From Barcelona to the UfM: Ideological and Political Evolution of the EU's Vision for the Mediterranean Region

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Europe's Mediterranean policy is based on, and often dictated by, the evolution of the Middle East crisis. It is also paced by the vicissitudes of transatlantic dialogue.

Barcelona was but a euphoric stage in a long, progressive process originating with the enlargement of the European Economic Community (EEC) to nine members (1st January 1972). In fact, it must be recalled that during the negotiations for the first EU enlargement, the issue of 'political cooperation' in spheres not covered by the Treaty of Rome was the focal point of debates. Managing the Middle East crisis, preparing a common energy policy, overcoming the monetary crisis, preparing the Helsinki Conferences and other matters called for a mechanism for reaching in-depth consensus, if not taking up joint action, that the Treaty of Rome did not allow. The Israeli-Arab War of 1967 had, in fact, divided the EEC: France and Italy backed Arab arguments and the Netherlands were aligned with Israel, while the Federal Republic of Germany took up an uncomfortable position of neutrality. This division pushed Europe away from the conflict arena, the role of mediator being occupied exclusively by the USA and the USSR.

The Davignon Report (1969), which proposed an ambitious approach of "political cooperation" within the future EEC-9, was particularly endorsed by Great Britain, then a candidate for accession. The latter declared a strong will to see the EEC play a major role on the international arena, and thus backed the Franco-Italian positions on the Middle East. The idea that Europe's 'soft power' was to contribute to the emergence of a new world order had made the birth of the EEC-9 a major event that elicited considerable interest and a great deal of hope, in the Arab world in particular. The preliminary work for the Helsinki Conference and the wish to demonstrate a position of political independence vis-à-vis the USA caused a sensation. It was during the course of that year (1972) that the European Commission drew up the First Report to the Council advocating the adoption of a balanced, Global Mediterranean Policy. It was to contribute to peace and stability in the region and promote preferential cooperation with Mediterranean Non-Member Countries (MNCs).

The deterioration of transatlantic relations, the strategic USA-USSR rapprochement, the disappointment of the Arab world in the face of European passiveness and Israel's mistrust of the behaviour of certain Member States had the EEC up against the wall.

The October War of 1973 was considered the ultimate test to measure the strength of the economic construction devised by the Treaty of Rome, the credibility of Europe as a political entity and its capacity to free itself from the influence of the Atlantic Alliance. Until the Copenhagen Summit in mid-December 1973, the EEC remained silent and totally paralyzed in the face of the Arab-Israeli military confrontation. The oil embargo decreed by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) against the Netherlands and the reduction of the supply to Europe (which was dependent on the Middle East for 75% of its oil), the convening of the Washington Oil Summit (February 1974) to create a consumer coalition, the curtailment of common energy policy and so forth revealed that the EEC did not have the means to match its ambitions: the Copenhagen Summit finally reached a minimal consensus on the Israeli-Arab conflict and buried its vague illusions of becoming a major actor in the international arena.

It is in this context that the Global Mediterranean Policy emerged. It was the result of a French initiative put forth by President Pompidou and his Foreign Affairs Minister, Michel Jobert. It followed American dictates on the evolution of the North Atlantic Treaty Organ-

ization (NATO), the Middle East and the unilateral trade concessions envisaged for the Mediterranean Non-Member Countries (MNCs) and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). [Recall that the Nixon Round of negotiations on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was underway: the Americans were questioning the legality of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the unilateral trade preferences].

Thanks to the support of Germany and then Great Britain, France strategically fell back on its geographical neighbourhood with a view to tip the EEC balance towards the south, fostering the Latin world by encouraging Spain's accession, maintaining preferential ties with the Maghreb and keeping a minor role for Europe in the Middle East. In order to round out the project, France had had a document adopted on European identity that was intended to be "Europe's rejoinder to America".

In this look back on history, you will have observed that Europe's Mediterranean policy is based on a doctrine prioritising energy security and the maintenance of economic ties with former colonies. This doctrine has evolved according to external threats and the internal balance between the Atlanticists and the Europhiles. The changes in direction experienced (Barcelona was one of them) were the result of external developments or merely hiccups of History.

By way of example, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the debt crisis and illegal immigration led Europe to adopt a Renovated Mediterranean Policy (RMP). This stage of development of the Mediterranean Dialogue, prompted by Abel Matutes, coincided with the era of structural adjustments, the Washington Consensus and threats of social instability in the South Mediterranean Region. It was also the period when the European Parliament was created to defend human rights, universal liberties and democracy. The inclusion of political dialogue on the RMP agenda was motivated by the concern expressed by the European legislator. The progression of multilateral trade negotiations in the Uruguay Round likewise put pressure on the EU to review the restrictions imposed on textiles and agricultural produce imported from the MNCs.

The need to make Mediterranean Policy evolve towards a more ambitious partnership system was increasingly being felt both in the North and the South. Morocco and Spain were the spearheads of this movement. The European Parliament's rejection of Morocco-EEC and Syria-EEC financial protocols due to purported human rights abuses was to accelerate the regional dynamic. The freezing by Morocco of fishery negotiations with Spain at a time when the Felipe González regime was gearing up for elections and Aznar's party looked like the front-runner increased the Spanish desire to advance in the Mediterranean sphere.

Terrorist attacks committed in Paris in this same period made a revision of Europe's Mediterranean options urgent. The conclusion of the Oslo Accords and the imminent election of President Chirac created conditions favourable to such an exercise.

After the threat of an interruption in Arab oil delivery in 1973 and the threat of political and social instability following the debt crisis, it was the Islamist terrorist menace that would lend the European extreme right arguments to redouble its attacks against European societal values, threatening the balance of the European political landscape. It was becoming urgent to act by dealing with pockets of poverty and exclusion that could constitute a source of destabilisation of political regimes and swell the ranks of the terrorists having chosen to live in Europe in order to then swarm to Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. This approach, certainly not devoid of naiveté, was to deeply mark the genesis of the Barcelona Process.

It is thus with these threats in the background that Abel Matutes took a stance (March-April 1992), not stopping until he obtained from the Commission, the Council and the Parliament the authorisations necessary for relaunching the Mediterranean project on a basis of an acquis of extensive consultation and dialogue maintained with the main actors concerned. These consultations began in Rabat at a meeting between Mr. Matutes and Abdellatif Filali during the course of which the foundations of the Barcelona Process were outlined. Indeed, the political dressing needed to be found that would allow the European Parliament to revise its negative vote on the financial protocol and allow Morocco to resume fisheries negotiations with Spain. It was, moreover, on this occasion that Morocco again proposed the start of negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The first time this idea was mentioned was in October 1983, during preliminary negotiations for adopting the 1976 Cooperation Agreements relative to the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC.

And we all know the rest: the European Council at Corfu, the Lisbon Summit, Manuel Marin's entry into office, the Cannes Summit, and so forth, until the Barcelona Declaration.

This glance back on Euro-Mediterranean history allows us to glean precious information with which to dis-

sect the genesis of Mediterranean Policy and understand, in particular, the stage that brought us from Barcelona in 1995 to Paris in 2008:

- The centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It paces the terms of the Mediterranean dialogue, sets the tone for negotiations and serves as an alibi for slowing down the dynamic of reforms, a pretext to stall for time, and often, a legitimate reason for questioning the aims of the peace and security dialogue.
- The role of non-Mediterranean actors in exerting positive or negative influence on the course of affairs: yesterday, the USA and USSR; today, China and Iran as well.
- Energy as a major imperative, although often implicit, in the positions of the different stakeholders in the Mediterranean dialogue: Arab solidarity, whether real or fictional, does not allow what goes on between the EU and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCG) on the one hand, and the South Mediterranean Countries on the other, to remain airtight.
- Europe's difficulty in declaring a common position vis-à-vis its neighbours to the south, not only on the Middle East conflict, but also on other conflicts that threaten regional stability and on commercial issues, such as agriculture, oil tax policies and services, or on migratory policies, and so on.
- The heterogeneity of the Arab World as measured by differentiated options regarding political, economic and social governance, alliances and strategic obeisance (positions with regard to the USA), positions on regional integration, etc. This factor explains the near impossibility of finding a joint South Shore approach vis-à-vis the EU for a credible project to establish collective, strategic ties with Europe.
- The Euro-Mediterranean project is therefore having a hard time making its transition to a multilateral approach and setting a deadline for the hegemony of the bilateral approach. The reminders of the colonial era, the misunderstandings with regard to Islam and the sensitivity of bilateral contentions between neighbours in the South relegate Europe to defensive positions or ones of formal neutrality in the name of the sacrosanct principles of equidistance and the status quo.
- The absence of cross-compliance in implementing economic aspects of the Mediterranean Partnership and the difficulties of enforcing it in the name of the principle of non-interference, much to the annoyance of the European Left in Parliament.
- Europe's power of negotiation is significant wherever it can demonstrate common policies. This is the case for the commercial facet of the Association Agreements, for development funding. In all other spheres, Europe has a hard time translating its status of economic power into a power of tried influence. Whether regarding migration policies, commitments in the name of regional security, counterterrorism or sustainable development, Europe's voice carries less weight than others. The tragedy of Gaza, Israel's destruction of Palestinian infrastructures funded by the EU, illustrate this situation well.
- The initiative has always come from Europe in all phases of the Process. The South Mediterranean shore has often remained on the defensive, limiting itself to reacting and acceding in order to test the ground. The rare Arab initiatives (Algeria's proposal for a long-term energy agreement in 1974, Arab League peace plans and the like) did not have the desired repercussion. The same situation prevailed at the time of the UfM's genesis.
- Non-governmental actors were purportedly only involved sporadically in the chancelleries' initiatives. The private sector, civil society actors and elected party leaders observed Mediterranean Policy from afar. This democratic and popular deficit was to have a significant effect on the policy's evolution, its contents and the level of its ambitions.

These lessons and remarks shed light on the ideological foundations of European approaches from their origins to the present. They are based on relatively simple principles:

1. Global Mediterranean Policy was based on the idea that Europe's energy dependence is so great that it cannot neglect to concern itself with the political stability of traditional sources of energy supply as a priority issue. Maintaining the trade dependence of certain member states of the Arab League, ensuring the trade links inherited from the colonial period while preserving the acquired economic rent were essential. The ideal instrument to do so was obvious: unilateral trade preferences. These preferences would not be extended to the

agricultural sector beyond what Protocol 1/7 (annex to the Treaty of Rome) authorised. The vote of the agricultural lobby was and remains so strong that the producing Member States' margins for manoeuvring were symbolic. Moreover, unilateral preferences were a sign of the times. The theory put forth by Singer and Prebish (the founder of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development - UNCTAD) on the deterioration of the terms of exchange between the North (the centre) and the South (the periphery) largely inspired the Eurocracy of the European Commission's Directorate General on Development (DG VIII) at this time. Commitments relating to development aid were materialised in financial protocols unilaterally decided by Europe. This aid was associated with the purchase of European Community goods and services –that went without saying.

2. The RMP acknowledged the limits of this North-South model of relations, dominated by a Third-Worldist vision encouraged by the consequences of the Cold War. The emergence of the Washington Consensus, the progression of negotiations at the Uruguay Round and so forth had thus motivated Europe to lend a new dimension to its vision of the partnership with the South. Upon taking a closer look, it becomes clear that the paradigms have not evolved to any significant degree. Europe has limited itself to anticipating the results of multilateral trade negotiations to relax restrictions imposed on trade with preferential Partners of the South Shore. It has moreover been riding the wave of cross-compliances imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) when financing structural adjustment programmes, thus starting to get involved in the process of formulating economic and financial policies for its southern Partners. This is why it increased its financial aid to come to the rescue of payment balances for Partners experiencing difficulties (Turkey, Morocco, Algeria) following successive oil price shocks. Prevailing public opinion in Europe did not allow it to go any further. The unemployment resulting from the economic crisis and its corollary, the reduction of migratory flows, did not allow Member States to meet the South's demands. At the very most, it expanded the spectrum of development cooperation to cover new sectors (environment, urban development, energy projects, etc.). On either side of the Mediterranean, however, it was quite clear that the heritage of the post-colonial era needed to be put away in the cupboard of History.
3. The Barcelona Process, demonstrating remarkable ideological continuity, attempted to cross the bilateral Rubicon and foster a new dynamic in the Mediterranean project. Europe had slightly departed from its concern of not frontally offending the sensitive sovereign nations. In the name of the struggle against violent Islam and the preparation of the era of peace in the Mediterranean, it had the audacity to insert clear political commitments to democratic governance respecting human rights, fundamental liberties and so forth into the Barcelona Declaration. Although not equipped with any particular sanctions or cross-compliances, this new line represented remarkable progress for the Mediterranean set. It namely corresponds to the demands that were expressed at the Civil Forum held in Barcelona before the Summit of Heads of State and Government. Although the theories of Wallenstein, Chomsky and all the ideologues of alter-globalisation predominated in these demands, yet no-one could be impervious to the strong demands for modernity and reforms expressed by the civil society representatives of the Mediterranean community, with women at their head. It is also true that the post-Oslo euphoria licensed all utopias and allowed boundless speculation on the dividends of peace. The offer for free trade in exchange for commitment to political liberalisation, along with the appropriate financial aid, most definitely constitutes the foundation of the Barcelona Process.

The breakdown of the peace process froze political dialogue on regional peace and security. The economic basket created some positive acquis: the macroeconomic situation has improved significantly on the South Shore. These acquis, however, remain insufficient as regards the human development gap between the two shores and the employment challenges to be met: 40 million jobs need to be created over the next two decades. The question then arises of whether the foundation of the Barcelona Process is pertinent. In other words, is the reciprocal opening of markets sufficient to bring about virtuous postures on economic and political governance in the South? Does it allow the level of competitiveness of its economies to increase and trigger internal energies in relative hibernation that will accelerate the pace of growth?

The following subsidiary question remains: has the EU actually completed its institutional construction before attempting to metamorphose into a global actor in a multi-polar world? Will the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty be enough for Europe to play a new score in the concert of nations and provide its economy, ill treated by an unparalleled crisis, with the required therapies (demographic crisis effects, financing for the social model…)?

The replies to these questions and many others will determine the UfM's capacity to rise to a Mediterranean filled with challenges.

The Union for the Mediterranean, as conceived by President Sarkozy in his October 2007 speech in Tangiers, probably constituted the first ideological rupture in the long trajectory of Europe's Mediterranean policies. This rupture was all the more audacious, as it intervened in a historical context where the consequences of 9/11 had not yet faded. To paraphrase Mr. Arkoun, "*Islam and the West have polarised the task of building the imaginary of the Other. The Islamic and Arab-Islamic demonization of the West is answered, in a dialectic of conflict, by the construction of the enemy Islam in the [Western] imaginary."*

The predominant European discourse on migration issues still bears the stigma of the Arab and Ottoman invasions, and tends to accredit the idea that Muslim populations cannot be assimilated by Europe.

President Sarkozy thus addressed two communities that have different cultural referents and interpret concepts such as security or shared prosperity in different manners.

For Europe, which has nevertheless turned the pages of the Crusades and colonisation and has separated Religion and State, attaining the objective of security in the Mediterranean Region involves a cooperative approach based on shared responsibility.

In the South, as Georges Corm indicates, "*the models of the collective imaginary remain fixed on a past of glory and suffering, idealised or made legendary; there is no future except in a return to lost grandeur… The Middle East has retreated into a model of 'regressive temporality.'"* The historic confrontational tendency remains the referent allowing interpretation of the Gulf Wars, the creation of Israel, the fear of a globalisation dominated by American cultural imperialism, and so forth.

Thus, Europe, in the eyes of the South, should turn into a political power, depart from its "tendency to have double standards" and get more involved in the Middle East in order to restore international lawfulness. It should also demonstrate regret for its errors committed during the colonial era.

Aware of these misunderstandings and reciprocal mistrust, Sarkozy had proposed not to build the Union for the Mediterranean *"on the premise that sons atone for the sins of their fathers. We won't build the Mediterranean Union on the premise of repentance [...]. We will build the Mediterranean Union, as Europe's union was built, on the basis of a political determination stronger than the memory of the suffering, on the basis of the conviction that the future counts for more than the past. […] Wanting the Mediterranean Union doesn't mean wanting to erase history [...].*

This vision in and of itself constituted a psychological rupture *"with attitudes, ways of thinking, playing safe, a state of mind opposed to audacity and courage."*

This rupture was needed in order for a new project to emerge that would be structured on the following premises:

- A geographic area of action that would transcend the Mare Nostrum to engender Eurafrica.
- A pragmatic Union whose geometry would vary according to the different projects.
- The Union would begin with sustainable development, energy, transport and water.
- Its priorities would be culture, education, health, human capital, justice and the struggle against inequality to become the largest laboratory in the world on co-development.

Upon analysis, it is clear that this vision constituted a methodological rupture and a change in the manner of institutional decision-making in the EU. Conflicts were to be set aside and the realisation of joint projects undertaken, with the accession of countries considering they had an interest in the project. In sum, the political status quo was lauded, work was to be done in collaboration with the regimes in power and there were no risks taken that would destabilise the balances attained: they constituted the only effective ramparts against the extremisms and excesses of political Islam. Moreover, the UfM is open to accession by the countries along the Mediterranean coast. The other members, that is, the non-coastal EU Member States, shall have observer status only. The European Commission is also to be involved in this initiative.

Developments between October 2007, the 13 July 2008 Summit in Paris and the present reveal the limits of strategies of rupture, the resistance existing to reform, and the persistence of misunderstandings.

The return to the ideology dominating the Mediterranean Process since the 1967 War was nearly automatic in the Union for the Mediterranean. The tragic events of Gaza remind us once more that words and concepts do not always have the same meaning or the same emotional charge on one shore as on the other.

The ideological development work carried out by Europe continues to run up against a wall made of suspicion and mistrust. One cannot associate with a demonised Westerner without certain preliminaries that make it 'respectable' to the eyes of certain sectors of public opinion in the South.

Perhaps placing priority on the economic and commercial basket and improving sectoral dialogue is a subconscious attempt to give things time. Time for the South Shore to mature culturally and ideologically, to pacify its internal relations and begin undertaking the process of regional integration.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict appears as an urgent issue, a prerequisite and the ideal path towards putting into practice Sarkozy's audacious, courageous vision, which is not devoid of a necessary utopian ideal.

At the point when the UfM institutions are to be established, one can only hope that the EU and its partners to the south will lend these structures (the Secretariat) the political mandate and the human and material means for them to start breaking the wall of suspicion separating the two shores. Organising the Mediterranean catharsis in a context of a worldwide economic crisis, a crisis of values, political doubts and the decline of the Nation-State is more salutary than ever. It is in this context that a number of independent spirits have called for a Mediterranean Conference along the lines of the one held in Helsinki to manage our reciprocal misunderstandings and foster peace. Operating in parallel with the UfM's economic project, it would facilitate the UfM's realisation and would launch the popular dynamic that has been so lacking to European initiatives in the Mediterranean Region to date.

THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) was instituted in Naples on 3 December 2003 by decision of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference. Its predecessor was the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum, which was established in 1997 by the Members of European Parliament (EP) in order to develop inter-institutional relations on the parliamentary level. The first three Forums were convened in Brussels, Belgium, and the fourth in Bari, Italy (June 2002), where the objective was to prepare the ground for the establishment of a genuine Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and for the drafting of the Assembly's rules of procedure. The conversion of the Forum into the Assembly was proposed in an EP resolution and approved in Valencia at the 5th Euro-Mediterranean Conference. After it was instituted, the EMPA opened its proceedings in Vouliagmeni (Greece) on 22-23 March 2004.

Organised into national delegations and EP delegations, the EMPA meets once a year for an ordinary plenary session. It is comprised by a total of 280 members, the majority parliamentarians from the EU, whether from the EP or the national parliaments of the EU Member States and the founding Mediterranean Partner Countries. The EMPA's Bureau has four members, two of whom are appointed by the national parliaments of the Mediterranean Partner Countries, one by the national EU parliaments and one by the EP. They serve a four-year term in office and assume the Assembly Presidency on a year-long, rotational basis in order to guarantee parity between the North and South components. The three other members exercise the role of Vice-Presidents. From 2008 to 2012, the Bureau shall be comprised of the Parliaments of Germany, Jordan, Italy and Morocco. From March 2008 to March 2009, the Presidency shall be held by Hans-Gert Pöttering, of Germany, with Jordan, Italy and Morocco holding the Vice-Presidencies, these positions rotating on the subsequent year, and so forth.

Structurally, it is comprised of four standing committees and one ad hoc committee: the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights; the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education; the Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture; the Committee on Women's Rights; and the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy and Environment.

Playing a consultative role, the EMPA provided parliamentary impetus, input and support for the consolidation and development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in its first stage. In its second stage, it expresses its views on all issues relating to the Partnership, including the implementation of Association Agreements. In addition, it adopts non-binding resolutions or recommendations addressed to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference.

Indeed, many entities can secure permanent observer status for meetings: representatives of national parliaments of Mediterranean countries that are not part of the EU nor the Barcelona Process; representatives of national parliaments of non-Mediterranean countries that are not applying for accession to the EU, provided negotiations or discussions with a view to accession have been officially opened; the consultative and financial bodies of the Barcelona Process; and parliamentary and intergovernmental organisations of a regional nature who apply for such status. Permanent observers have the right to the floor.

According to the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of 13 July 2008, the EMPA shall be the legitimate parliamentary expression of the Union for the Mediterranean. Heads of State and Government strongly support strengthening the role of the EMPA in its relations with Mediterranean partners.

Further information at:
www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/