

# Foreword

## Senén Florensa

Executive President  
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),  
Barcelona

Since we launched this Yearbook over a decade ago, the Mediterranean as a region has undergone progress, setbacks, transformations, revolutions, wars, success and failure... It has unfortunately not ceased to be the focus of world attention. The development of events in the region has direct repercussions on international relations on a world-wide level. Over the past few months, the Mediterranean area has again experienced a period of upheaval, full of tension and uncertainty. Regrettably, conflicts, crisis and violence today determine the evolution of the remainder of events in the region. The war in Syria continues in a spiral of violence and destruction that will be difficult to resolve; jihadi terrorism persists in attempting to sow hatred through its macabre capacity to bring terror to any sphere of everyday life; the instability and confrontations in Libya continue to prevent the construction of an inclusive, unifying state; the crises relating to refugees and migrants seeking a better life have once again dyed the waters of the Mediterranean in the black of mourning. The year 2015 was marked by the sad annual record of the greatest number of dead or missing in these waters.

The conflicts, wars, extremist violence and political instability, moreover, are irremissibly blocking economic and social development. The possibilities of emerging from the depths of economic crisis, already difficult in and of itself, are hampered by the conditioning political and security factors affecting both North and South shores of the Mediterranean.

Given this scenario, in selecting the topics to be discussed in the Keys section of this Yearbook, not only have the issues and events building the present of the Mediterranean region been taken into account, but also those that will, moreover, be clearly decisive for its future.

The first of this Yearbook's Keys is dedicated, precisely, to the war in Syria. This topic is discussed not only from the internal perspective of the country's situation and the military evolution of the war, but also and particularly with regard to its determining geopolitical dynamics and its influence in the regional Middle East quagmire. Hence, in addition to the situation in Syria, the different articles analyze US policy in the region or the role of Russia in the context of its armed intervention in the conflict. Europe's perplexity and difficulties regarding the conflict and its consequences are likewise the object of analysis in the last of the Keys on European challenges, as well as in the second one on the jihadi phenomenon in Europe. Other geopolitical dynamics are also discussed, such as the division between Sunni and Shiite Islam and its influence on the Middle East situation.

Jihadi terrorism, as mentioned, is also a segment of the Keys section in the 2016 Yearbook. In this case, the Keys articles focus on terrorism in Europe, although throughout the Yearbook, other articles also discuss jihadi terrorism from different perspectives; a terrorism that has demonstrated its capacity to spread suffering and terror over the past few months and the only achievement of its attacks on innocent, unsuspecting victims in targets such as a concert hall in Paris, an ice cream parlour in Baghdad, the Brussels metro, the Istanbul airport, a nightclub in Orlando or the Nice boardwalk fireworks celebration. The Keys section discusses the EU's challenge in the face of these attacks, the re-

cruitment of European Muslims for the jihadi cause or the need to realize that freedom and democracy involve risks regarding the terrorist threat and that this is precisely the jihadists' aim, i.e. to instil fear, which can weaken democratic values.

Coming up next, the Keys section also focuses on a country playing a fundamental role in the region: Turkey, a "swing" country par excellence. An emerging power, key actor in the Middle East geopolitical puzzle, a necessary partner for Europe in the refugee crisis... A segment of Keys had to be dedicated to Turkey for both its internal situation and its extremely important regional role. Thus, articles discuss the national situation, the regional context, relations with the EU and economic perspectives, and the role of the Kurdish question and its effects on regional geopolitics. These articles, written before 15 July, advanced the keys to the situation in Turkey that eventually led to the attempted coup against Erdogan and its consequences.

**The Mediterranean area has again experienced a period of upheaval, full of tension and uncertainty. Regrettably, conflicts, crisis and violence today determine the evolution of the remainder of events in the region**

And finally, another of the topics that had to be included in the Keys section is that of the crisis affecting the European Union and the challenges and difficulties it faces – in large part relating to the Mediterranean region – which are distressingly on the rise. The difficulties of implementing a common foreign and security policy in an increasingly insecure neighbourhood, both on the Eastern border and, particularly, in the Mediterranean and Middle East, the effect of the economic crisis in general and the Greek crisis in particular, the terrorist attacks in European territory, the Brexit and the refugee crisis – all of these factors have cast doubt on the European dream, which is now experiencing one of its lowest moments. In the meantime, in various European countries, populist parties of differ-

ent tendencies are growing that advocate exiting the Union. The European Union is faced with an existential crisis; not only the future of Europe, but also the values that led to the Union's creation will depend on how this crisis is resolved.

After the Keys, the Yearbook's Dossier analyzes in depth the subject of mobility in the Mediterranean and the refugee crisis, a veritable turning point in the situation in both the South and North Mediterranean. The refugee crisis represents the greatest movement of people in Europe since the Second World War and above all demonstrates the fragility of a European Union not prepared to act as a unit when the emergency situation was within its boundaries. The Union has presented a divided, hesitant image in this crisis, only to end up preparing an agreement with Turkey to externalize to a partner country a problem that the EU is incapable of managing. In addition to the effects on the very framework of the EU discussed in the Keys section, the Dossier presents an overview of the different issues recently arising relating to mobility in the Mediterranean. Different migratory flows, human trafficking, irregular migration and the key factors of the different routes are analyzed to subsequently focus on studying the refugee crisis from different perspectives. First of all, the origin of the crisis as a consequence of the escalating violence in the Syrian conflict is discussed, as well as the situation of the countries having taken in the majority of refugees (Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan). Later, the EU's response to the crisis at its borders is examined, and lastly, the challenges of a European migration agenda and a succinct analysis of the different European models of immigration and diversity management in host countries are presented.

After this, the articles in the Panorama section, as always, offer broad thematic diversity designed to cover the maximum topics of interest regarding the Mediterranean Region, although they are for the most part complementary to the articles in the previous sections. The section includes, for instance, articles dealing with the geopolitical importance of Iran or the Gulf countries, those examining Daesh's organization or the communication strategy of jihadi groups, and anti-radicalization policies or the role of education as a weapon to fight radicalization, not to mention those analyzing the economic consequences of instability in the region or the role of the Balkan countries in the migratory crisis. Also

covered in this section, moreover, applying both the geographic and sectoral or thematic approach, are the traditional articles on the majority of the individual Mediterranean countries, together with those addressing issues that are probably less spectacular but certainly essential for grasping the complexity of a such a region as the Mediterranean. Among these we could cite economic growth, youth unemployment, energy geopolitics, the quality of education, competitiveness, brain drain, urban planning, cultural creations, the circular economy and climate change. These issues are covered in a series of articles intended to provide an overview of the political, economic and sociocultural situation in the Mediterranean Basin.

Stopping here, however, would mean relegating the Yearbook to a mere compilation of articles. Beyond the authors' valuable opinions and analyses, the Yearbook retains its educational and informative essence through a thorough series of Appendices offering those interested in the Mediterranean the op-

portunity to peruse raw information that is more difficult to digest but also more direct, with the minimization of possible bias. In this manner, the Yearbook's Appendices, with their various chronologies, maps, thematic data compilations and the broad selection of statistics on the Mediterranean countries, round off this book as a fundamental tool for gaining knowledge of the Mediterranean area.

Clearly, the Mediterranean Region will never cease to be in the spotlight of current affairs, with international media attention focussing on one or another part of its geography. It is this circumstance that lends the Yearbook its meaning. We cannot be continually looking only at the hotspots; we must also see what is going on around them; the Mediterranean area must be studied to show that is a region undergoing constant change, that beyond the crises, conflicts and violence, there is a multitude of issues that progress or regress which must be considered, because it is on them that our inexorably shared future depends.