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We are now at the 15th edition of the IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook. During the publication of these 15 editions, the Mediterranean as a region has been witness to a multitude of events, from situations that were unimaginable 15 years ago to stagnated conflicts which have hardly changed, revolutions, wars, political setbacks, heartening progress, economic crises or bitter disappointments.

For better or for worse, an endless stream of events has made its way into the Yearbook. Yet, even in a publication as extensive as this one, it is impossible to truly capture and contain such a boundless reality and effervescence of activity. An important part of the Yearbook's work, therefore, throughout these 15 editions, has been to try to capture the essence of the events, to select the most important, to go beyond telling the news and offer an in-depth analysis of the phenomena that are deciding the fate of the Mediterranean region. This analysis has been embodied in the pages of the Yearbook in a precarious balancing act between current affairs and long-term processes, including events that are immediate, urgent, relevant and underlying.

The selection of themes and articles that constitute the Yearbook's contents is an attempt at capturing this boundless reality in a single publication, limiting all that complexity, richness and diversity to just 500 pages. This selection process sees its culmination in the *Keys* section of the Yearbook, where we strive to attain that delicate balance and present the most important themes in the Mediterranean area.

The first of this year's *Keys* focuses on the challenges of globalization, on the social changes this represents and the state crises that arise as a result of these transformation processes. The articles ana-

lyze the challenges that states are facing, the transformation brought about by the digital revolution in the Mediterranean or the radically different trajectories of the Arab countries following the Arab Spring uprisings.

In this edition, *Keys* analyzes the role of the main non-European Mediterranean players in the Mediterranean area. At a time when European influence in the Mediterranean seems to have weakened, the major world powers are coming back into the regional limelight. Four articles, therefore, explain firstly how Russia's return to the fore on the international scene has included a major role in the Mediterranean, especially in the Middle East, where it has adopted a decisive role in the Syrian conflict. The Yearbook also dedicates an article to China's presence in the Mediterranean; an economic presence which has steadily grown in recent years and has led to an increase in China's political influence. The Gulf countries have also increased their influence in the Mediterranean, their disputes, to some extent, continuing through conflicts, such as in Libya, or in the relations they establish with Mediterranean Arab countries thanks to financial aid. Lastly, there is also an analysis of US politics in the Mediterranean, especially following the administration change and arrival of a President such as Trump, and his effect on US foreign policy.

The third part of *Keys*, which comprises the first section of the Yearbook, is focused on sectarianism and the politics of hate in the Mediterranean. Three articles here deal with different aspects of this topic: on the one hand the geopolitics linked with sectarianism in the Middle East (with a particularly strong role played by the Saudi Arabia - Iran rivalry), while on the other hand the advance of Islamophobia, analyzed in the European and US context. Lastly, the subject of minorities in the Middle East is another theme discussed in these pages, specifically, in this case, the future of the region's Christian minorities.

The selection of the last subject in *Keys* was determined by its importance in world news as well as its proximity. The attacks in Barcelona in August 2017, little more than 700 metres from where the Yearbook is prepared, have made violent extremism one of the themes of *Keys* in this edition. This area has been approached from varying angles: the role of young people and European jihadism; that of the jihadist networks following the fall of Daesh's pseudo-caliphate or the role of returning foreign fighters and the security challenges they represent.

After *Keys*, the next major section of the Yearbook, the *Dossier*, provides an in-depth analysis on the subject of relations between Europe and the Mediterranean. The degree of European involvement with its southern and eastern Mediterranean neighbours is hugely decisive in the development of the Mediterranean area. The *Dossier* looks at relations between Europe and the Mediterranean from different areas and different perspectives. This section, therefore, contains articles on the geopolitical framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations, the role of the "renewed" neighbourhood policies or the effect of Europe's crisis when it comes to relations with Mediterranean countries. There are also two articles on the bilateral relations of France and Germany with Mediterranean countries and their influence in European relations. The *Dossier* also incorporates two fundamental areas in recent Euro-Mediterranean relations: the new European defence policy and its relation with ongoing conflicts in the Mediterranean and the effect of the European response to the refugee crisis on European values. The crisis of European ideals has had a direct impact on Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The European Union is in the grip of a wave of national populism, feeding on the fears and lies that are being spread concerning the very values that have enabled the Union to grow, like solidarity, cooperation and shared development. Europe must respond to these challenges and strengthen its potential. If the European Union responds tentatively to humanitarian emergencies such as irregular migration, in fear of a xenophobic response, it will do a disservice to its capacity as an international leader and will lose its ability to promote an alternative discourse in international geopolitics, a discourse that favours development, solidarity and cooperation and which has a common goal. The EU has not lost its potential, but it must adapt to new times, to

greater integration, a deeper union and a consensus on external politics, which can take the Union forwards to the next stage and, in so doing, give fresh impulse to Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Like in previous editions, the articles from *Panorama*, which are more brief and specific, complete and complement the preceding sections and encompass a broad range of subjects. Although they may appear less important than the themes dealt with in *Keys and Dossier*, they are an attempt to cover the boundless reality that is the Mediterranean area and offer a broad geographic and subject-based range of articles. Firstly, it is worth highlighting articles that complement some of the themes from *Keys* or the *Dossier*, such as jihadism in the Sahel, the training of imams, the crisis between the Gulf countries, the new youth culture or the European-Arab dialogue. The selection of articles also addresses the internal politics of most Mediterranean countries, including themes such as food security, information technologies and employment, the geopolitical impact of climate change, the media in Arab countries, human trafficking in the Mediterranean, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen or the protection of cultural heritage.

To complement and complete the information offered by this great volume of articles, the second part of the Yearbook is dedicated to *Appendices*, which aim to provide readers with a wealth of information, enabling them to gain further insight into the Mediterranean reality. Chronologies, statistics, country profiles, maps and other annexes offer a general understanding of the different aspects of Mediterranean countries and pose new questions for readers, into which they can then delve more deeply.

Over the years, a body of knowledge on the Mediterranean area has grown from these 15 editions of the Yearbook, which now constitute a unique compendium of information. Working on the 15 editions has, therefore, meant treading a path which, to a greater or lesser extent, has uncovered the Euro-Mediterranean reality, offering our readers an informative and knowledge-based guide with the tools needed to take an informed and analytical approach to the complexity of the Mediterranean world. This is something that requires great effort from many contributors, and I couldn't end this presentation without expressing my gratitude, and that of the IEMed, to all those who have participated, in one way or another, in these 15 editions.