

Barcelona II: towards a Renewed Commitment?

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Barcelona II is just a few months away. Having been one of the instigators (or at least one of the sympathisers) of the movement which at the time generated a vast amount of hope and triggered so much genuine enthusiasm among the Mediterranean political elite (although more on the South shore than on the North), I now find myself wondering, among many other things, what we have done with the wealth of confidence which public opinion on both sides of the Mediterranean placed in us.

Have we fulfilled all the different hopes expressed in that memorable Civil Forum in Barcelona? How can we take stock, with complete objectivity, of these ten years of intense intergovernmental activity, conducted in the context of the Barcelona Agenda? If we could bring together again the authors of the Barcelona Declaration, would they still write it the same way?

While maintaining the necessary detachment, and without falling into an all-too-easy outright condemnation of the whole process, mingled with a series of embittered criticisms of the results of a whole decade of activity, I would like to invite you to take a fresh look at the record of such a vast project. I will do so as a simple citizen of the Mediterranean, discarding any of the trappings of official status I may enjoy.

1. Re-reading the Declaration, ten years after it was adopted, leaves me feeling totally at ease with its contents. It would be difficult to challenge the general structure of the text, the common

values it represents and the unanimously-agreed positions it adopts. Each declared objective is relevant and constitutes a response to a genuine problem. I will therefore not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

2. On the other hand, we have to admit that there have been serious shortcomings in the management of Euro-Mediterranean political dialogue. Politicians on either side of the Mediterranean never managed to get public opinion interested in the project. Nor were they able to dispel the shadow cast by the breakdown of the Middle East peace process over all the grand designs enshrined at Barcelona. Most of the intergovernmental political meetings were dominated by sterile debates concerning this major issue. The attempts made to involve business, cultural figures and women in this project proved to be at best rhetorical, and certainly inadequate in relation to the demands voiced by non-governmental bodies.
3. The signals sent out by the EU were never convincing enough for the peoples of the South. The way security issues were managed (particularly the anti-terrorist aspect), the positions adopted towards racism and xenophobia, the parsimony in granting visas and the ambiguity of politicians' attitudes towards Islam all led to a psychological fracture whose effects are not wholly visible yet. These factors, added to the EU's marginal role in taking responsibility for the Palestinian issue, led some sections of public opinion to question the relevance of seeking closer alignment with Europe and the underlying social model that such a choice would represent.

4. Too positive a picture was painted of the Barcelona Process. The editorial line encapsulated in joint statements, joint press releases and legal documents gave and continues to give a virtual image of constant progress which the ordinary citizen finds impossible to relate to the realities of everyday life. Advances in democracy and the area of freedoms in the South are too slow, compared with the commitments undertaken by both sides in November 1995. The results of economic growth, the attractiveness of direct foreign investment and improvements in the overall competitiveness have fallen short of initial hopes. The gulf between the two shores of the Mediterranean has grown wider in all areas. The experiences of macro-economic adjustment, which in reality are all encouraging signs in themselves, have been interpreted negatively by public opinion. The public sees in these experiences a sacrifice that has been unfairly shared out and an increased deterioration in social development indicators. (The classification of the countries on the southern side of the Mediterranean in the world human development indicators index is a perfect illustration of this feeling of despair). Symptomatic of this is the general tendency to hold the EU, rich and opulent, responsible for the governance deficit which is so bitterly criticised. In addition to the vicissitudes of shared history, which are often invoked, there is a line of thought pointing the finger at European "complacency" in the face of the mediocre performance of the Southern partners. Appeals making scarcely disguised references to a duty to intervene demonstrate the dramatic state

BARCELONA PLUS: TOWARDS A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRATIC STATES

EuroMeSCo was asked to draft a report on the ten years of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), analysing what it has achieved so far and defining priorities for the future in the political and human dimensions. From this report, presented on 28th February by Abdallah Saaf and Álvaro de Vasconcelos to representatives of the governments which are members of this partnership, four main conclusions can be drawn.

The Importance of Barcelona

The first conclusion that can be derived from the report is the enormous relevance enjoyed by the Barcelona Declaration and the commitments by its signatories to “develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems.” Potentially, in the Barcelona experience there is already present the idea of the construction of an area founded simultaneously on democracy and on the refusal to legitimise the use of force between neighbouring countries or, which comes to the same thing, the idea of the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States. Those who declare that there is no need to revise the declaration, but that what is truly important is to implement it, are right. During its approximately ten years of existence, the references made to the declaration’s content have been rare, and it has to a great extent been ignored by the governments as well as by the civil societies of both sides of the Mediterranean. The first objective of Barcelona 2005 should not be solely to reaffirm clearly and unequivocally the declaration’s content, but also to adopt the measures needed to turn its ambitions into realities. This means, first of all, accepting the primacy of the fundamental values, both in the Member States’ internal systems and in the refusal to use force to impose a country’s will. This reaffirmation of values takes on even greater importance when we note that the achievements of almost ten years of collaboration demonstrate that we are still very far from the objectives set in the realm of political reform and regional integration. Although doubts are starting to be cast on authoritarianism by the majority, in many countries democracy is still not a goal that has been clearly adopted. On the other hand, the Agadir Process has made its first steps towards South-South integration and sub-regional cooperation in the Maghreb, and in the Middle East has become paralysed by the persistent tensions

which the Partnership has been unable to address. The objective of creating a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area by 2010 runs the risk of not being achieved. The responsibility for this lies with those on both sides of the Mediterranean. At the end of the day, at the root of it is chiefly the shared belief that was already present in 1995, concerning the imperative need to curb radical Islamic fundamentalism, even if the price to be paid were the stagnation of the political systems. Now the need arises to, on the one hand, share responsibility in order to put reforms into practice and, on the other hand, provide support for this process.

Prioritising Democracy

The Barcelona Process has focused on the idea that it is possible to achieve a high level of political convergence starting from a process of economic reform and liberalisation of access to the markets. Human rights, the rule of law, and, in due course, democracy will be the logical result of economic development, as also will security and the containing of migration. The report by EuroMeSCo casts doubt upon this assumption and ends by saying that, although there is a relationship between democracy and economic development, it is not a sequential one and that each issue ought to be handled on its own terms. In the view of the report’s authors, democracy and fundamental rights must now be treated as a central issue by the Partnership. It is necessary to get rid of the existing perception in significant sectors of the societies of the South that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is an initiative which protects the *status quo*. This does not mean, on the other hand, suspending the support currently given to the gradual reform processes already taking place within these societies. The Partnership is now faced with a series of initiatives, mainly from North America, which have the aim of a political reform of the region. These initiatives have had contradictory effects: they both place the reforms on the international agenda and create a huge resistance to the so-called “democratic interventionism.” The Partnership must show that it has effective answers to the questions mentioned above, since if it does not, not only will it lose relevance but it will become progressively more marginalised and lose support and legitimacy. The central importance of the Partnership is not a product of any diplomatic declaration,

although such declarations have their importance, but of its ability to respond effectively and consistently to the aspirations of the peoples of the Maghreb and the Mashreq and to win the support of the Europeans. To achieve this, it is vital that it is consistent in its objectives – that it perseveres with the Barcelona Declaration – as well as in its initiatives, which should always embody the universal values on which the European Union itself is founded. The Neighbourhood Policy which the European Union is proposing to its neighbours to the South and East is more ambitious than the Partnership in that: it is a project for a common destiny, including the creation of a single market which envisages the four freedoms of movement, including the free movement of people. If the Partnership does not take these objectives on as its own, that is, if the objective which it seeks to achieve is not a single Euro-Mediterranean market based on democracy, then the bilateralism of the Neighbourhood Policy will gradually destroy the regional project that constitutes the Barcelona Process.

The Five Pillars of the Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States

According to the report by EuroMeSCo, the Community of Democratic States should be constructed on the basis of five fundamental pillars.

Democracy should be the central pillar, meaning the giving of active support to reforms, a greater development of civil society and inclusion within the process of all political sectors which forswear violence, including Islamists.

Inclusion within diversity should replace the concept of a dialogue of civilisations, which is based on the idea of a bipolar religious division which does not in fact exist. Inclusion within diversity focuses on the notion of “hospitality” and denies the vision of the “other” as intrinsically different, instead affirming its similarity and thus creating a much more appropriate framework with which to deal with the cultural questions.

Migration should stop being viewed from a security perspective. It is vital for migrants and their children to be seen as fundamental players, not only from an economic viewpoint but also in political terms.

Citizen security must be an essential aim for the partnership. It is important to guarantee that in this region individuals are protected from

being a target for violence, and to achieve this it will be necessary to guarantee their protection by developing a policy based on a close relationship between security and justice.

Social cohesion is the fifth pillar of the community. The creation of a free trade area should be accompanied, following the example of what is happening in Europe, by a funding framework enabling social cohesion and solidarity policies to be put into practice to mitigate its possible negative consequences. Promoting education, training, modernisation of management, creation of infrastructure, competitiveness and innovation are measures which require significant financial outlay on the part of the Union compatible with the ambition of the proposal to construct a Community of Democratic States. Such measures are a part of European shared responsibility.

Four Steps on the Road to 2015

Creating the Community of Democratic States means establishing an action plan and some intermediate goals, in which control of per-

formance is in the hands of the partnership's ministers (through six-monthly meetings). Four steps are essential:

Setting by joint agreement a precise deadline that is, applying the European method which made it possible to create the Single European Market and the single currency. EuroMeSCo proposes that it should become a full reality by 2015, meaning that there will be a ten-year period in which to make the reforms needed.

Including the objectives of the Neighbourhood Policy in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and differentiating the East from the South. The Neighbourhood Policy should be made part of the EMP, but the objectives, action methods and resources which should be applied in relation to the East and in relation to the South should be different. Finally, the countries of the East have as an objective full membership of the European Union, while the goal of the countries of the South is the creation of the Community of Democratic States.

Joint taking of responsibility. A project of

this nature can only come to fruition if responsibility is shared between all the countries involved, which necessarily entails resolving the institutional asymmetry. An immediate step could be the creation of a joint presidency of the North-South partnership and the involvement of officials from the South in the work of the Commission and the Council.

Convincing elites and public opinion. One of the partnership's main problems is the lack of information, especially in the sphere of civil society. Making the partnership visible means, first of all, giving it substance in all fields and at the same time implies that the greatest possible number of sectors are involved in the process, which will only be possible by removing red tape and clearly identifying all the initiatives that enjoy its support.

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of uncertainty and the total absence of prospects which certain Arab societies are experiencing today.

5. In Europe's internal political debate, these concerns and these passionate symptoms do not register as they should. The Mediterranean issue, overshadowed by debates on enlargement and the European Constitution, is not a priority concern. It has to be said that there was little time for the Mediterranean either during the European Parliament elections or at the Convention which produced the draft constitution submitted for approval by the Member States. What is more, the political arguments which focused on the issue of Turkey's accession had an additional detrimental effect on the South. The passions aroused by this issue, which do not necessarily correspond to an economic or cultural proximity between Turkey and its neighbours in the South, was interpreted as a rejection of Islam by the EU and as confirmation of its image as an economic, social and spiritual fortress.
6. The strategic alternative embodied in the Maghreb project is considered, at best, to be a pious wish. The slow-

ness of the process of normalisation between Morocco and Algeria, the impasse on the Sahara issue and the absence of concrete achievements in Maghreb trade are keeping the prevalent pessimism alive. The discretion which surrounded the Agadir process and the qualified reception given in business circles to this eminently strategic initiative have only made the general atmosphere even more morose.

7. The transatlantic rivalry concerning the Mediterranean fosters confusion in people's minds and complicates action by leaders from the South in the geopolitical sphere. Each gesture, each choice is questioned and challenged. The Free Trade Agreement signed by Morocco with the USA is a perfect illustration of the nervousness of the region's geo-strategical actors and their inability to construct a model of relations which, while respecting the sovereign choices of nation-states, would foster inter-regional synergies and contribute to a concerted and consistent assumption of responsibility for the globalisation of trade. The respective positions on Iraq are also

another concrete example of strategic conflict between North and South and inside each camp. In the light of these various events we can understand the reasons for the failure of the negotiations over the security charter in Marseille in 2002.

How can we interpret these feelings and the lack of belief in a project which is as fundamental for peace, security and shared prosperity as this one is? What explanation can there be for the failure of such laudable intentions and such a generous approach to overcome doubt and unwillingness?

1. We must first remember that the Barcelona Process is almost exclusively intergovernmental. Right from the start the unwillingness of some Southern countries to involve the various sectors of society in the process created an atmosphere in which future discouragement was only too predictable. In addition, national parliamentary bodies made unequal contributions towards the validation of the choices and options contained in the Declaration which their governments

had adopted. It was thus impossible to achieve popular acceptance and legitimisation of the concepts underpinning the process.

2. The gulf in status between EU countries and 'associate countries' creates a feeling of exclusion and injustice with regard to the distribution of EU handouts. Free trade looks more and more like a sacrifice (to be made in terms of unemployment) in order to satisfy Europe's predatory commercial appetites.
3. The Barcelona Declaration, however valid it may be, has run out of steam and has no strategic perspective to offer. It was supposed to create dreams in the North as well as in the South. The new Neighbourhood Policy, especially its slogan ("everything but institutions"), has not been properly understood and will not be able to redress the prevailing pessimism. In the opinion of many observers, the EU, for all its habitual rhetoric, is in fact preparing an escape route. This project further reveals the bilateral and intergovernmental nature of the EU's traditional approach. It makes timid references to the taboo subject of immigration (in terms of the citizens' right to freedom of movement) while pulling out the old chestnut of liberalisation of agricultural trade. The European Neighbourhood Policy is perceived in the South as the logical consequence of the enlargement of the EU, but is received very unfavourably, because it was not subjected to the same consultation process which preceded the Conference of 1995, and because it has been introduced according to the mechanical logic of the pre-enlargement period, but without having the same attractions.
4. Barcelona leaves the US no space or room for manoeuvre. However, Southern countries would prefer to avoid having to make a choice between a rock and a hard place each time they make a strategic or tactical move. They can understand this situation even less when they observe American omnipresence in the Mediterranean and the peaceful and fruitful dialogue within NATO between Europe, the US and some non-EU Mediterranean countries.
5. Euromed's private partners are not

very interested in the project. Their coldness towards the South, contrasted with their future ambitions and the transactions already under way in Eastern Europe, are obvious symptoms of this fact. In their view there is no solution within the context of the current partnership to the accumulated grounds for complaint with regard to the South (insecurity of economic transactions, a legal system without proper independence, instability of the rules of the game, etc.)

Given these uncertainties and an observable lethargy, what do we do?

1. First of all we must preserve the achievements of Barcelona I:
 - It had the merit of being the only political forum uniting the entire Southern shore of the Mediterranean and all of Europe, so we must preserve its spirit;
 - It led to a process of economic modernisation, with Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan leading the way, but also to ten years of a widening gap between the first and last arrivals. We must consolidate economic modernisation;
 - Euromed's financial aspect, in spite of its imperfections, means that the EU remains by far the major lender of public funds and the major pole of economic attraction for the Mediterranean basin.
 - Many Euro-Mediterranean networks have been set up in all fields and are a vast resource for the transfer of expertise.
2. We must solemnly acknowledge the common destiny of Europe and the Mediterranean and formulate this destiny into a declaration of principles which will define the outlines of our future society, as part of which common measures will be implemented.
3. In order to fulfil this common destiny we will need to establish a higher level of institutional organisation. Clearly, we need to state the relevance of creating, in the long term, a Mediterranean Community, with a permanent secretariat, parliament (in its first phase, consultative) and a regional development bank. These institutions will be the permanent and equally-representative tools for political and econom-

ic dialogue between the different governments and parliaments.

4. This would be a strong encouragement for the Maghreb countries to relaunch the AMU, as a collective negotiating tool for this new project and so that later it can become the motor of regional integration. This scenario of Maghreb relaunch from above should enable solutions to be found to the various regional conflicts in the context of a wider geopolitical perspective.
5. We need to organise a lively and autonomous dialogue between citizens (young people, women, unions, clubs, societies and cultural associations) without government interference, and to give a significant role to common cultural activity as a means of rapprochement between peoples.
6. We need to call for the launching of a huge programme of construction of infrastructures, which would have an impact on the development of the region and would be highly visible to the local population: a regional toll motorway network (Casablanca-Cairo), interconnected South-South and Euromed networks (telephone / ICTs, gas, electricity, etc.), public housing and related services (primary health, sanitation), water conservation and environmental protection.
7. Since the level of readiness of the various countries in the South is variable, a Community would need to be created which will, in its first phase, bring together countries able to undertake second generation commitments and to adhere to a plan for a future society, with a duty to provide results and to submit to collective discipline. This Community will enlarge to include other members as and when they are willing to take on board its existing laws and agreements. Meanwhile, the partnership with the EU will continue to be governed by Barcelona I and by the new Neighbourhood Policy.
8. Common policies conceivably forming part of the first phase would be to do with:
 - Security;
 - Concerted development of the Mediterranean agricultural area ;
 - Fisheries;
 - Energy;

- The economic divide and the knowledge economy;
- Institution building (capacity strengthening, democracy);
- Infrastructure (harmonisation of projects, alternative funding);
- Standards and the trade in services;
- The regulation of migratory flows.

As presented here, this project might appear ambitious. However, its relevance can only be assessed when measured against the challenges facing this part

of the world, which remains one of the major areas of instability in planetary political and security terms.

We should remind ourselves that up until 2050, according to the many available studies of future prospects, the active population in Europe will decrease by an average of 1% annually. Over the same period the population of the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, at present growing at a rate of 3%, will fall by less than 1%.

The prospective growth in GDP in the EU is not likely to exceed 1%, because

of the ageing population. In the South, economic performance will scarcely be better: 2% per year.

These scenarios are not viable. Putting the mechanical effects of growth together with the weakness of natural resources (shortage of water, desertification, exhaustion of energy potential), we can clearly see the extent of the systemic risks inherent in the Mediterranean area. By the same token, we can also clearly see the eminently strategic character of an alliance of countries around the Mediterranean.