



The Political Economy of Governance in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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New Challenges: The impact of EU Enlargement on the Barcelona Process

The Political Impact of the EU Fifth Enlargement on the Mediterranean Region:

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1. Introduction

In 2004, the European Union experienced its *Fifth Enlargement*, whereby ten new European countries; Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the existing community of 15 EU members. In 2007, the second phase of the *Fifth Enlargement* was officially achieved with the accession of two more countries, Bulgaria and Romania.

The increase in the number of member countries has many benefits for Europe. On an internal level, the 27 member countries together will create a security zone of peace, security, stability, cultural diversity, an interchange of ideas, and better understanding of other peoples. A configuration of 27 countries, with a combined population of more than 450 million and a GDP of almost €10,000 billion, will fundamentally boost the political, geographic and economic weight of the EU on the European continent. At the level of the global economy, the EU will emerge as the largest “*single market*” in the world without internal borders and accounting for some 18% of world trade.

Moreover, the accession of these 12 new members is not without its benefits for Europe on a political level. By adopting the “*acquis communautaire*” (*the total legislative body of the EU*), the 12 new member countries have consolidated their democracies, as they are now pledged to ensure its effective implementation and enforcement through appropriate institutional and democratic structures. This is clearly reflected on the EU Enlargement website as follows:

“Enlargement is one of the EU’s most powerful policy tools. The pull of the EU has helped to transform Central and Eastern Europe into modern, well-functioning democracies. More recently it has inspired far-reaching reforms in the candidate and potential candidate countries. All European citizens benefit from having neighbours that are stable democracies and prosperous market economies. Enlargement is a carefully managed process which helps the transformation of the countries involved, extending peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe.”¹

¹ The official website of the ENP: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm

If an enlarged Europe has generally been perceived as beneficial to its own members, and especially to its new members, this does not necessarily mean that it will prove to be beneficial to the Southern Mediterranean Countries².

The consecutive expansions of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 have raised serious questions about the future of the already strained Euro-Mediterranean relations. Will many of these obstacles persist in the post-enlargement EU, or will new member states inject energy into Euro-Mediterranean relations? Do the southern Mediterranean countries consider that new EU member states affect EU foreign policy in the region positively or negatively?

The purpose of this paper is to assess the political impact of an enlarged Europe on the Southern Mediterranean Countries. It is important to note, however, that the *Fifth EU Enlargement* and its impact on the EU's relationship with Southern Mediterranean Countries are relatively difficult to analyse since the enlargement took place only three years ago. Accordingly, this paper will investigate, in its first part, the two main policies which have framed the relations between the European states and their southern Mediterranean counterparts. These two main policies are the Barcelona Process (EMP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The second part of the paper will draw attention to the EU's political stance towards these countries and the different level of commitment revealed by different EU member states towards these countries (*i.e* Arab – Israeli conflict, Iraq Crisis, Lebanese Crisis). The second part will also shed light on how the Mediterranean countries' perceptions of EU policy in the region have changed post-enlargement. Finally, the paper will highlight the future political in which an enlarged Europe can play in the Mediterranean region.

It is vital to emphasize from the outset that the major challenge an enlarged Europe will face does not lie solely in its ability to set in motion the reform process (economic, security, political etc.) among southern Mediterranean countries, but also in the will of new member states to support reform instruments towards the south.

The EU enlargement brings hope and uneasiness to the Southern Mediterranean countries. Opinions in the southern countries have varied with regards to the enlargement. Some thought it would be beneficial to the region, while others perceived that the enlargement would aggravate the volatile Euro-Med relationship. Positive perspectives saw that enlargement gives hope for “*an emerging Europe that will counterbalance the “global” vocation of the*

² The southern Mediterranean Countries are: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia.

United States of America.”³ Conversely, some negative perspectives among others saw Europe shifting all its resources, mainly on the economic level, to its new Eastern European members.

In response to all of these different perspectives, the EU commission has maintained a positive stance with regards to the enlargement; it has stated that “*the accession of the new member states will strengthen the Union’s interest in enhancing relations with the new neighbours. Over the coming decade and beyond, the Union’s capacity to provide security, stability and sustainable development to its citizens will no longer be distinguishable from its interest in close cooperation with the neighbours*”⁴.

2. Euro-Med relations from the EMP to the ENP

If Europe maintains that enlargement will help bring democracy, human rights, economic prosperity, security and stability to the region, then it is important to analyse policies vis-à-vis the southern countries prior to enlargement. Results of the Barcelona process, which was launched in 1995 and ultimately aimed to strengthen relations between the European states and the south Mediterranean countries, remain disputed until today.

The Barcelona Process has been widely analysed and discussed in scholarly references as well as in policy and research forums. The aim here is to present the different attitudes towards the process.

When the Barcelona Process was announced, it was the first and only platform which brought the Arabs and the Israelis together. It brought new momentum to the Arab-Israeli peace process, which was embodied at the time by the 1993 Oslo Accords⁵. The Barcelona process officially institutionalised relations between Europe and the Mediterranean countries, in the form of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP).

The atmosphere surrounding the process was overwhelmingly positive and very high hopes were set. Results, however, did not meet aspirations. Many questions have been raised with regards to the effectiveness of the Barcelona Process and whether or not it failed in its stated

³ Abderrahman Youssoufi, *Maroc: Intégrations et Inquiétudes*, Confluence Méditerrané, N=41, Eté 2004

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – “Wider Europe—Neighborhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours” p.3

⁵ The Oslo Accords, officially called the *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles (DOP)*, was the first direct, face-to-face agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The Accords were finalized in Oslo, Norway, on August 20, 1993, and led to the creation of a Palestinian Authority as well as to the public acknowledgement of Israel’s right to exist from the Palestinians.

objectives. The South Mediterranean countries' perception of Europe was closely tied to the implementation of this process.

Some have noted that although the major goal of the Euro-Med was to create “*a common area of peace and stability*”, it was also a tool to “*enhance markets and investments in foreign countries close to home*”⁶. The goal of establishing equal footing between the European states and the south Mediterranean countries, with the exception of Israel, was not achieved given that the “*relationship between the fifteen EU members and their 12 Mediterranean partners [was] based on hierarchical North-South or core-periphery dynamic.*”⁷ Accordingly, some have considered that the “*objectives declared in Barcelona have gone unrealized*”⁸.

The failure of the Arab-Israeli peace process was not solely responsible for the set-back of the Barcelona Process. As noted clearly by Carapico, the “*xenophobes [were] fearful that Arabs and Turks, will overrun a continent [and] were crying for policies to stem immigration, while the deteriorating situation in Algeria in the mid-1990s raised the specter of Islamist radicalism spilling into Europe.*”⁹.

The rising trend of radical Islamism in the Arab world, on the one hand, and the colonial legacy of the European countries such as Spain, France and Britain in these countries, on the other, further led to a clash between the Southern countries and Europe. In this sense, for those scholars who criticised the Barcelona Process, “*the EMP may claim to be a multilateral process based on equal partners, but in fact it remains centered on the EU itself, designed and financed by the EU which also conceive[d] the method, the objectives and the different steps of the process: the Euro-Med is a neo-colonial practice wrapped in a post-colonial discourse.*”¹⁰.

Given the existing negative perceptions of Europe by the south Mediterranean countries, was it feasible to expect Europe to be a counterbalancing power vis-à-vis the United States in the region? Is the spirit of the Barcelona Process, that of building on the idea of “civilian power,”

⁶ Sheila Carapico, *Euro-Med: European Ambitions in the Mediterranean*, Middle East Report, No. 220, Autumn, 2001, pp.24-28

⁷ Ibid. p.27

⁸ See for instance: William H. Lewis, *The European Union-Maghrebian Dialogues: Echoes of Disappointments Past*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000, Washington, DC

⁹ Sheila Carapico, Ibid. p.25

¹⁰ Kalypso A. Nicolaïdis, Dimitri Nicolaïdis, *The EuroMed beyond Civilisational Paradigms*, Institute of European Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2004 p.13

¹¹ trying to bring common responsibility to international problems, or is it more accurate to depict it as a “realist” perspective of self-benefit and security?

Some analysts have suggested that the EU has dismissed the image of a strong military persona, opting to exert “*soft power*” in the form of bilateral aid. The EU has provided twice as much development aid in the region than the United States, and is also the largest contributor of bilateral aid donations¹².

The dysfunction of the Euro-Med relations does not only fall on Europe but it also falls on unwilling South Mediterranean governments to promote domestic reform in their own countries. What encouraged these governments to delay in introducing reforms is the EU’s decision to adopt a top-down approach rather than a bottom up approach of “citizen power,” conducting many of its reform activities through a bilateral, government-to-government, approach¹³. Secondly, negotiations between the EU and southern Mediterranean countries within the forum of the EMP have also been restricted, as little discussion has focused on how aid is disbursed or how much aid will be administered to each of the above countries.

New dynamics have emerged in Euro-Med relations since the introduction of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in May 2004. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was developed in 2004, with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours and instead strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of all concerned.

The ENP left the EU without a consistent stance toward its Mediterranean partners as some action plans were more advanced than others. This was reflected clearly in the “*intensity and level of ambition of relations with each ENP partner is differentiated, reflecting the degree to which common values are effectively shared, the existing state of relations with each country, its needs and capacities, as well as common interests. The tailor-made Action Plans contain a number of priorities intended to strengthen commitment to these values.*”¹⁴

¹¹ The concept of civilian power was introduced by Dechéne 1973 and developed by Hill, 1990; Bretherton & Vogler 2002; Ehrhart, 2002.

¹² See Crawford Beverly, “*The Impact of EU Enlargement on the Euro-Med Partnership*”, Jean Monnet - Robert Schuman Paper Series, Vol.5 No. 23, July 2005

¹³ Mona Yacoubian, “*Promoting Middle East Democracy: European Initiatives*”, United States Institute for Peace. (127), 2004

¹⁴ Communication From the commission to the council, on the commission proposals for Action Plans under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Brussels, 9 December 2004, p.4

There is a distinction between the Barcelona Process and the ENP although they refer to the same “normative concept” of Human Rights promotion, democratization etc. The ENP’s approach differs to that of the Barcelona Process.

According to Rossi and Panebianco and despite “the general framework of achieving long-term common goals, the clear reference to a differentiated framework gives the impression that by respecting the neighbours’ needs, in the short to medium term the bilateral framework of cooperation will emerge as the most practicable level of cooperation¹⁵”. The ENP as a “new policy” is compared to “old wine [that has] been poured into new bottles just to attract the attention away from the real problem of EU relations with the Mediterranean countries”¹⁶.

The reforms which are set as preconditions by the Barcelona process did not produce results in the south Mediterranean countries. This disappointed many people who were depending on Europe to push reform forward in their counties. The introduction of the ENP may not solve this problem. On the contrary, it might aggravate it since ENP:

- 1) adopts an overwhelming “positive conditionality”, probably since negative conditionality did not work in Arab countries;
- 2) does not tie political reform to economic reform;
- 3) approves the principle of “differentiation” between Europe and the neighbouring countries through Action plans.

Moreover, the internal political dynamics, and in particular the delicate and much-debated balance between further enlargement and institutional reform, could have consequences for the ENP. For example, rising public hostility towards enlargement, is seen as one of the reasons for the French and Dutch votes against the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, and has also made member states extremely cautious about raising undue expectations among the EU’s neighbours, especially in Eastern Europe¹⁷.

In order for Europe to meet the high expectations regarding reforms in the region, it should find a balance between political and economic reform plans. In other words, Euro-Med relations should not be restricted to only economic profits for the Arab countries, but also emphasize political reform. This would not be achieved by the ENP since the differentiation

¹⁵ Stefania Panebianco and Rosa Rossi, *EU attempts to export norms of good governance to the Mediterranean and Western Balkan countries*, Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics, October 2004, p.9

¹⁶ Stefania Panebianco and Rosa Rossi, *Ibid.* p9

¹⁷ Antonio Missiroli, Rosa Balfour, *Reassessing the European Neighbourhood Policy*, European Policy Center Issue Paper No.54, June 2007, p. 17

policy would allow authoritarian countries¹⁸ such as Syria, for instance, not to sign the Action Plan and not adopt any political reform process.

This can be construed by Arab countries to adopt a selective approach regarding relations with Europe. For example, during the negotiations on the first seven Action Plans, and then later on the following five, it became clear that some member states were reluctant to develop new agreements once the aim of the Action Plans had been achieved, and unwilling to make real progress on visa issues – which are incentives of great importance to partner countries. This is widely recognized as the ENP’s weak spot; nonexistent incentives relating to mobility have affected the EU’s role in solving long-standing conflicts in some countries (Moldova, the Southern Caucasus, and the Middle East), and have additionally affected trade and economic benefits – three crucially important areas for both the EU and its 26 neighbours¹⁹. The EU’s implicit strategic shift is a result of increasing tensions in the Middle East (Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon), which offer a dismal picture for the stability of the region.

It can be that the ENP suffers from being neither enlargement nor a foreign policy: it cannot exercise conditionality as effectively as the former, nor can it bring to bear all the tools and levers of the latter. It lacks a clear objective as it is divided among competitive interests and policy goals that go well beyond the European Commission’s Directorate-General for External Relations (DG Relex). ENP is also under-funded – despite the 30% increase in the budget for 2007-13²⁰.

Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) who reject political reform and adopting a more liberal orientation are especially resistant to any kind of “conditionality”, thus constituting a particularly difficult obstacle for both EMP and ENP.

¹⁸ According to the Economist in its “Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2006” the southern Mediterranean countries are ranked as follow (out of 167) :

Israel	47
Palestinian Authority	79
Lebanon	85
Jordan	113
Morocco	115
Egypt	116
Algeria	132
Tunisia	135
Libya	161

¹⁹ Antonio Missiroli, Rosa Balfour, Ibid, p.17

²⁰ Antonio Missiroli, Rosa Balfour, Ibid, p.6

Europe's expectations of "*careful Westernization*"²¹ have been resisted by the Arab world, as historical legacies of colonialism and exploitation have imbedded a feeling of victimization and trepidation of European involvement in the Mediterranean region. There is an obvious imbalance of power between the European states and their Mediterranean partners, as NMMCs trade dependence on the EU remains relatively high, "*while Europe's trade dependence is negligible and consists primarily of dependence on energy supplies*"²². Yacoubian noted that "*European decision makers have eschewed policies that could exert real pressure on incumbent regimes and instead opted for short-term stability, yielding limited improvement in cross-regional coordination*"²³.

Studies on political conditionality have shown that in order to produce results, it must be based on clear objectives and transparent methods of implementation. Under the ENP, progress in meeting those objectives is assessed by joint bodies established under the agreement between the EU and the partner country (for example, the EU-Jordan Association Council). However, the EU has the upper hand as it controls both the incentives and rewards²⁴.

The aspiration of the ENP was to consolidate new power and have even greater influence on the EU's Mediterranean neighbours.

The ENP will allow the countries who want to endorse and implement the reforms to move forward, while those not willing to do so can be bypassed. This means that Europe will not deal with the region as a unified region but on an individual scale; hence, what would be the position of an enlarged Europe towards the Middle East?

3. Europe and the Middle East Crisis: A divided "old"- "new Europe"?

The expansion of the EU is expected by many in the Middle East to be an opportunity to provide an emboldened outlet to advance peace in the various countries in the region. European officials believe that while the addition of new member states supports the Euro-Med process; it is also seen by them as an opportunity to promote their own national

²¹ See Tovias, Alfred "*Economic Liberalism in Theory and Practice*", Working Paper, Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley. 2004.

²² Crawford, Ibid, 2005, p. 12

²³ Yacoubian, Ibid, 2005

²⁴ Balfour

achievements in democratic reform. The officials state that “*the new initiative may encourage the introduction of instrumental reforms by ‘reluctant democratizers ... and could even strengthen appeal of pro-democracy political elements within North African countries’*”²⁵.

This optimistic perspective, however, is based on the assumption that the new EU will adopt a unified foreign policy and unified decisions vis-à-vis their neighbouring southern countries. Nevertheless, the stability of the EU post-enlargement may be questioned, as the possibility of having a unified stance towards a multiplicity of countries with very complex and intertwined problems is close to nil.

Presumptions that new members will welcome Euro-Med relations should also be questioned, as the Mediterranean region are potential competitors in trade. A reluctance to offer economic support through EMP may also be of concern, as new member states may first want regimes in North Africa and Middle East to attack root causes of political instability. Thus, highlighting the impact of enlargement on the economic level is also important in order to understand the EU 27 political commitment in the region.

Zielonka²⁶ observed that the US \$40 billion Western European countries used to prepare the candidate countries for membership was not simply an act of generosity, but rather an initiative of “*enlightened self interest.*” The primary concern for enlargement was not grounded in economic or fiscal concern, but on a platform of “*political and geo-strategic*” objectives. According to Zeilonka, the expansion of the EU was a necessary action for Western European member states. On the other hand, the western European countries are also spending an unprecedented amount of aid to push forward reforms in the southern Mediterranean countries, thus providing an excuse for Ariel Sharon’s scornful comment concerning the role of the western countries in the region as “*payers, not players*”²⁷.

The vacuum of uncertainty left behind from the collapse of the Soviet empire caused a vast political and economic space open to the contest of ideas and profits. Enlargement opened Eastern European markets to EU goods and services, offering the prospect of material gain that could be flexed in favour of the original EU members over the less-stable eastern part of the continent. Expansion for Zeilonka is less problematic than frequently alleged as “*too many interests [are] at stake for the enlargement process to be allowed to fail*”. This

²⁵ Crawford, Ibid, p. 16

²⁶ See Zielonka, Jan, “*Challenges of EU Enlargement*” Journal of Democracy - Volume 15, Number 1, January 2004, pp. 22-35

²⁷ Cited in “*How Europe could be a force for good in the Middle East*”, Prince El Hassan bin talal, Europe’s world Journal, Autumn 2007, N=7, p 15

suggests that particular attention will be given to a successful assimilation of new member states into a cohesive European Union. Consequently, resources that may have previously been used on Euro-Mediterranean initiatives will be significantly decreased, especially in areas that were already visibly under funded before expansion, such as the civil society sector.

On the other hand, Europe's financial involvement in the Middle East goes back to between the years 1995 and 1999. During this period, Europe spent some 3.435 billion Euro in the region and another 4.8 billion Euro were provided in loans from the European Investment Bank. Again, between the years 2000-2006, Europe has spent 5.35 billion and the bank approved 6.4 billion Euros in loans. In 2007, the European commission has already committed 320 billion Euro in Palestine²⁸. This sheds the light on an important fact. Enlargement did not affect directly the financial commitment of the EU in the Middle East.

Crawford²⁹ sees four indicators of subversion resulting from enlargement that may weaken the region-building project of the EMP. The first schism will manifest itself through new divisions in the Mediterranean region. Preferential treatment for some Mediterranean countries means that NMMCs must be subjugated to difficult adjustments of the EU's rules and norms without the prospect of membership, dividing countries in MENA even further. Secondly, sub-regional cooperation may be weakened, such as the intended formation an Arab Free Trade Area – as ENP remains largely a bi-lateral approach. Third, perceptions of exclusion and apprehension amongst NMMCs will undoubtedly remain as historical cleavages between South and the North, which are embodied with a history of colonialism and exploitation. Finally, the Barcelona Process and ENP's unambiguous attempt to offer incentives for economic liberalisation can undermine the process of political liberalization. Crawford offers the example of Algeria, where economic liberalized benefited unaccountable political elites rather than any constructive institutional reforms.

In other terms, the EU has seemed ready to pump large amounts of fiscal assistance into countries known for massive political repression or human rights violations, while surprisingly offering very little for civil societies in countries with proven political liberalisation potential. This has led Johansson-Nogues to state that, "*Such an imbalance in EU prioritization seems to indicate that its democracy and human rights assistance is more ruled by newspaper headlines than ... [the] greatest added value for furthering long-term*

²⁸ Ibid. p16

²⁹ Crawford, 2005

strategic norm promotion.”³⁰. However, this will lead to ask a main question: What was Europe’s political attitude towards the main crisis in the region?

The Middle East is experiencing new crises almost on a daily basis; among those conflicts are the Arab-Israeli Conflict, the Iraq crisis, and last but not least the Lebanese crisis. Given all these complicated variables it becomes, and as mentioned before, hard to analyse the political impact of the EU enlargement on the Southern Mediterranean region.

Those examples are indeed vital to understand Europe’s point of view as regards the region.

Arab-Israeli Conflict: A hopeless case?

Without a prominent position on the negotiating table of the Middle East peace process, the desire for Europe to play a more active role in the Arab-Israeli conflict is an important factor in the development of increased coordination between the Euro-Mediterranean.

Interestingly, the “*work programme*” for the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership timidly mentioned the role of Europe in re-launching the peace process and restricted the EU role to the following:

The review shows that continuing conflicts are an obstacle to progress in the partnership. This is particularly true of the Middle East Peace Process. The paper by Arab partners places particular emphasis on this point. Following the recent meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister and the President of the Palestinian Authority there are encouraging signs of progress. The Barcelona Process can make a contribution to promoting this, even if this is not the forum in which a settlement will be reached. Partners should call for the strengthening of the efforts of the Quartet and facilitate the implementation of the Road Map objectives of the creation of a democratic Palestinian state living in peace and security with Israel as the guiding framework for the peace process on the Israeli-Palestinian track. The Euro- Mediterranean Partnership should provide continued support for cooperation among the parties, particularly in the industrial and economic sectors, to complement the political process. In the context of a settlement it should provide the instruments for Europe to help maintain the peace once it is achieved through a Charter for Peace and

³⁰ Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues, “Civil Society in Euro-Mediterranean relations: What success of EU’s normative promotion?”, European University Institute, 2006, p. 16

*Stability and the closest possible integration of all partners into the European space through the Neighbourhood Policy.*³¹

Although providing convincing language, the EU indeed did not have an active role in the peace process. This failure can be reflected, for instance, in the shortcomings of the French, Italian and Spanish Initiative.³² The prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, stated that “*We [Spanish, French and Italians] cannot remain impassive in the face of the horror that continues to unfold before our eyes*”³³. This initiative, among many other initiatives, faced the obstacles lobbed by the United States as the Americans exercised their veto power in a Security Council resolution condemning Israel in the wake of an artillery attack in Gaza which killed 18 Palestinian civilians.

Israeli politicians do not want foreign interference because they believe that this “*will only complicate matters*”. Israeli Foreign Policy considered the mentioned initiative as a “*slogan*” and stressed that they had “*learned the disparity between the slogans and the reality, and we can’t forget that reality is more complex*”³⁴.

Even though the EU can legitimately claim to be the largest provider of development assistance and the main source of “*non-military funding for the Middle East process*”³⁵, the Middle East conflict does partly lead to a paralysis of the EMP, specifically the “*Political and Security Partnership*”. The Charter for Peace and Stability, which should have been about peaceful conflict management and continued political dialogue, was never signed. The Arab States continuously underline the fact that cooperation in security matters is impossible as long as there is a “*strategic imbalance*” between Israel and its neighbouring countries, and that the Middle East conflict will remain unresolved as long as Israel does not give up its monopoly on nuclear weapons³⁶. Based on that, it is not a secret anymore that the peace process in the Middle East is under the unique monopoly of the United States of America.

³¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Tenth Anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A Work programme to meet the challenges of the next five years, p 14

³² The plan announced on November 16, 2007 had five components: an immediate ceasefire; formation of a national unity government by the Palestinians that can gain international recognition; an exchange of prisoners, including the Israeli soldiers whose seizure sparked the war in Lebanon and fighting in Gaza this summer; talks between Israel's prime minister and the Palestinian president; and an international mission in Gaza to monitor a ceasefire.

³³ Cited in Brian Whitaker, “European states offer Middle East peace plan without UK” The Guardian Newspaper, “European states offer Middle East peace plan without UK, The Guardian, November 17, 2006

³⁴ Statement by FM

³⁵ Carapico, Ibid, p.26

³⁶ Schäfer Isabel and Ibrahim Ferhad (2005), Regional Crisis and Europe: How the Middle East Conflict and Iraq War Affect the EMP, EuroMeSCo Papers, 40, p.7

The Iraq Crisis: an Exception?

Iraq does not belong to the southern Mediterranean countries per se, however it represents a good example here since its repercussions are strongly felt all over the region. Debates started to take place regarding the war in Iraq in 2002; it was at that time that the real challenge facing the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) appeared. In this context, both France and Germany were expressing their willingness to oppose the Americans regarding any attack or invasion of Iraq.

For example, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder during his re-bid for the elections in September 2002 stated clearly that *“Under my leadership, Germany will not take part in an intervention in Iraq”*. This had provoked the Bush administration to a certain point where *“Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s much-quoted comments made at this time differentiating between “Old Europe”--France and Germany--and “New Europe”--the former Communist countries of Central Europe, who were more sympathetic to America’s stance on Iraq, confirmed the attitude of mutual suspicion emerging between the U.S. Administration and the French and German governments”*³⁷.

Facing this drastic schism in perspectives Europe was divided³⁸.

The Polish President during his visit to the United States of America stated that *“George Bush is not a man who wants a war to take place. He only wants to complete his task, the destruction of weapons of mass destruction, and ensure the safety of America and the whole world. He is not a person who would like to test himself on the battlefield at any price. It is not like that”*. In response, the President Bush stated that Poland *“is the best friend of the United States in Europe”*³⁹.

Latvia on the other hand, also supported a war on Iraq. In his speech at the parliament the Prime Minister of Latvia said that *“This is a very important moment for us to show that we are not a cowardly, small and provincial country, which troubles just about its local interests. If it does not concern us, we will neglect when a hooligan attacks the weaker, and afterwards we ourselves will wonder why no one helps us when we need it. Now it is decided how the world is going to fight threats to international peace, security and democracy. This is for*

³⁷ [Jonathan Spyer](#), *Europe and Iraq: Test case for the Common Foreign and Security Policy*, Middle East Review of International Affairs, Volume 11, No. 2, Article 7/8 – June.

³⁸ Great Britain, Italy, Denmark, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain were supporting the US policy, whether on the other hand, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Greece and Luxemburg were among the countries against the war on Iraq.

³⁹ The Warsaw Voice News, Poland- USA Tete à Tete, 23 January 2003.

*what we are going to vote today – for the collective security system in the world. And I hope that the voting will give a positive answer.”*⁴⁰

This confirms that an enlarged Europe will face dramatic problems regarding the Middle East, especially when it comes to its Common Foreign Policy. Although the notion of an “Old” Europe and a “New” Europe was heavily criticised, it is nevertheless a reality which Europe has to face.

Another example of the fact that Europe is far from being a uniform united entity, although it shows commitment to being so in its foreign policy, is demonstrated by the Lebanese Crisis on two levels: the July war in 2006 and the Political deadlock in the country.

The Lebanese Crisis : An infertile commitment?

The July War

In July 2006, Israel launched a devastating offensive by air, land and sea against Lebanon. The UN Security Council and the international community did not take an immediate position as regards this war. Europe’s position and stances vis-à-vis the Israeli war on Lebanon was far from unified. A case in point is that Chirac openly criticised the EU actions during the July war by saying that *“Europe was insufficiently active in the Lebanese crisis, although France had recommended on a number of occasions that the High Representative be given a mandate to speak and act on behalf of the twenty-five member countries ...”*⁴¹

However, if the political role was not effective, a statement by European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso on Lebanon clearly highlight the financial role of the EU when he stated that *“The EU fully supports these efforts and has been closely involved to relieve those suffering the consequences of the hostilities as the main donor in the region. We have already committed and pledged more than €100 million in humanitarian and recovery aid to the Lebanese population and have been active helping the control and the cleaning up of the environmental damage caused by the conflict.”*⁴²

In this context, the EU’s actions were seen as insufficient by the Lebanese, especially in the eyes of the vibrant Lebanese civil society. As a reaction, a group of civil society organizations

⁴⁰ Speech of Einars Repše, Prime Minister, at Saeima session on March 19, 2003

⁴¹ EurActiv, Thursday 31 August 2006

⁴² Statement by European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso on Lebanon, No. 74/06, August 24, 2006.

"Lil Hayat" (For Life) invited all Lebanese to gather in front of the European Union Headquarters in Beirut. The gathering submitted a statement in protest of the Israeli attacks and called on the mobilisation of the world to stop the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. During the protests a famous slogan brandishing "*Shame on YOU, Shame on EU*" was seen as a symbol of a castrated EU which is unable to stop the war on Lebanon and its inability to take a common decision condemning Israel.

It is important to note here that the of five permanent members of the UN Security council two are are EU countries: France and the United Kingdom. But, the reality showed that Europe again was far beyond from reaching a political consensus about the July war. A very explicit reflection of this division was expressed in the letter of the Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora published in the Guardian since the letter was addressed to the EU and the Britain⁴³.

The deadlock crisis

Another example of Europe's rifts was seen in the deadlock crisis Lebanon is witnessing at the moment; Europe showed commitment to end the political deadlock in Lebanon, demonstrated lately through the visit of the foreign ministers of France, Italy and Spain to Lebanon on October 20, 3007, in order to urge the opposing factions to agree on the election of a new president. D'Alema, the foreign minister of Italy, stressed the importance of this visit and considered it as "*a message of commitment, engagement and unity*". The Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos considered the visit "*historical*". According to him, "*The three Euro-Mediterranean countries came together with the same purpose – to help assist and to commit themselves for peace and stability in Lebanon*". And during their visit to the South of Lebanon the three ministers confirmed "*pledged unequivocal support for UN peacekeepers overseeing a truce along the Lebanese-Israeli border increasingly threatened by Al-Qaeda-inspired militants and political instability in Beirut*"⁴⁴

This serves to show that Europe is committed to the region, but unable to push for political solutions on the international level.

Thus, the famous statement of ex-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, confirming deficiency of Europe strategy in the region as payer and not player is confirmed with time. Although, polls

⁴³ The Guardian, "Put an end to the aggression, Britain and Europe must take a lead in halting Israel's wanton destruction of my country", Fouad Siniora, August 12, 2006

⁴⁴ Daily Star, [Monday, October 22, 2007](#)

during the pre-Iraq war showed that the new members' public opinion was critically against the war, the countries mentioned above were directly related to the decision of the United States of America. Thus, this commitment will not be seen as positive on the political level if Europe will not act as a unique body, in order to re-launch the peace process and put an end to US interventions in the region.

Now the big question is the following: Will a Europe of 27 with new members keep accepting the role of "payer" in the region? And will the failure of spreading democracy from one side, and counterbalancing the USA's unilateral presence in the region, push Europe to suspend its political role in the region and try to find alternatives in order to achieve a uniquely physical secure space?

4. Enlarged "Europe" – Shaking "Mediterranean": What prospects for the Euro-Med?

In his first trip as a President outside Europe to Algeria and Tunisia, Nicolas Sarkozy unveiled a new initiative which is meant to inspire prospective partners on both sides. He outlined his plan for a new Mediterranean Union that will bring together, from the onset, five western Mediterranean countries (France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece) and the five Maghreb states, governed by a permanent council similar to the Council of Europe.

The incentives behind this project reside in a wide variety of challenges which include controlling the flow of illegal migrants from North Africa into Europe; the need to tap the Maghreb's ample supply of oil and gas; keeping the European economy going; fighting terrorism and cooperation in security issues; and driving investments into the southern Mediterranean's growing markets. For the Arab members the incentives would include collective security; normalized relations with Europe; transfer of nuclear energy technology for civil use (France is a world leader in this area); and much-needed European investments in various economic sectors⁴⁵.

Scepticism, however, is already surrounding Sarkozy's project, as Brussels has already suggested that the move is a challenge to its own Euro-Med project which thus far has cost more than 20 billion euros. Sarkozy also needs to convince some of his European partners such as Spain and Italy of the feasibility of his proposal, as well as set other countries at ease. For example, Turkey considered the French move a conspiracy to kill its bid to join the European Union.

⁴⁵ Osama Al Sharif, The Gulf News, July 14, 2007

Efforts should not only be directed to European and Middle Eastern countries, as the biggest suspicion of these initiatives may come from the United States, which views the southern Mediterranean basin as its own backyard. The prospect of its closest Arab allies building special ties with Europe would not be welcomed by the States as it would weaken its grip on such a strategic area.

Sarkozy declared in his victory speech that “it is in the perspective of this Mediterranean Union that we must approach the issue of peace in the Middle-East and search for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (...) A system of collective security would allow it [the Mediterranean Union] to guarantee peace by means other than arms race and intimidation”.

It is still too early to affirm that a change in policy will persist, but if a new structure of relations is developed along Sarkozy’s vision it would seem to sidestep the enlargement question and work more directly on bilateral decisions between the participating countries. Whether this will produce better results or not remains to be seen, however it is an interesting proposal that promises to increase efficiency.

The question which begs to be asked is consistent with preceding European-Mediterranean initiatives: is this project just another mechanism for advanced nations to dictate mechanisms for “development,” while in the process reaping substantial benefits for their own interests?

5. Conclusion

The future of Euro-Mediterranean relations must not be prematurely dismissed as unachievable; however, various outstanding obstacles remain in the face of regional cooperation and effective implementation of political reform. The argument that the EU’s expansion would result with a diplomatic power which rivals the United States in developing peace in Middle Eastern, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, seems highly unlikely. Effects of the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy on development in the Mediterranean region, specifically on civil society, have also been limited at best. The new member states of the EU have grown much quicker than EMP Mediterranean partner countries as the “*combined income of the 10 NMMCs is only one tenth of combined income of the new EU members*”⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Crawford, 2004

Indicators from recent UNDP and EU reports also suggest that there has been almost a complete absence of progress of positive developments in the civil society sector of the Mediterranean region since 1995.⁴⁷

European initiatives to develop a cross-cutting relationship with their Mediterranean neighbourhood should not be abandoned. Greater concentration instead should be placed on working from the bottom up. Attempts to build bridges for regional interdependence by the newly expanded European Union must be very careful not to be “*caught between the language of post-colonialism and the behavior of neo-colonialism*”⁴⁸.

Establishing an environment of trust, as originally adopted in both the EMP and the ENP, must be grounded in sustained commitment to developing a sense of ownership amongst the underpowered MENA region. The Mediterranean partners and the European Union must both be willing and politically prepared to implement reform in order to offer an adequate chance for successful inter-regional cooperation. This responsibility must be honoured by the European Union as the primary broker capable of establishing regional cooperation. This means that the Union must first work on the integral internal dynamics of the newly enlarged and diversified EU post-enlargement. Only a united European Union can invest in a long term solution, developing a common language that is culturally sensitive to the southern Mediterranean’s concerns, as a first step toward compromise and using civil society in the Middle East in order to yield results of sustained development and interregional stability.

⁴⁷ Annual Arab UNDP Human Development Reports since 2002 or the ENP Country Report from 2004.

⁴⁸ Crawford, 2004