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Twenty years ago the Heads of State and Government from Europe and the southern and eastern Mediterranean met in Barcelona to sign an ambitious and optimistic declaration. In so doing, they made a pledge to work towards making the Mediterranean area one of peace, understanding and shared prosperity through the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership within the framework of the Barcelona Process.

Unfortunately, the Mediterranean area is far from reaching this goal of peace and prosperity, and perhaps even further from intercultural understanding. Not only are the conflicts that hindered the initial launch of the Process still alive, but the situation has been exacerbated by fresh conflicts such as those ongoing in Syria or Libya.

Confidence that conflicts in the Middle East would be resolved waned as the area entrenched itself in a dead end marked by cycles of violence from one side or another. Meanwhile, conflicts continued in the Mediterranean area: the unacknowledged, bloody civil war in Algeria, al-Qaeda terrorism, the war in Lebanon, the occupation and ongoing war and violence in Iraq, and now the current panorama marked by war and violence in Syria and Libya and the indiscriminate terrorism of Daesh. The Mediterranean region is far from being the area of peace that was dreamed of 20 years ago, and seems further from reaching this goal today than it did then.

The instability has also hampered economic development. Although, thanks to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, reforms and free trade agreements certain countries have witnessed advances in their development, the continuing structural problems, reticence of European collaboration together with the impact of the global financial crisis, which has been particularly virulent among the Mediterranean countries of the EU, have left the region even further from being one of shared prosperity.

After the outbreak of the Arab Springs, it seemed as if democracy would develop and take hold in the southern Mediterranean. However, what subsequent events have shown is the diversity of models that exist across the Arab world. The various evolutions of these ‘springs’ and the array of very different situations have prompted us to begin this edition of the Yearbook with a series of articles on the crisis and the new agenda of the Arab States. The first theme of the section Keys analyses the changing role of the State in Arab countries, the role of the military or civil society in the new realities and, lastly, the failed, and almost no longer existing, states, such as the post-Gaddafi Libya, and the difficult construction of a successful democratic state en route to consolidating its position, as is the case of Tunisia.

Tunisia’s democratic consolidation is under threat from the second of the themes in Keys: the ‘jihadism and violence in the Arab world,’ which has hit Tunisia in the area it most needs to develop, its economic development, by attacking the strategic but highly volatile tourism sector. This section analyses the roots of this jihadist violence, the expansion of Daesh in Syria and Iraq and its presence in North Africa and the Sahel; a jihadism that shows its willingness to wreak terror through roughly planned massacres and which has extended from the Middle East towards the rest of the world. DAESH acts as a magnet for young people from Arab, European and African countries, as well as from other parts of the world, thereby enabling it to unleash its senseless
violence - in Paris, on the beaches of Tunisia, in Libya, Turkey or Sinai, not to mention Syria and Iraq.

The third and last theme in the Yearbook’s Keys section is determined by the two previous ones, since their evolution is changing the regional order. The geopolitics of the Mediterranean is in constant mutation: the role of the Gulf countries, the implication of the United States, the consequences of reconfiguring the regional stage in the Maghreb or the influence of the new energy models in the geopolitics of the Middle East are some of the themes addressed in this section.

Fittingly, in this edition the Dossier section focuses on the twenty years of the Barcelona Process, the evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the changes in the region itself. The Dossier thereby addresses the different areas of Euro-Mediterranean relations: democratic transitions, security, economic development, trade integration, social transformations or the role of migration. And this has not been done solely from the perspective of the changing policies and structure of the Partnership over the last twenty years, but also taking into account the far-reaching changes in the region, as well as the actions and decisions that need to be taken to make a definitive improvement in the effectiveness of the policy of cooperation and partnership with the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and the neighbours’ new neighbours. The Dossier draws reflections on both the evolution of the Process and the challenges the future holds for Euro-Mediterranean relations.

As in previous editions, the articles in the Panorama section complete the preceding sections, complementing them through a multitude of themes. Although not as crucial as those addressed in the initial sections, they do present themes of great interest regarding the situation in the Mediterranean region and encompass a comprehensive range of issues and geographies. There are, therefore, articles that complement themes from Keys or Dossier, such as jihadism in Europe, terrorist attacks on energy infrastructure, the role of the Kurds in the Syrian war or the role of Russia in the Middle East. The selection of articles also encompasses a host of other issues including: the internal politics of the Mediterranean countries; the informal economy; the drama of illegal immigration; investments in the Gulf countries; the effect of non-conventional hydrocarbons; the role of the media in the transitions; the fight against the squandering of resources; the comic boom in the Arab world; and the situation of women and refugees; looking to provide the political, economic, social and cultural keys of the Mediterranean agenda.

The perfect complement for the articles found in the Yearbook is its extensive Appendices which give readers interested in the Mediterranean region direct and clear information through a selection of statistics for each country across as many sectors and areas as possible, as well as a comprehensive series of chronologies. In addition, the Appendices contain specific sections on electoral processes, the situation of agreements with the EU or Mediterranean immigration within the EU, and European cooperation with Mediterranean countries.

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Twenty years ago, it seemed as if the push to develop Euro-Mediterranean relations would effectively transform the Mediterranean region into an area of peace and prosperity. This goal may well seem far from being accomplished twenty years later, at a time of heightened tensions both in the northern and southern Mediterranean. However, let us not allow the dark clouds of the present to overshadow the fact that the drive and values of ‘95, with the strengthening of political, economic and cultural cooperation among Mediterranean countries, will enable us, albeit step by step, and hindered by stumbling blocks and steps backward, to keep moving forward. This has been our incentive in compiling the Yearbook, year after year, looking to improve each edition in order to provide our readers with the best product possible, which will help us to understand and improve the future of all countries in our region.