society is relatively unstructured and non-hierarchical. The European civilization owes much to the Mediterranean and the Islamic world, and both have found themselves locked in centuries of lasting dynamic tension and cooperation. To start with, one has to go back to the era of the ancient Greek civilization, and the days of the Roman *imperium*. In the period after, the Mediterranean witnessed an explosion of the Arab population that conquered the Greco-Roman civilizations, leaving a remarkable and lasting impact on a region that extended from Egypt to the so-called “Fertile Crescent”. The peoples living in this area were given a new religion, Islam, and a new language, Arabic. Neither of which, however, was able to create a melting pot through assimilationist techniques of enforced homogeneity, or for that matter to lead towards a complete fusion or incorporation, although some commonly shared features did offer a bridge to overcoming diversity.

From such a macro-historical perspective, the fragmentation of the Euro-Mediterranean space constitutes the major obstacle to sustain regional cooperation. Tempting as it may be to characterize the Mediterranean as “a horizontal dividing line” between the rich European North and “an arc of crisis” located in the South, this division fails to capture the dialectic between distinct, yet intertwined, geographical spaces. A North-South conflict theoretical framework underestimates the realities of both North-North and South-South frictions and the sympathies that not only prevent the outbreak of autochthonous conflicts but also underlie Western European efforts to develop harmonious, yet not symmetrical, relations across the Mediterranean⁸. A more studied analysis though, reveals that the Mediterranean provides an efficient

⁸. N. Waites and S. Stavridis (1999), “The EU and Mediterranean Member States”, in S. Stavridis, T. Couloumbis, T. Veremis and N. Waites (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 29.

line of contact. In fact, it has always constituted a crossing point for conflict and co-operation, antagonism and co-existence.

Being a heterogeneous synthesis of diverse civilizations – conceptually, along the lines of a “heterarchy” – as well as of unequal economic development, a plurality of political regimes, divergent perceptions of security and uneven demographic growth, the Euro-Mediterranean system occupies a position between order and disorder, for which a comprehensive framework of analysis is yet to become discernible. True as the latter may be, the Mediterranean can be also seen as a network of diversities and dividing lines between different socio-economic systems, political cultures and regimes, languages and, crucially, religions. One may also refer to the Mediterranean as a space, where geography, history and politics intermesh with culture and religion with enormous complexity, resulting in a composite system of partial regimes, each reflecting a particular sense of being and belonging.

3. Huntington, islamophobia and the Arab journey to modernity

Mediterranean security considerations are full of misunderstandings about distorted perceptions and images of (political) Islam, as well as about the threat of terrorism used by extremist nationalist movements in the region. Other issues stem from the appropriation of Islam for political ends and the lack of respect for universal values and norms of human rights. These misunderstandings emanate from mutual ignorance and intended confusion, since the military dimension of security is lacking from Southern debate on security. One should also guard against the simplification often suggested in the media that “Islamic fundamentalism” is a violent and merciless organization orchestrated by Iran with the help of other radical regimes. As Essid rightly points out, *«there is still a need to define and redefine terms which, rather than contributing to the dialogue we desire, reduce it to a series of parallel monologues and, at several levels, reinforce misunderstandings»*⁹. It is thus of great value that any meaningful debate about Islam should dispel the clouds of deliberate myth-making and revengeful rhetoric that are particularly detrimental to a mutually rewarding dialogue.

During the Gulf War the West was seriously concerned with the possibility of a militant Islamist backlash against intervention. The risk of terrorist

⁹. H. Essid, “Les termes de l'équivoque”, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Dossier No. 5, La France et les Arabes. Quoted in F. Faria and A. de Vasconcelos (1996), “Security in Northern Africa: Ambiguity and Reality”, *Chaillot Papers*, No. 25, Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, Paris, p. 1.

attacks against the West was raised by Hussein's call for a "holy war" a few days after he invaded Kuwait. His appeal rested on a three-pronged strategy that bared several fault lines between and within Mediterranean societies¹⁰. From an international relations perspective, this signalled the re-arrangement of world order, reducing the East-West confrontation to a minimum, whilst re-emphasising, in however complex terms, the Orient-Occident and North-South gaps. These events offered useful ammunition to those arguing that the dominant conflict post-Cold War is between Occidental and Oriental values, or indeed between an Occidental economic/technological "post-historical" world and an Oriental "historical" world¹¹. Rather effortlessly, Huntington depicted multiple (sub)regional *clashes* as a result of the irrefutable existence of different cultures (civilizations), projecting a historical Mediterranean fragmentation, rather than unity¹². His *Clash of Civilizations* raised the question of the cultural dimension of security, in that the "clash" occurs along the lines of religiously inspired militancy against Western liberal values. But his analysis missed the underlying causes of Islamic resurgence, as it is obsessed with the cultural symbols or the retrieval of collective historical memories. A related line of criticism is that, by rewriting Muslim history, his approach fails to encourage intelligent dialogue between the two opposing cultures. Instead, such scholarship serves to corrupt the common moral and

¹⁰. Firstly, he projected himself as the Arab leader who stood up against the West in general, and against the US in particular. Secondly, he elevated his struggle to a holy war against the West and its puppets in the Middle East. Finally, he brought Israel and as a consequence the Palestinian issue into the conflict thus handing Arab nationalism and Islamism a common cause. In doing so, he attempted to appeal to the peoples of other Arab States referring on the one hand to Islam, Islamic unity and orthodoxy, and on the other to pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism and Arab brotherhood. See K. Matthews (1993), *The Gulf Conflict and International Relations*, Routledge, London, p. 21; also, A. Ehteshami and G. Noneman (1991), *War and Peace in the Gulf: Domestic Politics and Regional Relations into the 1990s*, Ithaca Press, Reading, pp. 19-44.

¹¹. In *The End of History?* Fukuyama sees the end of the Cold War as evidence of the triumph of liberalism over communism; the former reigning triumphant as the only remaining ideological perspective. While he admits that certain internal conflicts exist within liberalism, such as the economic conflict among classes engendered by the market economy, he dismisses these conflicts as manageable. F. Fukuyama (1992), *The End of History and the Last Man*, Macmillan, New York.

¹². For Huntington, much of the future of world politics and a good part of its past can be understood as conflict among differing civilizations and, to a lesser extent, cooperation among peoples within the same civilization. See S.P. Huntington (1993), "The Clash of Civilizations?", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer, pp. 22-49; and S.P. Huntington (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Touchstone Books, London; Cf. T. Couloumbis and T. Veremis (1994), "In Search of New Barbarians: Samuel P. Huntington and the Clash of Civilizations", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter, pp. 36-44; and D.A. Welch (1997), "The 'Clash of Civilizations' Thesis as an Argument and as a Phenomenon", *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 197-216.

political language of the two cultures and fosters violence and confrontation, and has a justification for the prolongation of historical stereotypes.

Nevertheless, concern of an Islamic “threat” to the West increased after the Gulf War, by creating a new enemy stereotype after the demise of communism, preparing a climate for a “new cultural war”¹³. Rising anxiety in international relations is, according to Blunden, contagious¹⁴. The international system tends naturally to generate insecurity and suspicion, and «*once a pattern of hostility has been established each will tend to see the other as the enemy and to assume the worst about him*»¹⁵. In fact, even before the Gulf crisis, a theory started to take shape that it was not Communism that constituted the major threat for the West, but rather Islamic fundamentalism¹⁶. On many occasions, Western policy-makers have exploited a general public ignorance about *Orientalism* to advance self-serving foreign policy objectives. Since “Islam is both a religion and a polity”¹⁷, it is not surprising that several extremist groups have used it for radical purposes. The traditional view of the so-called *Orientalists* in the West is that the Arabs/Muslims «*show lack of coordination and harmony in organization and function, nor have they revealed an ability for cooperation. Any collective action for mutual benefit or common profit is alien to them*»¹⁸. Crucial to the creation of such stereotypes has been the role played by the western media in equating Islam with “fundamentalist Islam” and, hence, with a direct threat to the liberal-democratic West. As Said observes, «*... the negative images of Islam are very much more prevalent than any others and such images correspond, not to what Islam “is” ... but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be: Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that particular image of Islam, and this image therefore becomes more prevalent, more present, than all others*»¹⁹. In this context, Said continues, «*there is a consensus on Islam as a kind of scapegoat for everything we do not happen to like about the world’s new political, social, and economic patterns*»²⁰.

¹³. M.J. Shapiro (1997), *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

¹⁴. M. Blunden (1994), “Insecurity in Europe’s Southern Flank”, *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Summer, p. 137.

¹⁵. B. Buzan (1983), *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton, p. 228.

¹⁶. N. Ayubi (1995), “Farms, factories and... walls: which way for European/Middle Eastern Relations”, in N. Ayubi (ed.), *Distant Neighbors: The Political Economy of Relations between Europe and the Middle East/North Africa*, Ithaca Press, Reading, p. 7.

¹⁷. T.W. Lippman (1990), *Understanding Islam*, Penguin Group, New York, p. 70.

¹⁸. E. Said (1979), *Orientalism*, Vintage, New York, p. 310.

¹⁹. E. Said (1981), *Covering Islam. How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, p. 31.

²⁰. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Likewise, Esposito, a renowned non-Muslim scholar on Islam, has suggested that the selective presentation of facts and biased analysis have contributed to a negative perception of Islamic religion by mainstream Western society, reducing Islam and Islamic revivalism to stereotypes of “Islam vs. the West”, “Islam vs. modernity”, “Muslim rage”, extremism, fanaticism, and so on²¹. Writing on the subject, Roberson argues that «*the Islamic threat is essentially a counterfeit issue imbued with stereotypical misperceptions and a casual commitment to analysis ... in some cases, a conscious exercise in image creation for tactical political purposes*»²².

There has been a century-lasting conflict between Islam and Western Christianity, each being perceived by the other as ‘suspect’. Since the crusades, the Western world used to export its civilization through its imperial and colonial policies, often echoing the logic of *divide et impera*, to secure its vital economic and trade interests. All other civilizations were measured by western standards on the basis of anthropocentric and individualistic worldviews reflected in the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions. These pre-liberal images were strongly influenced by the pre-eminent role attached to an essentially value-driven distinction between the individual and the collective. It was only thanks to the legacy of the Enlightenment that certain notions of “civility” were linked to a more normative political language. Such a legacy has, in large measure, survived the present era, with the West attempting to monopolize global discourse on the democratic functions of government and human rights. But much like those in the West, Muslims believe that their faith has a divine purpose too, motivating them to set the world straight. They believe to be the chosen people following the righteous path to “judgement day”. More than religion and polity, Islam is also a culture with a different perception of the relationship between Church and State²³.

Despite the fact that the roots of this discourse can be traced to the revival of classic Greek ideas and the Renaissance, it was the coming of modernity that clearly exposed the differences between the two cultures²⁴. Most Arab societies were introduced to the logic of modernization under the heavy pressure of colonial Europe. Modernization was more successful in

²¹. J.L. Esposito (1998), *Islam and Politics*, 4th edition, N.Y. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse.

²². B.A. Roberson (1998), “Islam and Europe: An Enigma or a Myth?”, in B.A. Roberson (ed.), *The Middle East and Europe: The Power Deficit*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 120.

²³. I.M. Lapidus (1996), “Beyond the Unipolar Moment a Sober Survey of the Islamic World”, *Orbis*, Vol. 40, No. 3, Summer, p. 393.

²⁴. The term modernization refers to the process in which the structures of the traditional societies are dismantled and replaced by new structures on economic, social, political and cultural levels. See more analytically in C.E. Black (1966), *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York.

dismantling the traditional structures than in setting up their modern replacements²⁵. The process of adaptation to modernity is still going on for Islamic countries. Although Gellner has argued that «*the high culture of Islam is endowed with a number of features ... that are congruent, presumably, with requirements of modernity or modernization*»²⁶, many Muslim leaders still fight for a line “back to the roots”. Arab governing elites are particularly eclectic in picking out those “values of modernization” that best fit their objective aims of maintaining power and control, such as modern weapons, surveillance technology and consumer goods. Thus, a process of “selective sorting out” and “selective adaptation” does not allow the Western system of values and its assorted culture of modernization to be accepted by these societies. Instead, modernization is often reduced to a symbol of moral decay. From this line of argument, Western influence has to be controlled, not least because it increases the technological, military, economic and scientific superiority and/or hegemony of the capitalist world.

In Western polities, a separation of State and religion (secularism) was necessary to safeguard the modernization project – and its assorted properties of industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, technology, growth in communications, etc., – but Islam is still against any such separation²⁷. Huntington observes that fundamentalist Islam demands political rulers to be practising Muslims: ‘*shari’a* [Islamic law] should be the basic law, and *ulema* [theologians and jurists] should have «*a decisive vote in articulating, or at least reviewing and ratifying, all governmental policy*»²⁸.

According to Islamists, modernity may only be reached within the framework of indigenous values and not through their assimilation to Western culture. Aliboni explains: «*modernization through imitation of the West is a trap, which can only lead to subordination*»²⁹. In this context, Huntington

²⁵. G.A. G. Soltan (1997), “State Building, Modernization and Political Islam: The Search for Political Community(s) in the Middle East”, *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals*, No. 37: <http://www.cidob.es/castellano/Publicaciones/Afers/soltan.html> (23 March 1999).

²⁶. Such features include unitarianism, a rule-ethic, individualism, scripturalism, puritanism, an egalitarian aversion to mediation and hierarchy, and a small load of magic. See E. Gellner (1989), “Up from Imperialism”, *The New Republic*, 22 May, pp. 35-36.

²⁷. P.G. Vatikiotis (1991), *Islam and the State* (in Greek), Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, Athens.

²⁸. S.P. Huntington (1993), “Democracy’s Third Wave”, in L. Diamond and M.F. Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, The John Hopkins University Press and the National Endowment for Democracy, Baltimore and London, p. 19. Cf. S. Humphreys (1979), “Islam and Political Values in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria”, *Middle East Journal*, No. 33, Winter, pp. 6-7.

²⁹. R. Aliboni, (1994) “Factors Affecting Mediterranean Security”, in Tanner (ed.), *Arms Control, Confidence-Building and Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East*, Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Studies, Malta.

notes that, «to the extent that governmental legitimacy and policy flow from religious doctrines and religious expertise, Islamic concepts of politics differ from and contradict the premises of democratic politics»³⁰. This view accords with Diamond, Linz and Lipset's earlier analysis that «the Islamic countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa ... appear to have little prospect of transition even to semi-democracy»³¹. But it comes in direct opposition to Pool's claims that «the view that Islam is utterly incompatible with democracy, whatever form the latter takes, is to view Islam from a limited and simplistic perspective. Contemporary Islam can be democratic, undemocratic and anti-democratic and the political orientations of Muslim and Islamic movements have exhibited similar variations»³². To cut a long story short, although many argue that democracy and Islam «are contradictory only if democracy is defined by certain Western standards', in the end, 'presidents and kings' remain in charge of a state-controlled process of democratization as part of strategies of ... regime survival»³³.

The revival of Islam *per se*, of political Islamism and of Islamic radicalism are products of the aforementioned antitheses. Today, fragmented and struggling with modernity, Islam faces a variety of challenges including potentially violent movements with international implications. As Lapidus points out, «to cope with these movements we cannot merely deplore, hate, or fear them. We must understand what they are trying to say and the conditions that give rise to them. While the strengths and dangers of these movements can easily be overestimated, and frequently are, their seriousness and unsettling long-term potential cannot be ignored»³⁴. The threat of fundamentalism currently manifested in the Southern Mediterranean rim lies in the fact that many of its essential aspects represent a reaction to years of intolerable political and socio-economic conditions. In this sense, the fundamentalist threat is not merely a symptom of deeply rooted differences between the West and Islam, but also a means of responding to post-colonial pressures towards liberalization, which is perceived as threatening the "inner cohesion" of the Islamic tradition. In this context, religion is used to cover other deficits like economic, social, and political. More specifically, an

³⁰ S.P. Huntington (1993), "Democracy's Third Wave", in L. Diamond and M.F. Plattner (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³¹ J. Diamond, J. Linz and S.M. Lipset (eds.) (1989), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, p. xx. Quoted in D. Pool (1994), "Staying at home with the wife: democratization and its limits in the Middle East", in G. Parry and M. Morran (eds.), *Democracy and democratization*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 197.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

³³ D. Pool, "op. cit.", p. 215.

³⁴ I.M. Lapidus, "op. cit.", p. 404.

alleged inferiority in self-perception, dissatisfaction in terms of social development, and the non-acceptance of an organizational and technocratic problem-solving capacity of “the other” (the West).

It logically follows that the creation and maintenance of a climate of meaningful and open dialogue in the Mediterranean is no easy task, especially when there is a tendency to fuel traditional prejudices by both sides. As long as misperceptions persist and differences are not tolerated, then the relationship between Islam and Europe will remain tense, providing an excuse, if not a fertile ground, for keeping sustainable cooperation out of reach. But it is worth recalling that *«authentic Islam represents no threat and means no harm to Europe. In it one finds nothing that would justify hostility against it or the accusation that all Muslims are extremists and closed to dialogue»*³⁵. Accordingly, a new “hermeneutics of civilizational dialogue”³⁶ emanates as a *praesumptio juris et de jure*: a dialectic of cultural self-realization through a reciprocal exchange based on a philosophy of mutual understanding, that does away with the subjectivist approach that wants the “West” to act as a universal civilizing force based on an almost metaphysical obligation to humanity.

4. Comprehensive security agenda

The cause of tension in Euro-Mediterranean relations can only be partially ascribed to factors described above or the resurgence of radical Islam. The multidimensional character of Mediterranean security necessitates a comprehensive approach to security, taking into account socio-economic and cultural factors, and thus moving away from simplistic and convenient diagnoses that overemphasize the military aspects of security. As Bin asserts, *«many of the security-related concerns that have come to the fore in the region post-Cold War are non-military issues that may interact with more traditional security risks»*³⁷.

The new era has reactivated concern over the impact of the North-South divide on Mediterranean politics and society, itself part of the global debt problem. Such a divide is determined by unequal economic development, a

³⁵. Quoted in H.A. Jawad (1995), “Islam and the West: How Fundamental is the Threat?”, *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 140, No. 4, August, p. 37.

³⁶. H. Köchler (1998), “Philosophical Foundations of Civilizational Dialogue: The Hermeneutics of Cultural Self-comprehension versus the Paradigm of Civilizational Conflict”, *Occasional Papers Series*, No. 3, International Progress Organization.

³⁷. A. Bin (1998), “Strengthening Cooperation in the Mediterranean: NATO’s Contribution”, *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4, p. 25.

plurality of political regimes, divergent perceptions of security threats and changing patterns of demography. Ireland concurs: «*From Turkey to Morocco, the risks of social destabilization build, as intense demographic pressures overwhelm evaporating economic opportunities*»³⁸. Furthermore, the countries on the Northern shore have an industrial output four times higher than that of their Southern counterparts, and they have achieved self-sufficiency in agriculture, while Southern countries, despite attempts at agricultural reform and nation-wide modernization, are constrained by the lack of equipment and by demographic pressures resulting in insufficient productivity and a structural deficit of food³⁹.

Euro-Mediterranean affairs are affected by Europe's dependence on oil and gas supplies. The Mediterranean represents the most important transport route (shipping and pipelines) for many industrial European countries, through which the bulk of their raw materials travel from the Gulf and the Black Sea. For a long time, it was believed that the Cold War implied a threat to security of raw material supplies, accompanied by a feeling that the Soviet Union's policy towards the Arab world aimed at exposing the West to the danger of having its oil supplies from the Middle East cut off⁴⁰. Post-1989, the main danger lies in Europe's dependence on the Middle East as the main reservoir of crude oil, with 66% of world reserves and deliveries accounting for approximately 50% of total consumption.

Turning to issues of complex economic disparity, Joffé emphasizes the importance of the North-South ontology of the Mediterranean linked to the rich-poor gap in the basin⁴¹. One can hardly select a better example within which a clearer dividing line exists between a rich(er) North and a poor(er) South. With the exception of Israel, all other non-European countries of the region suffer, *inter alia*, from low income, insufficient growth of GNP compared to their ever-increasing demographic growth, high inflation and unemployment, widespread illiteracy and inadequate health services⁴². A further indication of complex economic inequality in the Mediterranean is the fact that «*the total GDP of EU Mediterranean States in the North is eleven*

³⁸. P.R. Ireland (1997), "Europe's Rio Grande? The Mediterranean Basin, Islam and the EU's Southern Strategy", paper presented at the Fifth Biennial ECSA-USA Conference, Seattle, Washington, May, p. 6.

³⁹. M. Grenon and M. Batisse (eds.) (1989), *Futures for the Mediterranean Basin: The Blue Plan*, United Nations Environmental Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁴⁰. J.C. Renaud (1991), "Security and Energy in the Post-Crisis Period", in *NATO Review*, No. 1, Vol. 39, February, p. 22.

⁴¹. G. Joffé, *et al.* (1993), "The Mediterranean: Risks and Challenges", *International Spectator*, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 36.

⁴². For a detailed analysis of all these factors see M. Benyaklef (1997), "Socio-economic Disparities in the Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer, p. 110.

times greater than that of its Southern littoral counterparts»⁴³. In addition to the above comes Vasconcelos's point that North African countries are heavily dependent on Europe for their external trade (circa 50-60%), and there is hardly any evidence to suggest that a process of economic integration has been set in train amongst them: «trade between neighbouring countries represents no more than a mere 3% of the total»⁴⁴.

From the early 1960s to the mid-1980s, the Southern Mediterranean outperformed all other regions of the world except East Asia, not only in income growth per-capita, but also in the equality of income distribution. Improvements in social conditions were dramatic: life expectancy significantly increased (on average by 13 years), infant mortality rates were cut in half, primary school enrolments became virtually universal, and literacy among adults rose steadily. Southern Mediterranean governments were also effective in reducing poverty⁴⁵. Since 1973, commercial relations between Europe and the Arab world have been determined by the variable of energy⁴⁶. After the increase in oil prices in the early 1970s, the Middle Eastern and North African economies were greatly dependent on the export of oil and natural gas⁴⁷.

In the 1980s, the slowdown of the earlier boom brought about a contraction of the Arab markets. Many Arab States became heavily indebted and were forced to undergo sharp economic adjustments. Moreover, with the decline of oil prices during the latter part of the 1980s most of the Arab

⁴³. Couloumbis and Veremis (1999), "op. cit.", p. 3. For other useful analysis of statistics on the North-South gap see R. Aliboni, *et al.* (1994), "Co-operation and Stability in the Mediterranean: An Agenda for Partnership", *International Spectator*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 5-20. For more recent statistical data see Eurostat (1998), *Euro-Mediterranean Statistics*, General Short-Term Statistics, No. 2, Luxemburg.

⁴⁴. A. de Vasconcelos (1991), "The New Europe and the Western Mediterranean", *NATO Review*, Vol. 39, No. 5, October, pp. 27-31.

⁴⁵. For any given per-capita income, poverty was lower in the Middle East and North African countries than elsewhere in the world and the distribution of wealth more egalitarian as compared to many countries in East Asia and Latin America. These achievements were the result of rapid growth in the 1970s and early 1980s and the introduction of generous transfers to large sections of the population. At its peak, the effect of the windfall on oil producers was equivalent to a 50% increase in their national incomes. The spillovers for the rest of the region (through aid flows, remittances of immigrant workers and exports) were substantial and equivalent to a 35-40% increase in GDP for the Middle East and North African countries as a whole.

⁴⁶. B. Khader (1997), "Europe-Arab Economic Relations: Balance of a Quarter Century 1973-1997", *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, No. 37.
<http://www.cidob.es/castellano/Publicaciones/Afers/khader.html> (23 March 1999).

⁴⁷. This has been particularly true not only for the major oil-producing countries, but also for minor producers like Egypt, as well as those non oil-producing countries that benefited from the increase of oil wealth through immigration and exports to Europe, and more direct investment flows from the latter.

economies came to a grinding halt. The worsening of socio-economic conditions in the Mediterranean as compared to other less developed regions has become clear by the 1990s. A report published by the World Bank in October 1995 stated that, since the mid-1980s, the Southern Mediterranean countries suffered the largest decline of real per-capita income than any other developing region (approximately 2% annually), and a 0.2% annual decline in productivity⁴⁸. As a response to these trends, the developing countries of the region accused the Europeans (and the wider West) of setting up and supporting a global economic system that works against their interests. From a historical perspective, such criticisms date back to colonial occupation and its powerful effects on the economic development of the Mediterranean South. Joffé explains: «*The effects are most strikingly seen in the Maghreb, where the region's integration into the French colonial sphere meant that economic structures were increasingly dedicated to serving the metropolitan market*»⁴⁹. On the whole, economic cooperation in the Mediterranean is limited as much by the fragmentation of the Southern economies (especially since protracted conflicts constitute an obstacle to South-South economic relations), as by the absence of a coherent framework to manage North-South relations in a mutually advantageous manner.

Two undisputed features in the Euro-Mediterranean soft security agenda are demography and migration. The countries of North Africa – Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya – have at present a population of 120 million, but over the next 25 years it is estimated that their population will cross the threshold of 200 million. The population of Northern Mediterranean countries, which in 1950 accounted for 2/3 of the total Mediterranean population, will fall to 1/3 by 2025, whereas on the Southern shore of the basin, the growth rate is increasing rapidly. Yet, the crux of the problem lies in the age-differences between the populations of the two shores. If there are no major demographic changes, the European countries will experience an increased ageing of their populations in the next 30 or so years, while in the Southern rim the section of the population under 15 years of age will continue to rise⁵⁰. Among the major consequences of these fast-growing

⁴⁸. World Bank Report (1995), *Claiming the Future Choosing Prosperity in the Middle East and North Africa*, October. For more comprehensive analysis of the economic challenges facing the region see N. Shafik (1998), *Economic Challenges Facing Middle Eastern and North African Countries. Alternative Futures*, Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey, Macmillan Press, Hampshire.

⁴⁹. Joffé (1996), "The Economic Factor in the Mediterranean Security", *The International Spectator*, Vol. 4.

⁵⁰. For a detailed analysis of figures and trends in Mediterranean demographics see, R. King and M. Donati (1999), "The 'Divided' Mediterranean: Re-defining European Relationships", in R. Hudson and A.M. Williams (eds.), *Divided Europe. Society and Territory*, SAGE, London,

demographic trends will be a colossal demand for employment. This problem is compounded by the fact that labour supply in Southern Mediterranean countries is lagging far behind the expected increase in the labour force seeking work. Just to absorb the young people entering the labour market, these countries would have to create more than 2,5 million jobs annually, that is, three times the present rate of job creation. Never before in the history of the Mediterranean have there been as many youngsters as today on its Southern shores due to a robust and still in full swing demographic transition⁵¹. Should this market fail to absorb them, then it is easy to imagine the frustration this will generate, not to mention the accompanying levels of social protest and migratory pressures⁵². As long as the conditions for the development of North African economies are not in place, the only available option to a large section of their population will be to migrate to the more prosperous European countries, thus posing an additional challenge to regional stability.

Needed as cheap labour following World War II, the Arab-Muslim migrants in Western Europe have recently become a security issue⁵³. Today, one easily identifies considerable migratory flows from ethnic communities that resist integration and/or assimilation to respective European host cultures, as some 6 million immigrants from the Maghreb alone reside in EU countries, mainly France, Italy, Spain, Greece, and far more in the new Mediterranean Members of the EU, Malta and Cyprus. As this continues to occur in a period of heightening demographic fragility, immigration will continue to be seen as a major threat, leading to socially pathogenous phenomena such as intolerance, racism and xenophobia among a section of the host population. At a time when Europe is preoccupied with the perceived socio-economic and political consequences of foreign residents, one should not forget the valuable contribution of immigrants to Germany's post-war "economic miracle"⁵⁴, regarded at the time as a resource, rather than a threat. Today, however, the

especially pp. 142-147.

⁵¹. S.E. Ibrahim (1995), "The Demographic Factors in the Security of the Mediterranean: From The Battle Of Tours To The Battle Of Algiers", Fondation Méditerranéenne d'Etudes Stratégiques, Séminaire de la Tour Blanche, Toulon, 21-24 juin.

⁵². Inter-Parliamentary Union (1997), "Employment is Key to Stability in the Mediterranean, CSCM Meeting Concludes", Press release of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, No. 2, Monte Carlo/Geneva, 4 July.

⁵³. S. Collinson (1997), "Migration and Security in the Mediterranean: A Complex Relationship", paper presented at the Conference on "Non Military Aspects of Security in Southern Europe: Migration, Employment and Labour Market", organized by the Institute of International Economic Relations and Regional Network on Southern European Societies, Santorini 19-21 September.

⁵⁴. See S. Spencer (ed.) (1994), *Immigration as an Economic Asset: The German Experience*, IPPR/Trentham Books, Staffordshire.

capacity of the European labour market to absorb growing migratory flows appears to be far more limited. Contributing to the above has been the ever-growing flows of refugees and immigrants from East European countries and the Balkans post-1989, not to mention additional currents of immigration from other troubled parts of the globe, such as Black Africa, Asia, etc.

Determining an appropriate policy response to the movement of immigrants and asylum seekers across national boundaries is one of the key challenges confronting both individual European governments and the EU collectively. Recent trends have resulted in restrictive legislation on immigrants and refugees which, in Aliboni's terms, comes in sharp contrast to the rationalist, democratic nature of modern European societies⁵⁵. Collinson has also illustrated the profound influence of the migration question on the political and security agenda of the Mediterranean. Indeed, her book *Shore to Shore* demonstrates how EU policy toward the Maghreb has been increasingly defined by anxiety about the potential for rising immigration levels⁵⁶. But even if Europe institutes new barriers to control the immigration inflow, critical questions remain as to the implementation of such measures, and the way and extent to which they will prove capable of discouraging potential immigrants from reaching Europe, without reinforcing fragmentation. In the existing patterns of North-South interaction, people (mainly through the media) see the extent to which their living conditions differ from those of their Northern neighbours. But the media also bring to the European peoples themselves stereotypical and negative images of the Southern Mediterranean, fuelling hostility and mistrust toward the Arab world. This xenophobic and, more accurately, islamophobic trend serves to solidify the cultural divide across the Mediterranean. In Boutros-Ghali's words: «*Proximity in this case can only exacerbate differences*»⁵⁷.

Disparities in wealth within the Mediterranean are undermining the social pillars of support that sustained secular national orders and generate a creeping cultural radicalism towards rejection of the 'other'⁵⁸. But such disparities have also allowed for other problems to come to the fore. In particular, due to their weakness to respond to the new challenges, the Arab regimes use "regional nationalism" as a means of perpetuating the *status quo*.

⁵⁵. Aliboni (1994), "op. cit."

⁵⁶. S. Collinson (1997), *Shore to Shore. The Politics of Migration in Euro-Maghreb Relations*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.

⁵⁷. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "The Marginalization of Africa", *Mediterranean Quarterly*: <http://www.erols.com/mqmq/Ghali.htm> (23 March 1999).

⁵⁸. N. Fahmy (1996), "After Madrid and Barcelona: Prospects for Mediterranean Security", paper presented at the Conference organized by MEDAC, "Prospects after Barcelona", MEDAC, Malta, March.

Aliboni explains: «to sustain the goals of “regional nationalism” they will continue to divert resources towards military expenditure ... As a result they will make the achievement of basic conditions for consensus – economic and social development, and a more equitable distribution of income and resources – more difficult or unlikely»⁵⁹. The collapse of the progressive pan-Arab regimes that, for the most part of the 1980s managed to keep radical religious trends under control, witnessed a resurgence of a popular Islamic radicalism in the early 1990s. As the majority of these countries have no tradition of political pluralism, their respective regimes attempted to cope authoritatively with the above through the employment of undemocratic practices, as in the cases of Algeria, Egypt, and Turkey. But this kind of internal instability has external repercussions too: since large numbers of immigrant workers from the Southern Mediterranean reside in Europe, the possibilities of turmoil spilling over to the Northern Mediterranean rim is far from fictitious, if not already a living reality in major European capitals. If the aforementioned alarming trends are followed by a deterioration of North-South relations along civilizational lines, and no drastic socio-economic and political reforms are introduced, then the prospects for political stability, economic prosperity and social progress in the Mediterranean will remain particularly bleak.

5. Post-September 11th

The terrorist attacks against the US on September 11th 2001, have ushered in a new era in international politics. The priorities of international relations, the nature of regional politics, the shape of political alliances, the driving purpose of foreign policies, the nature of international cleavages, the evolving role of military forces and the risks of weapons of mass destruction have all been affected by the epoch-making events⁶⁰. The latter have also altered the Western strategic threshold, but have not really challenged the US position in the world, although the impact on their strategy is profound. Likewise, the overall international security paradigm remained reasonably clear-cut, with the US dominating the post-Cold War international system, especially those aspects of the system dealing with security issues.

After September 11th and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, most analyses suggest that the wider Mediterranean space constitutes a zone of instability,

⁵⁹. R. Aliboni (1991), “European Security Across the Mediterranean”, *Chaillot Papers*, No. 2, Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, Paris.

⁶⁰. D.N. Chrysoschoou, M.J. Tsinisizelis, S. Stavridis and K. Ifantis (2003), *Theory and reform in the European Union*, (second revised edition), Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York.

violent religious and cultural conflicts, different perceptions of security and, above all, different worldviews. Although, terrorism is endemic in the Mediterranean region much earlier than September 11th, however, most would agree that the new US sponsored doctrine focusing on asymmetrical threats had its impact on regional affairs – *i.e.*, the re-enforcement of policing in national security affairs, the increase of restrictions in free movement, and the alienation between European and Arab populations. True as it may be, the new antiterrorist doctrine has affected regional affairs by increasing “internal pressures” and reactions in some Southern societies, and by redirecting the focus on issues of military security at the cost of investment in economic growth and regional stabilization. These developments have influenced negatively the workings of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the assorted Barcelona Process. Such trends were further reinforced by the unpopular US policy towards the Arab-Israeli crisis.

There is a dominant perception in the Arab world that the US sponsored antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and possibly in Syria or somewhere else in the Middle East is the beginning of *clashing* scenarios. This perception stems from a chain of events that have fuelled the Arab world with a deep sense of insecurity; especially the post-September 11th US doctrine convinced the Arabs that the West will not hesitate to strike out against them should its interests require so. Important here is that the emphasis given to the development of European military capabilities has led many Arab partners to the erroneous conclusion that the EU shares NATO’s strategic plan for the Mediterranean, focusing on new asymmetrical threats and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The consequences of all the above endanger the empowerment of radical segments in the Arab countries that view Europe as a potential enemy, as the escalating crisis in the Middle East mobilizes radical Islamism.

Regional affairs are clearly affected by the formation of the ESDP. The new crisis-management tool suggests a new development that enhances the role of the Union in international and Mediterranean security affairs. ESDP is only one dimension of a broader and more ambitious goal related to the future of the EU itself. These developments reflect the desire of EU States to “deepen” their political integration, which is inconceivable without the strengthening of the second EU pillar. The consolidation of the Union’s CFSP is the tool that will make the EU heard in international affairs, not only as an economic giant, but as a single and independent political entity able to face global challenges and promote worldwide the fundamental principles of peace, security, cooperation, democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These goals will be supported by the EU’s

security arm, the ESDP, which in its current state limits itself to dealing with crisis management, humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping operations and tasks of combat forces (including peace-making); the so-called “Petersberg Tasks”⁶¹.

Most analysts, in the light of the negative experience with Eurofor and Euromarfor, have underlined the need of complementary measures to support the ESDP. Given the low level of information about the ESDP that is provided in the Arab world, it was decided that the EU pays attention to the misperceptions and fears of some Mediterranean partners regarding the strengthening of its military capabilities. Thus the ESDP has its own Mediterranean dimension, courtesy of the initiative taken by the Spanish Presidency during the first half of 2002⁶². Greece, through its ESDP Presidency, has already played a decisive role in this effort. The Greek proposals over transparency, trust-building and the institutionalization of a security dialogue in the Mediterranean, will allow the Mediterranean partners to gain better access in the construction of a co-operative Euro-Mediterranean space, by reducing the asymmetry that currently characterizes the regional system⁶³. Hence, another function of the 2003 Hellenic Presidency’s seminars on the Mediterranean Dimension of the ESDP in Rhodes (1-2 November, 2002) and Corfu (9-10 May, 2003) is to act as platforms for constructive discourse⁶⁴. It is crucial that this line of communication remains open to clarify EU strategic intentions and alleviate possible misperceptions by the Arab partners, thus promoting mutual understanding.

⁶¹. It is necessary to make clear that ESDP is not an explicit first step towards the formation of a European army. In the military aspects of ESDP, the Union has committed itself to setting up a 60,000 force able to be deployed within two months and sustained on the ground for 12 months. The commitment and deployment of national troops will be based on sovereign decisions taken by EU Member States. It is clear that this military embryo is not meant to be a standing force and that is why the currently in use term “Euro-Army”, is not accurate since it does not reflect faithfully the current state of affairs in the formation of both CFSP and ESDP.

⁶². Spain plays a leading role in the EU Mediterranean policy. Naturally, the promotion of the Barcelona Process and the Mediterranean Dimension of the ESDP were high priorities for the Spanish Presidency.

⁶³. D.K. Xenakis (2002), “The Future of Euro-Mediterranean Defense Co-operation: The Way Ahead”, *experts round table paper*, international seminar of the Hellenic Presidency, “The Mediterranean Dimension of the ESDP and the Hellenic Presidency”, Defence Analysis Institute, Ministry of Defence, Rhodes, 2 November.

⁶⁴. The main aim was to exchange views on ESDP matters and soft-security measures with the Mediterranean partners in order to further develop the capacity to identify and adopt a common Euro-Mediterranean ground on security and defence issues. See more analytically in M.J. Tsinisizelis, D.K. Xenakis and D.N. Chrysochoou (2003), “Promoting Security Dialogue in the Mediterranean: The Hellenic Presidency and Beyond”, *Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 119-136.

It is important to mention here the EuroMeSCo's working group III on *European Security and Defence Policy: Impact on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* assessment of the Southern Mediterranean perceptions. The first year report revealed very useful data for the current state of art in regional security affairs⁶⁵. The Arab partners generally doubt the international role of the EU, since the favourable European attitude towards the right of existence for the Palestinian Authority is counterbalanced by its ineffective action in Jerusalem. Rather naturally, the majority of the public opinion in the Arab populations of Mediterranean societies considers the EU's stance fairer to that of the US, but the Israeli perception over the European presence in the area is opposite. In Israel there is a dominant "hopeful pessimism" over the international role of the EU *vis-à-vis* the "obvious" hostility towards Israeli interests in the Palestinian issue. On the other hand, the Arabs are positive for a more active EU role in the Middle East.

Besides the growing feeling that in the Arab world there is a negative predisposition towards the ESDP, questions about the properties of a Mediterranean security system further complicate discussion about the objectives and the level of the EU's strategic involvement in the region. The EU's official documents such as the *Common Strategy for the Mediterranean* are general descriptions lacking prioritization over the EU's pragmatic intentions⁶⁶. But in the process of consolidating a European defence identity with operational capabilities, the conceptions, intentions, planning, political goals, individual national interests of EU Members and their attempts to maintain a relative diplomatic freedom in the Mediterranean remain vague. «*In the absence of a clear range of goals, deriving from a joint strategic plan for the Mediterranean*», EuroMeSCo's report argues that «*a certain level of vagueness is inevitable*»⁶⁷. The development of EU military capabilities is a reaction to previous European interventions in the successive Yugoslav crises. But the fact that the main geographical target of the ESDP is to maintain stability within the European Continent, does not exclude the possibility of the EU to undertake humanitarian and crisis management operations in the Mediterranean.

⁶⁵. First Year Report of the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo) Working Group III (2002), "European Defence: Perceptions vs. Realities", *EuroMeSCo Papers*, No. 16, especially pp. 11-12.

⁶⁶. The *Common Strategy for the Mediterranean* was adopted by the European Council in Feira and constitutes a means for exercising EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean region, as well as a mechanism for implementation of the CFSP objectives, according to the relevant provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty.

⁶⁷. EuroMeSCo (2002), "op. cit.", p. 14.

Most of the Southern partners of the EU see positively the strengthening of regional defence cooperation and their involvement in joint military exercises. It is essential to promote the positive expectations for a more active EU in Mediterranean security affairs, by encouraging its partners to participate in joint strategic activities. The participation of Southern partners in future ESDP exercises in the region is a confidence-building measure that needs to be encouraged. The reinforcement of scientific cooperation in joint military exercises, like emergency rescue missions and the handling of natural disasters, is a good case in point. It is also suggested that co-ordination mechanisms for bilateral security and defence cooperation should not be excluded from the agenda, initially at the level of exchange of information in sub-regional initiatives where security is a clear issue, such as the Mediterranean Forum⁶⁸. This could then be extended to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This will promote regional cooperation in the fields of security and defence through immediate upgrade of the 'knowledge' level in ESDP matters.

6. Final thoughts

The Mediterranean has been a crossroads of civilizations as well as a hotbed of tension. Today, against the background of unprecedented global transformations that redefine the conditions of international life, both Mediterranean shores are groping for change. Indeed, elements of convergence and divergence are reformulated through modified perceptions and an ascending pluralism in the regional structures. The success of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership will determine whether the region will continue to be a crossroad of tension, conflicts and economic decadence, as opposed to a zone of peaceful cooperation. Efforts in this direction should ameliorate the policies of transparency and strategic cooperation, even if the current situation in the Middle East poses serious questions about what should be a realistic next step.

⁶⁸. While conceived as a sub-regional 'proximity' circle within the wider Euro-Mediterranean space, the Mediterranean Forum can have a very active and specific role in promoting a multilateral cooperation agenda in the Mediterranean in what concerns particularly security and defence issues. Its membership makes it easier to tackle cooperation on such issues, which would be a harder task, due to current circumstances, at the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership level to address. Istituto Affari Internazionali (2002), *Summary of Deliberations*, workshop on "Measures for Conflict Prevention in the MedForum Countries' Framework", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome 21-22 June.

Contemporary Mediterranean politics are full of misunderstandings about distorted perceptions and images of the “other”, as they are about the threat of terrorism post-September 11th. Other misperceptions stem from the appropriation of Islam for political ends and the tensions arising from questions of universal values and human rights norms. The creation and endurance of a meaningful (security) partnership in the Mediterranean is no easy task, given the tendency to exploit and even fuel traditional prejudices by both sides. Using such divergent concepts, the Mediterranean remains a complex construct, occupying a prominent position between order and disorder. But to break down Mediterranean complexity, one has to realize the importance of diversity as an essentialistic principle: the system is itself constituted in the clash of different sub-systems. A heterarchical order minimizes homogeneity as the principal referent for sub-systemic cooperation. This form of enhanced particularity through a reflexive appropriation of difference becomes the basic normative unit of the system itself. This resonates with a broader aspiration of partnership that transcends any mono-dimensional configuration of power, stressing the complex nature of a common vocation. This is where a heterarchical regime like the EU’s regional partnership is better equipped to manage the existing levels of Mediterranean complexity. The plausibility of this claim to the importance of reflexivity, as opposed to coordinated hierarchy, rests on a systemic perspective, whereby the various segments form “instances of a totality”. Although some hierarchy of norms may prove necessary, this should also reflect the necessity for respect for the “other”. The aim is for “others” to be brought into the Barcelona framework, and for regional diversity to transform itself from a self-referential property of distinct units into an identifiable pluralist order composed of intertwined States and societies⁶⁹.

There is urgent need to (re)define terms which reduce inter-civilization dialogue to a series of parallel monologues. The aim is for a reciprocal exchange that does away with any subjectivist view that wants the “West” to act as a universal civilizing force based on an almost metaphysical obligation to humanity⁷⁰. It is, then, of great value that any meaningful debate about

⁶⁹. D.N. Chrysoschoou and D.K. Xenakis (2003), “Prospects for Euro-Mediterranean Governance”, *The Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Autumn.

⁷⁰. With the majority of pre-liberal images being influenced by the pre-eminent role attached to a value-driven distinction between the individual and the collective, it was thanks to the legacy of the Enlightenment that certain notions of “civility” were linked to a more normative discourse. Such a legacy has largely survived the present era, with the West aiming at monopolizing global discourse on democracy and human rights. See further on this in Xenakis and Chrysoschoou (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Islam should dispel the clouds of deliberate myth-making and revengeful rhetoric that are detrimental to a mutually rewarding security dialogue.

However, any security dialogue in the Mediterranean implies a realistic assessment of security risks. It is true that the Arab partners do not present Europe with any major military threat, as the growing militarization in the South, is mainly intended for use on a South-South scale or for “internal interventions”. Nor do Southern Mediterranean States perceive any direct threat from the North, for they associate the term “security” chiefly with domestic concerns and policing. Still though, even talking about the (neo-colonial) international management of domestic crises that the West has exhibited in the post-1989 era exacerbates general anti-Western feelings. A “cold” assessment of the risks undermining regional stability would not point Europe as a threat to the South, as well as the European perception over the Islamic danger as an exaggeration. However, it is the threat itself as much as the dominant perceptions that guide policy-makers. It is a common place in international relations that state behaviour is very much determined by perceptions. The influence of perceptions and mental constructs in political interaction becomes visible when actors extend their interactions into new areas, or when establishing new modes of action, such as the war against international terrorism. Although terrorism is endemic in the Mediterranean region much earlier than that horrific day, however, most would agree that the new asymmetrical threats and the unpopular US policy in the Middle East had their impact on regional security. These developments have affected the formation of the ESDP and make the development of cooperative politics in the region an essentially contested project.

Of importance in the years to come will be the chosen institutional format to transcend the peculiarities of the regional system. But the Barcelona Process alone will not be sufficient to manage an ever more complex and expanding regional security agenda. Here, the comparative advantage of the EU in developing an ESDP Mediterranean dimension is that the Barcelona project was not meant to serve as a conflict-manager, peace-keeper, or an instrument of conflict resolution. For all its ambition to bring about an “area of peace and stability”, the Barcelona Declaration emerged as a loose framework for conflict prevention. The ESDP’s capacity structure is better equipped to act as an institution able to carry out crisis-management missions, offering complementary security framework for the elaboration of guidelines towards a “common Mediterranean security space”. In that sense, an ESDP-led security dialogue in the region will bear positive cumulative effects in the regional partnership, opening up new possibilities for critical security issues to be discussed such as interoperability and “constructive duplication”,

doctrinal convergence on conflict prevention, intelligence-sharing and information exchange practices, export control regimes, civilian emergency planning and, moreover, a redefinition of defence mechanisms with a view to embracing civilian capabilities and achieving operational cohesion. Such an extended political dialogue could thus enhance security's "human" dimension, including civilian engagement in crisis-management missions, compatibility of prescribed actions with human rights norms, civil society input, and so on.

Limited, as it may currently be, the potential for organizing Mediterranean security awaits utilization. Because crises in the region are endemic, they know no borders: they have a tendency to ignore passport procedures and spill-over very rapidly. There is no doubt that the Mediterranean dimension of the new EU crisis-management tool represents a new regional strategic variable and not a threat. Thus the Mediterranean partners of the EU should not perceive it in hostile terms. Immigration is not on the ESDP agenda, and the EU's military force is certainly not intended to act as a police force for the Mediterranean people. Southern partners should not therefore view the deeper motives of the ESDP as the creation of a Schengen-type force to guard the Mediterranean, or as some sort of EU military imposition, or even as an orchestrated western control on them. Within this frame, the ESDP project of the EU can be perceived by its Mediterranean partners as a new opportunity to strengthen regional security. This prospect opens a wide range of possibilities for crucial strategic issues to be brought to the fore of the partnership, such as questions of operational readiness, doctrinal convergence, conflict prevention, intelligence sharing and information-exchange practices, civilian emergency planning, and so on. It is only by setting up a structured political dialogue on the root-causes of conflict, the prolepsis of immediate crises through a long-term strategy within multilateral institutions, a renewed focus on institutional response adaptation, and the development of a "common strategic language" to redefine the regional security properties, that the Barcelona project will act as a prelude to far-reaching Euro-Mediterranean beginnings.

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