



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT



**WORKSHOP:
UNION FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN:
THE WAY FORWARD**

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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION

DIRECTORATE B

POLICY DEPARTMENT

WORKSHOP

UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE WAY FORWARD

Abstract

The Arab uprisings have changed the domestic and the regional context of the Southern Mediterranean. The EU's response to the new geopolitical landscape has been rapid and substantial at the bilateral level, through its revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Yet reforming the multilateral framework of its relations with the southern partners remains a real challenge. A workshop held under the auspices of European Parliament President Martin Schulz considered the most effective ways of reinvigorating the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM). The following papers represent the contributions of three scholars who participated in the workshop. Timo Behr presented four options before he argued in favour of a more pragmatic approach. Given regional uncertainties and mounting challenges, the UFM is likely to take small steps ahead, but little effort will be made to develop a broader vision for its development. Richard Youngs argued that the EU must work more closely to understand Arabs' demands and interests and argued for a simultaneous 'multilateralisation' of the ENP and launch of joint initiatives with Middle Eastern regional powers and international actors. Jean-Yves Moissoner called for a paradigm change. As the 'Mediterranean narrative' has failed to mobilise the southern partner, a new approach to multilateral relations is needed, based on a genuine cultural dialogue and a full association of democratically elected parliaments and civil societies from the southern Mediterranean.

This workshop was requested by the European Parliament's Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean.

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1. FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

DR. TIMO BEHR

Executive Summary

The Arab Spring has changed the domestic and geopolitical climate in the Mediterranean. This change provides a new context for the formulation of EU policies in the region. While the EU has been quick to recalibrate its bilateral policies, reforming the multilateral track of its relations – in form of the troubled UfM – remains a major challenge. This paper argues that the EU will have to decide between four broad options of how to reconstitute its multilateral relations with the Mediterranean region.

- **The Zero Option:** The EU can dismantle the UFM and refocus its attention entirely on its bilateral relations. This would free additional resources and allow for greater flexibility, but would also appear as a sign of EU weakness, reinforce a hub-and-spoke relationship, and might permanently sink the multilateral track of Euro-Mediterranean relations.
- **The Development Agency Option:** The EU could strengthen the economic and project oriented focus of the UFM, while deemphasizing its political aspects. In the long-run this might see the UFM turn into a more traditional development agency, but would deprive it of a much-needed political track while leaving it exposed to negative political spill-overs.
- **The Political Union Option:** The EU could attempt to revive the original political vision of the UFM by overhauling its institutions to lessen the potential of political blockage. This would require a greater role for civil society and the introduction of QMV, but appears improbable in the current political climate and might encourage new divisions and blockage.
- **The Diplomatic Conference Option:** The EU could try to separate the political and economic tracks of the UFM by reviving the idea of a multilateral diplomatic conference for the Mediterranean. This diplomatic conference would allow it to involve a broader set of actors and focus on rebuilding confidence, but would lack the grandeur of the original project.

Each of these options promises certain advantages, but also potential problems. To correct the UfM's birth defects and adjust to the new regional context fundamental reforms are needed. The choice, essentially, is between lunging forward and taking a step back in Euro-Mediterranean integration. Without doing either, the UfM will risk institutional gridlock for the foreseeable future.

Introduction

The Arab Spring has profoundly changed the domestic and geopolitical context in the Mediterranean. This change provides an entirely new context for the formulation of EU policies in the region. Until recently, the EU has reacted to this seismic shift by adjusting its bilateral tools and policies. While the EU's focus on the ENP has some advantages, within the still uncertain regional context it has further weakened the already brittle multilateral level of Euro-Mediterranean relations. This focus on bilateral engagement is perhaps no surprise, given the rather dire prospects for regional cooperation in the Mediterranean. If anything, Arab-Israeli relations have worsened as a result of the Arab Spring, tensions

with Iran are mounting, new divisions are emerging within the Arab camp, and much uncertainty remains about the future foreign policy direction of post-revolutionary states. Significantly, the European Union today is also much weaker and more divided than ever before and Europe's interest and commitment to Euro-Mediterranean integration seems to be waning.

Despite this adverse environment, important efforts have been made in recent months to put the UfM back on track. The appointment of Fathallah Sijilmassi, as the UfM's new Secretary General, the transfer of the UfM Co-Presidency to the EU and to Jordan, the promise of additional financial support by the EIB, and the launching of a number of new projects¹, all provide a silver lining for the embattled institution. However, these recent efforts can only hope to meet with some success, if they are couched within a long-term strategy that ensures the relevance of the UfM within the emerging regional context. In the absence of such a strategy, the UfM will remain vulnerable to negative spill-over from regional crisis and divisions and will have little impact on the future economic and political developments of the region. Based on this, this paper develops four broad options for re-shaping multilateral cooperation in the Mediterranean, before making the case for a wider, but less ambitious political partnership that seeks to rebuild confidence and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

1.1 The Zero Option

The first, and perhaps least desirable, option would of course be to simply give up and dismantle the UFM. This could come to pass either through design, with some members actively seeking a suspension of its activities, or by default, by gradually starving it of cash and resources and forcing its closure. This essentially would amount to an acknowledgment that with the Arab Spring both the UFM's ambitious goal of a tightly integrated Euro-Mediterranean region and its method of co-ownership, have become an obstacle to multilateral cooperation. Given the growing polarization of the region and the improbability of a quick solution to the Arab-Palestinian conflict, the EU would cut its losses and refocus all of its energies on its bilateral engagement. Moreover, with the EU's attraction waning as a result of the Eurozone crisis, Arab governments might be less willing to commit to a difficult process of region-building and instead look for bilateral and global solutions to provide the new growth impulses and technical assistance that are needed throughout the transition phase.

This option could have some advantages. First, it would free time and resources to focus on the EU's bilateral ties with those partners that are able and willing to further integrate with the EU. Second, it would allow likeminded partners to join in more ad hoc, project driven ventures without having to face the political deadlock and hurdles imposed by UFM co-decision procedures and its cumbersome institutional framework. The outcome would be more flexibility and more differentiation in the EU's relations with the southern Mediterranean, which have been central demands of the ENP review.

However, facilitating a collapse of the UFM bears also some significant potential risks. First, pulling the carpet from underneath the fragile UFM without offering any potential alternative would most likely make it more difficult to rebuild any multilateral approach towards the region in the future. Second, it would be read by many Mediterranean partner countries and the EU's global competitors as a further sign of the Europe's abandonment of the Mediterranean countries. Finally, it would encourage the development of harmful hub-and-spoke relationships between the EU and the southern Mediterranean countries that would increase dependence and divert investments. These grave consequences should, at the very least, provide the member state with reason to pause.

¹ New projects include: Skills for Success: Employability skills for women; Creation of a Euro Mediterranean University in Fez; and Overcoming Governance Challenges to the Mobilization of Financing for the Mediterranean Water Sector.

While at this stage there seems to be little real risk that this option will come to pass, any renewed deterioration in the regional climate would automatically threaten the UFM's flagship projects which remain sensitive to the regional climate. But without any significant progress on any of these projects the risk will grow that sooner or later all or some of the UFM's current funders will abandon the project. This means that even if EU member states would not prefer such an option, their current inaction and unwillingness to pursue reforms could eventually trigger the collapse of the UfM.

1.2 The Development Agency Option

The second option would be to further strengthen the economic and project-oriented components of the UFM, while giving up on its political track, at least for the time being.² In the past it has been negative political spill-over that has carried most of the responsibility for the poor record of the institution overall, by blocking the adoption of common strategies and preventing progress on the UFM projects. This would require insulating the core economic and development tasks of the UFM from political spill-over, caused by adverse and uncertain regional developments in the short run. While it will never be possible to completely insulate the UFM from regional political crises, there are some things that can be done to attempt to make it less vulnerable to political boycott.

These could include, amongst others, giving on organizing Euro-Med summits and ministerial meetings, which have been unable to come to an agreement. Instead, more emphasis could be placed on the role of the Senior Officials in providing guidance to the UFM. Furthermore, the role of the Secretary General and the UFM Secretariat should be strengthened and the institution would require a sound, long-term financing base to make it less dependent on the whims of the member states. Some of these proposals can be found in the Commission's recent Roadmap for future action.³

In the long run, this would set the UFM on track to turn into a kind of development agency. This would imply that it starts functioning as a sub-agency for the EU in the region, or manage a grant portfolio fed by different multilateral donors. This might go a long way in fulfilling part of the original purpose of the UFM. However, the UFM's track record shows how difficult it is to differentiate "high politics" from "low politics," as during the failed Ministerial Conference on Water in April 2010. Moreover, this kind of partnership would not allow any exchange on political and security related issues within a multilateral framework at a time when they are most needed. It would also take away some of the UFM's original purpose of increasing co-ownership and co-decision making, as the institution would become more technocratic. Finally, once the UFM has been firmly set on this track, reviving the political institutions of the UFM at a later stage will become ever more difficult and less probable. All of this suggests that there are therefore some costs connected to this solution as well.

1.3 The Political Union Option

The third option would be that rather than abandoning the multidimensional and holistic nature of the UFM, an attempt should be made to revive the original political vision of the project.⁴ The rationale for this would be that notwithstanding the current problems, economic and development relations ultimately need to be linked to wider political goals. Moreover, there is some hope that perhaps in the long-run the Arab Spring will increase the demand for greater European engagement in the region

² Eduard Soler i Lecha, "The Union for the Mediterranean: Survival in a Time of Crisis," *Opini3n CIDOB*, n.º 147, 3 May 2012.

³ European Commission, *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity: Report on activities in 2011 and Roadmap for future action*, SWD(2012) 121 final.

⁴ Rym Ayadi & Salim Gadi, *The Future of Euro-Mediterranean Regional Cooperation: The Role of the Union for the Mediterranean*, EuroMeSCo Working Paper 7, November 2011.

instead of reducing it and that the UFM would provide an ideal forum for this engagement. The question then is how to boost this dialogue without undermining the UFM's ability to act.

There are some proposals that have been developed in this regard. A first priority will be to revive the role of the Co-Presidency. In this regard a first step has been made with the transfer of the Co-Presidency to the EU (from France) and Jordan (from Egypt). However in the long-run, it might be worthwhile to think about other options, including the potential of Team-Presidencies to avoid giving single countries too much say on the agenda and to incentivize wider cooperation and ownership. Especially the southern Presidency might become more contested in the future, in case regional divisions deepen or the Jordanian monarchy will face renewed domestic pressures.

Second, to get around a potential deadlock in the political organization of the UFM, some analysts have broached the potential of adopting a qualified majority voting (QMV) or double-majority voting procedure for the UFM that is similar to that used by the Council. Lifting the consensus rule would certainly be helpful in getting results, but seems unlikely to be acceptable to all of the parties involved at this stage. That means, at best, this would be a long-term solution for the UFM and would have little impact on the current problems of finding a political consensus amongst the partners.

Third, some way needs to be found to bracket out divisive issues, such as the denomination of the Palestinian Territories, to avoid these from blocking the agenda. Pre-negotiating some of these potential hold-ups and avoiding contentious agenda items will above all require an agile and engaged Co-Presidency that has broad support. Whether the current duo will provide such leadership remains to be seen. Finally, to boost the political legitimacy of the UFM, civil society involvement needs to become a more central feature, giving ARLEM and other CSOs a clear consultative role and enhancing the role of the Parliamentary Assembly and decentralized cooperation more generally. Here, the recent MoU between the UFM and the Anna Lindh Foundation might provide a good starting point.

Overall, there are therefore some potential ways to revive the political track of the UFM. But unless they involve a radical overhaul of the institutional structures, including the introduction of QMV, the UFM's ability to function will remain a prisoner to political crisis. Since such an ambitious step towards regional integration seems unlikely given the current political climate in both the northern and southern Mediterranean, there is a risk that further deadlock will ensure for the time being.

1.4 The Diplomatic Conference Option

The fourth and final option that has been put forward, foresees a separation of the political and economic tracks of multilateral engagement in the Mediterranean.⁵ Just as under the second option, this could see the UFM Secretariat turn into a more technical organization and allow it to develop into a kind of development agency; either under the EU umbrella or as a standalone agency. But importantly, this economic track would be flanked by a new political initiative in form of some form of a regional diplomatic conference that is completely separate from the UFM structures.

This diplomatic conference would essentially downsize the high ambitions of the UFM. Instead of adopting a holistic agenda aimed at building a common regional identity and solving regional conflicts, as the UFM purported doing, this new track of multilateral political cooperation would less ambitiously focus on confidence building and conflict prevention. This could be done by emulating the focus and format of the former Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). This would have to be a simple structure to pursue dialogue and address divisive issues as they arise, without seeking to

⁵ Roberto Aliboni, "EU multilateral relations with southern partners: reflections on future prospects," EUISS Opinion, 2 April 2012.

promote a particular political agenda or model of development. History has shown that such a format can be successful in building bridges across deep regional divides.

Separating the two tracks in this way has some advantages. First, it would provide a clear break with the past approach, which has a bad reputation and is often portrayed as being too Eurocentric and too divisive. Second, it would allow for political engagement with a much broader set of actors that at this stage remain absent from the UFM's political dialogue and institutions. These could include the Gulf countries, Iran, Iraq, as well as some of the regional organizations, such as the Arab League, the GCC and the UMA that are vital to future regional developments. Finally, this separation would provide for a continuation of the political and economic tracks without making them too dependent on each other. The main downside of this approach is that it would break with the previous model of the UFM and set aside some of the higher ambitions of creating a Euro-Mediterranean union. While this would amount to a downsizing of the EU's longstanding approach, it might provide a more pragmatic way of reviving regional dialogues across a more heterogeneous region.

1.5 Prospects for a Political Partnership

Given the potential risks and downsides involved with each of these options, Euro-Mediterranean decision-makers will have to carefully deliberate about the best way forward for the UFM. Of course each of these options, to some extents, represents an ideal type. Instead, muddling and mixing is just as likely as a clear consensus favouring a certain path. For now, perhaps by default, it is the development agency option that seems to be gaining the upper hand. The reasons for this are clear. Given regional uncertainties and mounting challenges, there is little appetite to experiment with new initiatives or to fundamentally overhaul the UFM structures. Moreover there is no agent that has the influence and legitimacy to drive such a process. This means that for now the UFM is likely to take small steps ahead, but little effort will be made to develop a broader vision for its development.

Indeed, focusing exclusively on economic developments is unlikely to prove optimal in the long run. First, it risks making the UFM ever more reliant on the EU, given the present lack of co-funding from other partners. This might decrease its legitimacy amongst southern partners. Second, it leaves a gap in the multilateral institutional structure of the Mediterranean, at a point in time when the need for political dialogue appears particularly pressing. Reviving the original grand vision of the UFM by advocating a more political union is tempting. However, this would risk dragging down the entire project, given the probability of negative political spill-over. This would suggest that a separation of the political and economic tracks might provide the most fruitful option for the time being. But stepping back from the UFM's grand vision will be politically difficult and is unlikely to happen.

What has become clear over the last few years is that the UFM has been constructed with a birth-defect and with little regards as to the evolving regional realities of the Mediterranean. To correct this problem, fundamental reforms are unavoidable. The choice, essentially, is between lunging forward and taking a step back in Euro-Mediterranean integration. Without doing either, it is likely that the UFM will continue to be gripped by institutional gridlock for the foreseeable future.

2. THE FUTURE OF EURO-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS

PROF. RICHARD YOUNGS

Executive Summary

This briefing offers MEPs ideas on how the EU can respond to the momentous changes across the Arab world with a more tailored and qualitatively upgraded set of policies.

Introduction

Some elements of Europe's response to the Arab revolts have been admirable and timely. Relatively quickly on the heels of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, the EU introduced two new strategy documents. Commitments were made to increase funding, open up market access and facilitate mobility of workers from southern Mediterranean states into Europe. The EU has embarked on a series of 'task forces' to get concrete support and investment into states committed to implementing reforms. In cases such as Syria and Libya the EU has not shied away from exerting stronger diplomatic pressure than in the past.

Of course, many elements of EU reactions can be criticised as inadequate; and promises still need to be fully followed through. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to say that the EU and its member states have done nothing significant to revisit their traditional aversion to pushing and encouraging Arab political reform.

Yet, a deeper problem remains. Policy-makers themselves acknowledge that the EU needs to be more flexible in responding to changes in the Middle East and that future strategy cannot rely so heavily on simply exporting EU norms and rules. The EU still tends to work outwards from its own highly institutionalised policy frameworks, rather than mould its strategies to an assessment of local trends in the countries where it purports to act. A strong consensus has emerged that the enlargement-lite model needs to be reassessed. Arab populations and political actors clearly want a different and less intrusive form of support from Europe. And the EU must now compete with rising powers' increasing presence in the Middle East.

This is by now a relatively uncontroversial conclusion: even the most senior EU leadership speaks of the need to 'redefine the EU's neighbourhood'. The trouble is that the debate for now seems to have got stuck at this stage. Most recognise the need for a qualitative rethink. But, what form should this 'redefined Mediterranean' take? One thing is to have realised that pre-existing policy instruments may need to be re-designed; another thing is to ascertain with precision a route towards a more appropriately shaped European Neighbourhood Policy.

Some of the general principles of a new approach are already clear. The EU must work more closely from an understanding of Arabs' demands and interests; there must be less one-sided patronising and more two-way learning; the ENP must be 'multi-lateralised' to function in a way that intersects more with other powers' role in the Middle East; and the EU and Arab countries must begin to work together on shared problems rather than all the 'help' being seen to run in one direction from the EU to the Middle East.

2.1 Pluralism in the Mediterranean

The EU will need to rely less on its own heavily institutionalised frameworks of cooperation and more on a wider plurality of partnerships in support of Arab reform

The Arab upheavals should encourage a multilateralisation of EU policy efforts across North Africa and the Middle East. A hub-and-spokes governance pattern still exists between individual Arab states and the European Union. The assumption has often been that many individual Arab states see the EU as their main external reference point and that they have prioritised this bilateral relation rather than ties with other Middle Eastern countries. This tallies with the implied logic of the concept of a 'European Neighbourhood', a single EU hub linked by spokes to individual states around its periphery. Of course, in some cases US influence has been pre-eminent, but certainly in North Africa Europe has generally been seen as the key external interlocutor.

We might expect on-going, over-arching shifts in international power gradually to change this pattern and have a concrete impact in the new Middle East. Instead of any revival of Euro-Mediterranean governance or stronger European civil society engagement, the most notable trend may be that of diminishing EU presence in the Middle East. Most strikingly, the political and economic reach of Gulf states into North Africa has deepened appreciably. The role in democracy support of non-Western 'rising' democracies' may prove increasingly pre-eminent. This may be the case not only for Turkey, but also the likes of India, Brazil and Indonesia; these rising powers have to date engaged only sporadically in the Middle East but their transitions experiences are increasingly in demand in the region.

Instead of measuring how far the MENA region incrementally aligns itself with EU rules and norms, the key trend may be the region's turn towards non-Western powers. The EU should work with rather than against the grain of these trends. The EU should pay less attention purely to crafting its own policy frameworks in hermetic isolation and place more emphasis on crafting joint initiatives with other Middle Eastern regional powers and international actors from outside the region.

None of this means abandoning Euro-Mediterranean initiatives. Some EU rules may be imported enthusiastically by post-transition Arab regimes. Some governance export may occur. But this will be on a more selective basis, where it addresses Arab states' own concrete policy objectives.

With more limited material incentives at its disposal, the EU must fashion less direct forms of leverage through building broader alliances on Middle Eastern concerns. The most immediate trend is towards some Arab states engaging more influentially across the wider region. The current influence of rising powers should not be exaggerated; most still have limited engagement in the MENA region. But the EU would do well to start preparing for what is likely eventually to be a far more plural international engagement in the Middle East. EU diplomats frequently pay lip service to just such a concern; yet there is some risk that current choices are locking-in a reliance on EU policy frameworks ill-equipped to foster such multilateralisation. The EU's failure to craft a structured alliance with Turkey specifically on Arab reform support is only the most glaring failure to adjust to a changed order.

In short, the EU must move gradually from treating Arab states not so much as components of 'its neighbourhood' and more as potential partners in global challenges.

2.2 Opportunities

The EU must try to seize these trends as an opportunity. And the European Parliament could play a pivotal role in moving Euro-Mediterranean relations to this next plateau. In some ways the Arab spring has provided a positive antidote to Europe's relative decline and economic crisis: by standing up for democratic norms the EU's image has begun to improve in the region while China, Russia and other

rising powers stand somewhat discredited. Notwithstanding this, the EU must recognise the broader shifts in power and cast its Euro-Mediterranean initiative in this very different light. The geostrategic panorama is very different from 1995 when the Barcelona process was created.

The institutional implication is that the EU should work much harder to link its own structured initiatives to the policies of other actors. Existing frameworks like the ENP and Union for the Mediterranean are useful in negotiating detailed aspects of bilateral relations and transferring some elements of technical capacity. But ideally, the leading edge of the EU response to the Arab spring would be played by a much broader strategic platform. The Deauville process represented a step in this direction, but has not kick-started dialogue of a deeply political nature and lacks follow-up mechanisms to ensure implementation. A more geostrategic forum is required, as a guiding layer above the ENP and other more technical initiatives.

The EP, and in particular the Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary assembly can help in this process. It can: open a structured dialogue with other powers on challenges in the Middle East; propose common European-Arab partnerships on shared global challenges; devise common positions on how to implement the more for more philosophy in a way that coheres with the policies of other international institutions and development banks; act as a bridge to a Union for the Mediterranean that incorporates the geostrategic and not only developmental-technical perspective; and press to ensure that new initiatives like the Spring programme and putative European Endowment for Democracy include support from a wider range of democracy supporters.

3. A NEW PARADIGM FOR THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

PROF. JEAN YVES MOISSERON

Executive Summary

In the wake of the democratic changes in the Arab world, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership needs to be rebuilt; a new paradigm is needed. An objective assessment of progress in the Barcelona Process must be drawn with a view to redefining its strategy to convey the two-sided partnership desired by the region's new representative governments. This task is further complicated by the southern shore's oft-made complaint of 'institution fatigue' at the sheer volume of European projects concerning the region (the Barcelona Process, New Neighbourhood Policy and Union for the Mediterranean). The time has come to rethink this partnership by abandoning the label 'Mediterranean' that is of little relevance in the south and that has been made obsolete by the upsurge of both Islamist and nationalist sentiment. What is more, the Union for the Mediterranean remains synonymous with the figures of the former presidents Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. These democratic transitions must also be considered in the light of the advent of a bipolar world split between China and the USA, which is challenging the exclusive dominance that Europe has long held over the region; but what is even more important is to re-establish dialogue with the region's new governments and emerging democratically elected parliaments.

Introduction

Euro-Mediterranean relations in recent history, even before the Barcelona process, have been characterised by mixed results. The Arab Spring has highlighted the gulf between the initial goal of creating a region of peace and shared prosperity and the contrasting reality of developments in each of the countries of the southern shore. Europe has been shown to be more or less powerless to deal with this fragmentation of the Mediterranean region, and to be awkward – to say the least – in its words and actions. This was the case at first in Tunisia. It has also been shown to be true with the profound divergences between Europeans concerning the military intervention in Libya, and it has also been the case with the impunity still afforded to Syria. Who can forget that less than 5 years ago, we were relying on Bashar al-Assad and Colonel Gaddafi to give new momentum to the Barcelona Process within the Union for the Mediterranean?

The global crisis of 2008 and the revolutions in the Arab world have shown that we must rebuild the Union for the Mediterranean, which currently looks as though it has been overtaken by historic events. It is all the more urgent that we learn from the failure of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and change our way of thinking, because it is Europe's role in the globalised world of the 21st century that is actually at stake. The big question is whether Europe will be able to do nothing more than stand idly in a bipolar world dominated by the USA and China, or whether it will play a leading role in a tripolar world which it will have helped to build. This would necessitate placing the Arab World at the heart of a strategy which would eventually encompass the Mediterranean and Africa.

3.1 Lessons left unlearnt from the failure of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership

A great many assessments of the Euro-Mediterranean have been made since the launch of the Barcelona Process, but precious few lessons have been learnt⁶. The Union for the Mediterranean project, moreover, was founded in light of the failure of previous policies⁷.

The enthusiastic speeches of the presidential candidate and later president Nicolas Sarkozy bear testimony to this. The idea was to establish a more political and less technocratic relationship, taking better account of the countries on the southern shore within a co-decision process and, most importantly, with the focus on six specific projects: the Mediterranean solar energy plan, civil protection, cleaning up the Mediterranean, maritime and land highways, the common area of research and an initiative for SMEs. Many authors have shown that the Union for the Mediterranean actually heralded a return to the EU policy prior to the Barcelona Process. The regional dimension of the Barcelona Process, namely the idea of creating a shared region by fostering cohesion between the countries involved was greatly undermined by the New Neighbourhood Policy launched in 2004⁸. This new political framework addressed the criticism that countries were not moving forward at the same pace by enabling each southern Mediterranean country to take a different approach. In this way, each country could make their own institutional reforms at their own pace, and thereby move towards European standards as quickly or slowly as they wished. The countries making the most ambitious commitments were afforded an advanced status; this was, however, limited in that no application for EU membership could be considered.

This marked the first case of the EU rolling back the ambitions enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995. In its Neighbourhood Policy of 2004, Europe set out a dividing line that was not to be crossed by using the seemingly neutral word 'neighbour'. Although in the 1960s a country such as Turkey could perhaps be offered the possibility of accession to the EU, such chances gradually evaporated for its neighbours and are now totally unthinkable. This has become a taboo issue.

Neighbourhood policy was, in the Commission's own words, 'an offer' made to these countries, which was enshrined in the action plans which succeeded the association agreements implemented under the Barcelona agreements that were signed a few years beforehand. A more detailed analysis of these action plans – particularly those for Tunisia and Morocco – reveals, however, that they are in fact statements of principles that differ from the association agreements, which were far more precise and binding in nature. This is illustrated in the agreements setting the timetable for the abolition of trade tariffs which has led to the creation of a free area between Tunisia and the EU.

3.2 A multi layered institutional system

The past 15 years of EU policy have thus resulted in an accumulation of different systems (the Barcelona Process in 1995, the Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008), that is, three Euro Mediterranean policies with different underlying philosophies. This naturally creates a certain amount of confusion in EU strategies, since each of the projects had different aims: regional

⁶ See *inter alia* the EU's own assessments: European Commission, *Evaluation of Economic Cooperation between the European Commission and Mediterranean Countries*, EuropAid, Juillet 2003 and various other Commission assessments. See also a summary in *Le Partenariat Euroméditerranéen, l'échec d'une ambition régionale* by Jean-Yves Moisseron, 2005, PUG. I could also cite an edition of the magazine *Géoéconomie* entitled *Quelle Union Méditerranéenne?*, summer 2007.

⁷ In a speech in Toulon on 7 February 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy stated that 'the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue imagined 12 years ago in Barcelona, has not achieved its objectives'.

⁸ For an in-depth analysis, see *Du Processus de Barcelone à l'Union pour la Méditerranéen : une gouvernance introuvable*, by Jean-Yves Moisseron in the magazine *Géostratégiques*, No 21, 2008

harmonisation for the Barcelona Process, differentiated integration for the Neighbourhood Policy, and a 'Union of projects' for the Union for the Mediterranean. This institutional 'creativity' of the European Union illustrates the strong disagreement between EU Member States with regard to priorities. The opposition between France and Germany was most pronounced during discussions on the initial proposal for the Union for the Mediterranean, which was submitted by the former French President⁹.

After the Neighbourhood Policy, the Union for the Mediterranean focused on cooperation projects seen by some as rather innovative, such as the Mediterranean Solar Plan. This form of cooperation based on projects is, however, entirely unremarkable. The projects themselves have also attracted justified criticism. The construction of land highways in the southern Mediterranean is a good thing, but it must be accompanied by open land borders between the countries concerned, and this is not the case between Morocco and Algeria. Objectives relating to education and research have come up against a strengthening of visa policy and of EU entry requirements for residents of the southern Mediterranean. What is more, proposing that the problem of pollution in the Mediterranean be tackled is futile unless the causes of pollution are dealt with at their source.

Criticism of the process as a whole also concerns the level of political legitimacy. These three episodes in EU policy have resulted in an increasing democratic deficit, which explains the growing disinterest of the southern partners. While the Barcelona Process Association Agreements had to be voted on by the parliaments of the signatory states, this was no longer the case for the Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans, which only had to be approved by the Association Councils. Lastly, the process of setting projects for the Union for the Mediterranean is more a case of political bargaining between countries than of a choice expressed or endorsed by democratic bodies. Decisions on the choice of programmes for the Union for the Mediterranean were taken by governments, and particularly by northern governments, so it is entirely legitimate for the European Parliament – a beacon of European democracy – to examine the Euro Mediterranean issue.

3.3 Three shocks

The Union for the Mediterranean therefore seems to be a fragile process. The cancellation of the Summit of the Heads of State which was due to take place in France in November 2010 gave a clear indication of this, and the conditions have still not been met for such an event to be held in the foreseeable future. The initiative has been hit by three – or even four – shocks which make a radical rethink necessary.

The first shock, which is not entirely recent, was the deterioration in Israeli-Palestinian relations of late 2008, shortly after the Union for the Mediterranean was launched. The conflict in Palestine regularly disrupts any advances made in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The Barcelona Process was also significantly affected by the failure of the Oslo Accords at Camp David in July 2000. The seizing of power in Gaza by Hamas in June 2007 came shortly before the failure of the Barcelona Process was acknowledged and the Union for the Mediterranean was launched. Ultimately, the rising tension between the Palestinians and the Israelis was one of the reasons given for the cancellation of the November 2010 Summit of the Heads of States of the Union for the Mediterranean.

The interplay between Euro-Mediterranean projects and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has consistently caused problems. Since the United States are an ally but also a rival power to Europe, there is a weak

⁹ Discussions on the proposed Mediterranean Union and subsequently on the Union for the Mediterranean marked a moment of tension between France and Germany, with the latter stating that it risked causing the collapse of the European Union. These barely concealed threats were heard and the initial proposal, which would only have involved those countries with Mediterranean coastlines, was widened to include all EU Member States.

point here that ought to be eliminated. Indeed, by linking its cooperation on the southern shore to the issue of Israel, the European Union has shown that it is not a major player in the Euro-Mediterranean game, hence the interest that seems to exist in disassociating the two issues by, for instance, launching a separate discussion with the Maghreb¹⁰.

The second shock to befall the Union for the Mediterranean has its origins in the most recent global economic crisis¹¹, which has significantly reduced the scope for mobilising funds to accompany Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. This crisis arises at a time when the major Mediterranean EU Member States, particularly France, are reducing their cooperation in the Mediterranean area. With major budgetary crises occurring in Greece, Spain, Ireland and even France, the issue of whether it is justifiable to send assistance to the southern Mediterranean is still being discussed. In addition to the cuts in funding, the crisis is also altering the balance of power within the European Union.

As a result of the present economic crisis, Germany will have a much larger say than France in determining the nature of the Mediterranean policy in the years to come.

It is therefore to be expected that France's ability to direct EU funding to the southern shore will be much reduced. Germany's policy, which is focused on the countries of the East, will therefore be a greater determining factor in setting Europe's policy.

The third shock, and a more recent one, has come in the form of the revolutions in the Arab world. Despite the involvement of France and the United Kingdom in the Libyan conflict, which may seem to give the impression of a revival of European power in the Mediterranean, events are constantly demonstrating a certain impotence on the part of the European Union which contrasts with the USA's exercise of power, the latter being all the more effective for being discreet.¹²

Several elements have revealed this relative impotence, particularly in relation to the United States, which in the end may be regarded as the most active external agent.

The first element, and a long-standing one, was the objectivity of the observation made by US diplomats concerning the internal state of Tunisian society. In June 2008, in a diplomatic cable entitled: 'What is yours is mine', the US Embassy described Ben Ali's family as a quasi-mafia and listed a series of outrages for which the immediate entourage of the Tunisian President had been responsible. Another series of telegrams described a 'sclerosis' of power. Yet other telegrams also indicated how divided the EU Member States were about the attitude to be taken towards the Ben Ali regime, France being described as the most reluctant to persuade the Tunisian Government to speed up political reforms.

In the Tunisian context, the decisive intervention by the United States took the form of direct contacts with Rachid Ammar, the army chief of staff, at the decisive times during the revolt in Tunisia. The Tunisian army was largely trained and supported by the USA.

Developments in Egypt appear to have followed a similar course. It seems very clear that the decision by the Egyptian army not to fire on the crowd was influenced by the nature of the very close contacts between the army and the United States. The example of what had happened in Tunisia was also very influential.

¹⁰ This is also the purpose of alternative approaches such as '5+5 plus', which is currently decried owing to the fact that two of its parties, France and Libya are in an armed conflict.

¹¹ This also gives the lie to the notion that southern méditerranéen countries have been spared from the worst of the crisis. In fact its shock wave will be felt for a long time yet.

¹² There is no sign that the interest which the USA has taken in the Mediterranean region is waning. See: Jean-François Coustillièrre, 2010, Les Etats-Unis: une puissance méditerranéenne, *Confluences Méditerranéen* n°74, été. See also Moisseron J.-Y., Delhaye G., Puissance américaine et impuissance européenne en Méditerranée, *Géoéconomie*, No 30, Summer 2004

On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that Saudi Arabia's armed intervention against demonstrators in Bahrain could have been decided without the more or less explicit approval of the United States. It was a way of drawing a line which the Arab revolutions could or could not cross. While regime change was regarded as possible in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, the approach to be adopted was much less clear in the Gulf. Two additional ingredients – oil and the presence of Shiite population groups – made the processes far more explosive, with considerable geostrategic implications.

All in all, it is the United States that has the greatest influence in the changes taking place in the Arab world. It subcontracted the intervention in Libya to France and the United Kingdom, it decisively influenced the decisions by the Tunisian and Egyptian armies not to fire on crowds and thus to change the regime. Similarly, it was Washington that decided that the geographical limit of the Arab revolts should run along Egypt's eastern border.

3.4 Towards a change of paradigm

In response to the transformations which have taken place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and the rest of the Arab world, releasing a powerful shock wave throughout the region, and because of the obsolescence of the existing instruments, there is an urgent need to recast European policy towards the southern shore of the Mediterranean and to adopt a different paradigm.

The first step should be to abandon the Mediterranean myth¹³. The idea of the Mediterranean as a cradle of civilisation, mobilising energies, which in itself generates unity and even serves as a meeting place between civilisations, exists only in the political imagination of the North. No Southern Mediterranean country includes the Mediterranean among the aspects which define its identity. Belonging to the Arab world or to Arab-Islamic civilisation or being geographically located in Africa is far more important than any reference to the Mediterranean. For the South, historically, the Mediterranean has always been a frontier, an arena of conflict with opposing forces and the place where 'otherness' begins. So much so that, even today, the Arab term used to designate the Mediterranean – El-bahr el-abyad el Moutawassat (literally, the 'central white sea') – betrays its origin in Turkish, which contrasts the black and white seas. There are no strictly Arabic words for this sea: instead, the terms used in literature stress the concept of otherness. That is true of 'Bahr er-rum', literally 'the Christians' Sea'.

Thus, by embarking upon the project of establishing a dialogue with the southern shore on the basis of the epithet 'Mediterranean', from the very outset one distorts the nature of the partners with whom it is intended that a dialogue should be initiated. It is a strange kind of dialogue that begins by partially negating the partner, particularly by ignoring the partner's cultural identity! Accordingly, one must endorse the severe criticisms of orientalism expressed by Edward Said and break with anything which in any way suggests a reification of *homo mediterraneus*. The way to initiate a true dialogue would be by entering into cooperation based primarily on culture. But the fact that our partners belong to an Arab-Islamic civilisation must be accepted in all its facets, including the secular, bearing in mind that Islam is a cradle of civilisation which, like other civilisations, has borne extremely valuable fruit. This does not mean either sinking into types of culturalism or underestimating the complex forms taken by modernisation, but above all one should not ignore civilisational aspects. But generalisations, ignorance and clichés are so effectively exploited by the fear of political Islam that establishing a true dialogue

¹³ For a detailed demonstration see: Bayoumi Ezzat M., **Moisseron J-Y.**, The Mediterranean: a contested Concept, in: Emmanuel Godin, Nathalia Vince, *France and the Mediterranean*, Peter Lang Edition, London, pp. 19-36, 2012.

between civilisations would be as salutary as it would be worthwhile and necessary. This is the second pillar of a renewed Euro-Arab cooperation¹⁴, i.e. culture.

The third element lies in appreciating the competition which is currently in progress as a result of globalisation. We have sufficiently drawn attention to the decisive influence of the United States over recent events in Tunisia. Similar points could be made about Algeria with reference to control over oil resources or Morocco, which has signed a free trade agreement with the USA. These countries, like the whole of Africa, are attracted to the three zones which are establishing themselves in a globalised world: America (North and South), Asia (including China) and Europe. The success of Euro-Mediterranean integration is a decisive condition for enabling Europe to survive in the world of the 21st century. The two other powers in this tripolar world have a strong interest in preventing the emergence of a European centre which might persist, particularly if a zone were to be established which included not only North Africa but the whole of Africa. How could Europe build these zones without making the Arab world into an interface for contact, trade and prosperity? Euro-Mediterranean regional integration should therefore be guided by one of these concerns, and not by national considerations, let alone short-term political strategies.

3.5 Changing the paradigm?

If one accepts what has just been said, there is no realistic possibility of renewing the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. It is necessary to change the paradigm and make ambitious proposals. Forward studies have sufficiently indicated what a difference it will make to Europe's position in the world whether Turkey joins the EU or whether it remains outside¹⁵. The difference will be even more marked if one adds the Maghreb countries.

Contemplating the historic change which has occurred in Tunisia and the prospects which this creates for the development of the Arab world, it is necessary to make far more ambitious proposals than those which have been put forward in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Europe's response to the fall of dictatorships in Europe or the collapse of Communism was ambitious. In each case, it involved holding out the prospect of accession to the European Union. This prospect was decisive in the trajectories of institutional convergence in countries in transition, particularly in the need to adopt the *acquis communautaire*. It would certainly be illusory to propose that Tunisia could join the EU, in view of current political conditions. However, in a historical perspective the considerations which applied to Turkey 30 years ago were quite different.

But between existing instruments and accession there is a continuum of possibilities which could guide the transition in Tunisia. It is also essential to concentrate efforts on this little country, which will play a pioneering role, pointing the way ahead for the dynamics in progress in the other Arab countries.

But another issue which ought to be taken into account is the fact that it will only be possible to reconstruct the Union for the Mediterranean with governments and parliaments which have acquired greater legitimacy. Are we sure that the governments which will emerge in Egypt and Tunisia will agree that the existing arrangements applicable to the Union for the Mediterranean should be retained? There are good reasons for doubting this. The revolution has led to the emergence of Islamist forces

¹⁴ One of the aims of the Barcelona Process was to avoid a dangerous confrontation between Israel and the Arab countries. But the inclusion of Cyprus and Malta and the specific status of Turkey led precisely to such a sterile confrontation. Resuming discussions with the Arab countries (which also have ethnic and religious minorities) would be the right way to initiate a dialogue on culture and avoid such confrontation. Europe can redefine an Arab policy.

¹⁵ Philippe Colombani (dir.) Commerce mondial au 21e siècle. Scénarios pour l'Union européenne, Report for the European Commission, Paris, Ifri, 2002.

which have turned out to have rather more support within society than the reformist movements which were the force behind the revolution. These Islamist movements will probably persist for a long time, and they are inclined to redefine relations with the West. On the other hand, one should not exaggerate the rupture which has taken place, either. The Islamisms in the Maghreb and Egypt have more in common with the dynamics in Turkey than with those in the Iran of Ayatollah Khomeiny in 1979. Islamist parties in Tunisia, Egypt or Morocco will to a greater or lesser extent accept the ground-rules of democracy. Experience of power, the need to negotiate with other forces (the Maghzen in Morocco, the army in Egypt, civil society in Tunisia, tribal society in Libya) will lead to numerous compromises and arrangements and will broaden the spectrum of so-called 'Islamist' political forces. In fact, the emergence of Islamist parties does not mean major economic or geopolitical upheavals.

3.6 Conclusion

What can Europe do? First of all it must learn, if not to speak the language of Islam, at least to understand it. How ignorant are we of its basic principles and the history of Arab-Islamic civilisation? To a certain extent, Bonaparte haranguing the crowds in Cairo, starting his speech with 'Bismillah ar-rahman ar-rahim', or Goethe writing the West-East Divan, was well ahead of us. Learning the language of Islam, without however over-estimating the importance of this system of reference or forgetting others (the Berber identity, eastern Christianity, etc.) means building cultural relations which are not confined to the minority made up of the French-speaking or English-speaking elite who have a worldwide outlook, which we customarily address and which gives us the expected replies in dialogues which we have scripted ourselves.

A genuine cultural dialogue must be addressed to people who really exist, those who watch Egyptian serials during Ramadan, who feel deeply humiliated by the situation in Palestine, who feel how precarious their future is, who experience the Mediterranean as an inaccessible frontier and who perceive the West as a danger.

The first pillar would therefore be a 'true' Euro-Arab cultural dialogue. The second would be based on education. It should be a priority to increase the number of North-South study grants, university and research exchanges, twinning schemes, and to seek to influence the education of those who will be in command of the region. The needs are enormous, but come up against restrictions on the movement of persons. The third pillar concerns technological innovation. There again, the region is marked by economic specialisations which are not very innovative. Efforts to bring about innovation and particularly sustainable development in the Arab world could be cofinanced by the Gulf and the European Union. There is no shortage of initiatives in this field, but the various levels of cooperation (decentralised, national, European) should be defined. Lastly, these initiatives should be viewed in an overall geopolitical perspective which places the Arab world at the centre of a Euro-African zone. It should focus on Tunisia, a country on which it is possible to bring influence to bear and which will act as a guide and example to the Arab world as a whole.

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