

THE BARCELONA PROCESS AND THE SEARCH FOR POLITICAL STABILITY AND SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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1. Introduction

The Mediterranean has been an area of vital importance to the major European powers and their interests throughout history. It has also been a great challenge for the political and strategic planning of security and defence arrangements. It is a sea bridge connecting (or separating) three Continents with four different “internal sea regions”: the Western Basin from Gibraltar to the Gulf of Syrtis connecting Europe with the Maghreb and serving as an exit to the Atlantic; the Adriatic Sea which connects Italy with the troubled Balkans; the Aegean and Cretan archipelagos which have been part and parcel of the history and politics of the triangle of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus; and the Levantine waters which have been an integral part of Middle Eastern geography, political affairs and the Arab-Israeli-Palestine conflict. Needless to say, the Suez Canal, connecting the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean, adds another dimension to the Mediterranean and the surrounding countries.

But the Mediterranean is also a region of unity and diversity which has been a place of cooperation and conflict, cultural exchange and clashes, and economic cooperation, interdependence and exploitation. As a geographical region, for centuries it was divided politically, culturally and economically and quite often a source of friction and conflict. As it has been pointed out, *«the Mediterranean region is littered with potential geopolitical flashpoints, most of which have a long history. Problems such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Cyprus question, the Yugoslav issue, the external policies of radical States, terrorism, militant fundamentalism in some Southern Mediterranean States, or South-North migration»* are issues which have been around for some time¹. It is widely accepted that the major security challenges that the

¹. E. Anderson (2001), “The Mediterranean Basin: a Geopolitical Fracture Zone”, p. 19, in Russell King, *et al.* (eds.), *Geography, Environment and Development in the Mediterranean*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, Portland, pp. 18-27.

EU is facing today are in the Mediterranean region. As Alpo Rusi points out, «*the EU faces traditional security risks primarily in the Balkans, in the Mediterranean region, as well as in the Middle East and Algeria. The threats in the Balkans cannot be dismantled easily during the first decade of the twenty-first century*»².

For the above reasons, it was natural for the EU to express a special interest in its Mediterranean neighbours and make a top priority the development of a policy reflecting its concerns and objectives in the region. The launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership at the Barcelona Conference in November 1995 (more informally known as the Barcelona Process) was the culmination of a process that goes back to the early stages of the EC and the signing of Association Agreements with Mediterranean countries³. In the early 1990s, the European Council at its meetings in Lisbon (June 1992) and Corfu (June 1994) made decisions that paved the way for the development of a comprehensive and coherent Mediterranean policy. The European Council in Essen (December 2004), reconfirmed that «*the Mediterranean represents a priority area of strategic importance for the European Union*», welcomed the forthcoming Euro-Mediterranean Conference and laid down the guidelines for the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership⁴.

2. The Barcelona Declaration

The primary function and objective of the Barcelona Process is to establish a framework for political dialogue and a comprehensive partnership among the EU and the Mediterranean countries⁵. The rationale, objectives, tools and overall scope of the Euro-Mediterranean policy were presented in the Barcelona Declaration, which is basically a statement of principles and mostly long-term goals. Its main points are the following:

². A. Rusi (2001), "Europe's Changing Security Role", p. 117, in Heinz Gärtner, *et al.* (eds.), *Europe's New Security Challenges*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, pp. 113-124.

³. It is interesting to note that the EC signed its first two Association Agreements with two Mediterranean countries: Greece (1961) and Turkey (1963).

⁴. European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Essen, 9-10 December 2004.

⁵. The Barcelona Declaration was signed by the 15 EU Member States and the following 12 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. The League of Arab States (LAS) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) were also invited, and so was Mauritania, as a Member of the AMU. The AMU was established in 1989 by Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia.

- the Mediterranean is of strategic importance for the EU and relations in the region must be based on comprehensive cooperation and solidarity;
- political, economic and social issues present challenges that are common to both sides and require a coordinated response;
- a multilateral and lasting framework of relations would be a useful tool for building a partnership, but cannot replace other activities and initiatives;
- the goal of turning the Mediterranean into a region of dialogue, peace, stability and prosperity requires strengthening of democracy and the protection of human rights;
- balanced and sustainable economic and social development as well as understanding among different cultures are essential for a successful partnership;
- political dialogue, economic cooperation and emphasis on the social and cultural dimension are the main aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

3. The three aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)

The overarching goal of the Euro-Mediterranean policy is the establishment of a comprehensive Partnership and a common zone of peace, stability and prosperity in the region. For the achievement of this goal, three categories (or “*baskets*”) of measures were proposed, recalling and mirroring a similar mechanism adopted in Helsinki in 1975 at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)⁶. The three baskets refer to the main aspects of the Partnership and deal with political and security concerns, economic and financial aspects, and social and cultural issues.

- ❖ The political and security partnership aims at establishing a comprehensive regular political dialogue to promote common goals of domestic and external stability by strengthening democratic government, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

⁶. Renamed to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1994.

- ❖ The economic and financial partnership aims at promoting balanced and sustainable economic development and creating an area of shared prosperity through economic cooperation and concerted action based on the principles of free trade.
- ❖ The partnership in social, cultural and human affairs aims at developing links between societies, strengthening the civil society and promoting dialogue and mutual respect among cultures and religions.

This paper looks at the first aspect of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and examines some of the issues, problems and prospects it is facing in the area of peace and security.

4. European security arrangements

Following the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of the Soviet Union, security considerations and arrangements in Europe and the Mediterranean entered a stage of transformation.

The CSCE/OSCE remained the major pan-European forum for political debate and strengthened its role as a mechanism of interaction and conflict management open to all European countries⁷. NATO entered a phase of enlargement and remained the main security and defence organization based on transatlantic cooperation characterized by US prominence⁸. The EU as a multifaceted process of regional integration began seriously considering the development of a common foreign and security policy.

5. The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU

Historically, cooperation among the Member States of the European Community in the areas of foreign, security and defence policy was a sensitive issue and a difficult task to handle. This was due to several reasons: first, the division of Europe, the Cold War and ideological polarization made it difficult for the EC at its early stages to include these issues on its agenda;

⁷. Following its renaming and restructuring in 1994, today OSCE has 55 Members and, in that respect, it is the largest regional security organization.

⁸. NATO was enlarged in 1999 with the accession of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic; and in 2004 with the accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania. Today it has 26 Member States of which only Canada and the United States are non-European.

second, some countries had strong links to the United States and were Members of NATO; third, there were internal antagonisms and old rivalries among Member States on external issues; fourth, there was disagreement and uncertainty about the pace, purpose and final outcome of European integration.

Following the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the security framework of Europe changed drastically. The ideological schism and lines of division disappeared, the Berlin Wall came down, Germany was reunified and former enemies became allies. The meaning of security began shifting from the defence of territories, political independence and sovereignty to dealing with international crime, ethnic conflicts, humanitarian issues and terrorism. At the same time, integration was gaining momentum as the deepening and widening of the EU were accelerating.

In the light of the new emerging world order and the changing European political setting, the EU had to define its foreign and security orientation. Following a period of reflection, the 1990-91 Intergovernmental Conference, which concluded with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty⁹ in 1992, established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as the second pillar of the EU¹⁰. Under the Treaty of Maastricht, one of the objectives of the European Union is «*to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence*»¹¹.

The Treaty of Maastricht was a turning point and an important step in the direction of developing a common policy in these important and sensitive areas. Until then, there was a modest and loose cooperation among the national Ministries of Foreign Affairs known as European Political Cooperation (EPC), but now there was a need to go beyond that.

The repeated crises in the Balkans, the break-up of Yugoslavia and the active (if not dominant) presence of the United States in that troubled region

⁹. The Treaty of Maastricht was signed on 2 February 1992 and went into effect on 1 November 1993.

¹⁰. The three pillars of the EU are: First, the Community (based on the original Treaties of the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Community of Coal and Steel (ECSC), and the European Community of Atomic Energy (EURATOM). Second, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Third, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA).

¹¹. Treaty of Maastricht, article B. (Treaty on European Union, consolidated version, article 2). A similar provision is included in the Constitution of Europe which provides that «*the Union shall define and implement a Common Foreign and Security Policy covering all areas of foreign and security policy*», article II-294. The Constitution has not been ratified. Following its rejection at the French and Dutch referenda (held on 29 May and 1 June 1 2005 respectively) the ratification process has been suspended.

put pressure on the EU to go beyond political rhetoric and take practical measures to make CFSP an operational policy rather than a political goal. The Treaty of Amsterdam strengthened the legal basis and institutionalized further CFSP especially with the creation of the position of High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy¹².

At the same time, the continuing instability in the Balkans, especially the crisis in Kosovo and the almost unilateral style of US military action, raised the question of European autonomy and credibility which required the backing of military forces. In the wake of the 1998-99 Kosovo crisis, the European Council in Helsinki (December 1999) decided «*on developing the Union's military and non-military crisis management capability as part of a strengthened common European policy on security and defence*¹³». In particular, the European Council launched the European Security and Defence Policy as an integral part of CFSP, and decided for the creation of a small European military force. This is a self-sustaining force of 50,000 – 60,000 persons (European Rapid Deployment Force) which can be used for EU-led operations for crisis management. This force is intended to complement and not to compete with NATO. It will only act when NATO is not involved in a crisis. A new political and military structure was also set up with the establishment of standing political and military committees in Brussels.

Following the progress made in Helsinki, the EU has now in place a framework for foreign and security policy formulation, although it is lacking any credible force to support its implementation. The draft Constitution which was approved by the EU Heads of Government or State in October 2004, added two new important elements regarding CFSP: first, it created the position of the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs, who «*shall represent the Union for matters relating to the common foreign and security policy. He or she shall conduct political dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and shall express the Union's positions in international organizations and at international conferences*¹⁴»; second, it established a European External Action Service to assist the Minister for external action in fulfilling his mandate. This service will comprise officials from both the EU and the Member States and will work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States. With regard to security and defence issues, the Constitution provides for the establishment of a European Defence Agency the mandate of which is «*to identify operational requirements, to promote*

¹². The Treaty of Amsterdam was the conclusion of the 1996-97 Intergovernmental Conference. It was signed on October 2, 1997, and went into effect on May 1, 1999.

¹³. European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Helsinki, 10-11 December 1999.

¹⁴. European Constitution (not ratified), article III-296.

measures to satisfy those requirements, to contribute to identifying and, where appropriate, implementing any measure needed to strengthen the industrial and technological base of the defence sector, to participate in defining a European capabilities and armaments policy, and to assist the Council in evaluating the improvement of military capabilities¹⁵».

6. The Common Strategy on the Mediterranean region

In the broader context of the deepening and widening of the EU, and its evolving common foreign, security and defence policy, some initiatives and measures were taken which were directly related to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. One of these initiatives is the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean Region which was adopted by the European Council in 2000 and «*builds on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership established by the Barcelona Declaration and its subsequent aquis¹⁶»*. The Common Strategy reflects the firm position of the EU that the Mediterranean is of strategic importance and that «*a prosperous, democratic, stable and secure region, with an open perspective towards Europe, is in the best interests of the EU and Europe as a whole¹⁷»*. It also calls for the need «*to make significant and measurable progress towards achieving the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration¹⁸»*. With regard to political and security aspects, the Common Strategy defines certain areas of action and specific initiatives which are intended to make the Barcelona Process more action-oriented and result-driven. Among these actions are the following¹⁹:

- elaboration of partnership-building measures;
- identification of common ground on security issues;
- exchange of information on initiatives of mutual concern;
- reinforcement of cooperation against global threat such as terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking;
- cooperation for conflict prevention and crisis management;
- cooperation on how to address problems of anti-personnel landmines;
- signature and ratification of non-proliferation treaties;

¹⁵. European Constitution (not ratified), article I-41(3).

¹⁶. European Council, 2000, part I(1).

¹⁷. European Council, 2000, part I(1).

¹⁸. European Council, 2000, part II(7).

¹⁹. European Council, 2000, part III(13).

- promotion of a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass-destruction, nuclear, chemical and their delivery systems;
- support of the peace process in the Middle East in several ways.

The Common Strategy was applied for four years during which nothing in tangible terms was achieved. In June 2004, in continuation of the Common Strategy, the European Council at its meeting in Brussels, endorsed a Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East which reconfirms that the Union will seek to «*promote political reform, good governance, democracy and human rights*²⁰» in the region and that «*the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy will remain the cornerstone of the Union's framework for relations with the Mediterranean countries*²¹». It also acknowledges that no progress can be made «*unless a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is found*²²».

7. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

Another EU initiative directed towards strengthening cooperation with its neighbouring countries, including the Mediterranean States, has been the Mediterranean Neighbourhood Policy (MNP) which was launched after the May 2004 enlargement and the accession of 10 new Member States²³. With the new enlargement the external borders of the EU changed and new opportunities and challenges were created. The ENP is, in a way, a confluence of domestic and external EU policies intended to enable Member States and their Eastern and Southern neighbours to integrate common interests on important issues²⁴. It aims at strengthening relations with neighbouring countries, reinforcing regional cooperation arrangements and providing a broader framework for their further development and implementation.

The ENP places emphasis on stability, security and conflict resolution. Regarding the Mediterranean it «*will build on the *acquis* of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by fully integrating a tailor-made approach*

²⁰. European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels, 17-18 June 2004, paragraph 69.

²¹. *Ibid.*, paragraph 72.

²². *Ibid.*, paragraph 70.

²³. European Commission, 12 May 2004.

²⁴. The ENP countries are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, and Russia with special status, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine.

adapted to each country or group of countries²⁵». The fundamental objective of the ENP is «*to share the benefits of the EU's 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security and well-being for all concerned. It is designed to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours and to offer them the chance to participate in various EU activities, through greater political, security, economic and cultural cooperation²⁶*». The importance of the ENP is reflected in the European Security Strategy which was adopted by the European Council in Brussels (December 2003), which points out that with the accession of new States the security of the EU is increased but also brings closer troubled areas. It is, therefore, the EU's task «*to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations²⁷*». The ENP provides the framework of a long-term and far-reaching policy that adds a broader perspective to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It will also help in establishing balanced relations with its neighbouring regions in the South and the East.

8. A critical assessment

In 2005 the Barcelona Process completed 10 years of life and a thorough evaluation of its results was expected to take place at the extraordinary anniversary Conference of the Foreign Ministers in Barcelona on November 28-29. Any assessment of its results has to take into account that the political and security aspect of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is basically a loose arrangement of cooperation with emphasis on conflict prevention and the cultivation of a positive political climate for peace and stability. Since its launching in 1995 it has not gone beyond political rhetoric and has not achieved much in establishing an operational political and security framework. As it was concluded at the VIIth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Affairs' Ministers in Luxembourg (30-31 May 2005), the results of the Mediterranean Partnership overall presented "*a mixed picture*". Especially «*political and security cooperation at official level has grown although the pace has been slower than hoped for. The Partnership has not had any direct*

²⁵. European Commission (2004), p. 22.

²⁶. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷. European Council (2003), *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*. Drafted under the responsibility of the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and adopted by the European Council in Brussels, 11-12 December, 2003, p. 7.

*effect on the major unresolved conflicts in the region*²⁸». It is also pointed out that «*unresolved conflicts are affecting progress in the Partnership*²⁹». Indicative of the obstacles and difficulties which the process is facing is the fact that «*serious terrorists attacks have hit Euro-Mediterranean countries, but regional dialogue is too often beset by disagreements on definitions*³⁰».

There have been several other assessments of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership which conclude that not much has been accomplished, especially in the political and security chapter³¹.

The overall conclusion is that «*we cannot say that (...) the Barcelona Declaration has met the requirements and hopes of the people on the Southern shore*³²». Mostly we can talk about “*promises unfulfilled*³³” and «*considerable shortcomings on the implementation of Euro-Med objectives*³⁴». Apparently «*the ambitious objectives are up against formidable open and covert obstacles*³⁵» which made the prospects of success extremely limited from the very beginning.

Following is a summary of findings and recommendations regarding the achievements, problems and prospects of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, especially in the area of peace, stability and security³⁶.

- The Barcelona Process remains important and relevant and the participating countries share the belief that it is worth continuing the project with the objective of reaching tangible results.

²⁸. VIIIth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Barcelona VII), Conclusions of the meeting held at Luxembourg, 30-31 May 2005, paragraph 3.

²⁹. *Ibid.*, paragraph 20.

³⁰. *Ibid.*, paragraph 24.

³¹. Three of such assessments are: “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 10 Years after Barcelona: Achievements and Perspectives”, published by FEMISE (Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Economic Institutes), February 2005; “Barcelona Plus: Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States”, published by EuroMeSCo, April 2005; and G. Joffé (2004), “The Status of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”, *Institute of Strategic and International Studies*, Lisbon.

³². S. Hamdani (2002), “Where Has Barcelona Taken Us so far?”, p. 165, in Bo Huldt, *et al.* (eds.), *Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process*, The Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, pp. 165-77.

³³. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁴. E. Mirapeix (2002), “The Barcelona Process: Critical Assessment and Challenges Ahead”, p. 193, in Bo Huldt, *et al.* (eds.), *Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process*, The Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, pp. 193-213.

³⁵. C.-E. Stålvant and L. Bjarne (2002), “A Critical Assessment of the Barcelona Process”, p. 179, in Bo Huldt *et al.* (eds.), *Euro-Mediterranean Security and the Barcelona Process*, The Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, pp. 179-92.

³⁶. This summary draws on the EuroMeSCo report (2005) and the report by G. Joffé (2004).

- There has been no serious progress in addressing political and security issues.
- The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as multilateral effort, has not succeeded in meeting expectations and needs and can, therefore, be interpreted as bolstering the *status quo*.
- Any successes of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which offers bilateral solutions, may lead to further stagnation of the EMP.
- While democratic reform is a desirable goal supported by the civil society, resistance to external imposition has become an issue, especially following US intervention in the region (Iraq and the Balkans).
- The civil society must be more involved in the promotion of political reform because the participation of citizens will give added credibility and legitimacy to the process.
- Defining fixed dates for certain targets and monitoring progress for their achievement might be a way to ensure that objectives are not mere political rhetoric and declarations.
- There has been a sense of institutional asymmetry in managing the project with limited participation of the South. Common management of the process through more balanced and integrated participation in decision-making at various levels needs to be reinforced.
- There has been a lack of information, communication and debate involving the people and their real concerns and needs. This problem can be addressed with a strategy for dissemination of information and public debate, which will make the EMP more visible and bring it closer to the citizens.

9. Reasons for the stagnation

The main reasons for the weaknesses, lack of progress and stagnation in the implementation of the EMP in the areas of political reform and security can be summarized as follows.

- Individual States participating in the process are not willing to compromise on sensitive and vital issues of security.
- A collective effort that requires unanimity by so many countries with diverse and often conflicting interests in a fragmented region cannot be very promising.
- Some governments do not have the political will to support initiatives and actions because of domestic political consequences and high political costs.
- Some conflicts are deeply-rooted in the history, demography and politics of the region and their handling has never been easy.
- Mistrust among certain States dominates and disrupts political motivation and goals.
- The overall framework of foreign, security and defence of the EU has remained mostly a political framework of objectives and tools, and less an instrument of operation and implementation. This signifies the weakness and inability of the EU to play a role on these issues.
- Other actors and arrangements (such as the US, NATO, UN) become involved in issues and crises and do not leave much room for EU involvement.

10. Conclusions

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has not achieved much, if anything, on issues of the first chapter in the areas of political reform, peace and security. The Mediterranean region is still faced with political and security challenges. The lack of progress in the search for peace in the Middle East, the continuing threat of terrorism and the active presence of fundamentalism are examples of unfulfilled promises and expectations.

On the positive side, the spirit of Barcelona is still very much alive. The challenge now is how to learn from the experience and failures of the past to build a better future for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the peoples of the countries involved, especially on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The dialogue has been kept alive, sensitive issues and difficulties have been identified, and the need for change and progress are reconfirmed.

The conclusion drawn from 10 years of Barcelona experience is that there is a growing need for political commitment to bring about changes and transform the Mediterranean into a zone of stability, security and shared prosperity. The EMP has been a learning process that still remains the only promising and viable way forward that has the potential to produce some results through result-oriented policies and actions.

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