

Foreword

Senén Florensa

Executive President

European Institute of the Mediterranean (Barcelona)

This is the twentieth edition of the IEMed's Mediterranean Yearbook. Throughout these twenty editions we have seen how the world, and with it the Mediterranean, has undergone spectacular transformations. We have witnessed advances and setbacks, opportunities and vanishing hopes, revolutions and counter-revolutions, the fall of dictators and the rise of new authoritarianisms, new wars (in Libya, Syria, Ukraine...), entrenched conflicts, economic crises, recoveries and new crises, failed states or states on the verge of collapse, European enlargements, but also Brexit and the very idea of Europe endangered by the advance of populism and ultra-nationalism. All this has directly determined Euro-Mediterranean relations and the region's development.

For the past twenty years, the IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook has dealt with the situation in the region and Euro-Mediterranean relations from a dual perspective. On the one hand, immediate issues, conflicts, the economic situation, political decisions and relations between countries through the events of the year in question... and on the other, issues that are just as important but less linked to the immediate course of events, issues that require long-term reflection and analysis with the future of the region in mind. The Yearbook has thus been structured in all its editions as a tool to explain reality and, at the same time, to foresee the challenges that the region will face. Twenty years ago, we were already dealing with issues closely linked to current affairs such as conflicts, the economic and political situation of countries, agreements, migration, etc., but also issues such as water, energy, the en-

vironment, women's rights, economic reform, religion, and the like.

Traditionally, the Yearbook has straddled the waters of the immediate and the important, trying to shed light from both points of view. The evolution of these years has shown us how some of these important aspects have moved to the level of the urgent and immediate, such as the climate emergency, with the Mediterranean region emerging as one of the areas where its effects could be the most devastating.

Twenty years ago, the war in Iraq dominated international geopolitics while the Mediterranean watched with concern as the EU's eastward enlargement could affect Euro-Mediterranean relations. Today, eastern Europe determines not only Euro-Mediterranean relations but also international geopolitics, with the return of war to European territory. Hence, this issue's *Dossier* is dedicated to the Mediterranean ramifications of the war in Ukraine. In this *Dossier*, several articles analyse these ramifications from different perspectives, with two blocks of articles corresponding to two different approaches: one geographical and the other sectoral. Following an article focused on the transformation of the international order after the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it analyses the Russian presence in the region, the role and effects of the conflict on European foreign policy and its influence on relations with Mediterranean countries, and in parallel, how the positioning of these countries has affected their relations with the EU. This section is rounded off with an article on Turkey's geopolitical role in the conflict and the reordering of its international alliances.

At the sectoral level, the *Dossier* analyses the impact of the war on the Euro-Mediterranean energy sector, both in terms of the reconfiguration of European energy relations and the impact on southern

and eastern Mediterranean countries, for both producing and importing States. Other articles deal with the impact on food security or public opinion in Arab countries. Moreover, the consequences of the invasion of Ukraine are dealt with throughout the Yearbook, both in geographic and sectoral terms.

Complementing the *Dossier's* geopolitical thread, the first theme of the yearbook's *Keys* section focuses on China's presence in the Mediterranean. China's economic presence in the Mediterranean is undoubtable and has been addressed in previous editions. This edition also includes an article on China's foreign policy in the Mediterranean in the context of the war in Ukraine and China's military influence in the region, an aspect that will grow in importance over the coming years as a result of China's increasing interests in the region.

The second of the *Keys* is also a theme that has been present in successive editions of the yearbook, as it is a fundamental element of Euro-Mediterranean relations: migration and the EU's external borders. In recent years it has become even more important, especially with the rise of extreme right-wing parties in Europe and their traditional political instrumentalization of migration on the one hand, and transit countries' use of migration as a tool to pressure the EU on the other. The security perspective on migration currently determines a large part of Euro-Mediterranean relations, which is why this edition analyses the EU's migration policies and the relationship between migration and the failure of EU policies towards Africa.

The third of this edition's *Keys* focuses on the dual green and digital transition promoted by the European Union and its fit within the Mediterranean area. Four articles analyse the external dimension of the green transition, how digitalization is a key element for the green transition in the Mediterranean, the imperative need for these transitions given the region's vulnerability to climate change and, finally, the role of the energy transition in Mediterranean energy-producing countries.

Finally, the fourth of the *Keys* focuses on some of the multi-level crises that have marked recent Euro-Mediterranean dynamics. Thus, the four articles here address issues such as the rise of the extreme right in Europe; the debt crisis in the MENA region and the need for economic reforms to overcome them; the analysis of Mediterranean value chains

as a factor of economic growth and development; and how crises of economic models lead to social mobilizations and more authoritarian and repressive responses.

As in each edition, the *Panorama* section, structured around short, specific articles, provides a general mosaic of some of the most relevant issues in the Mediterranean area. In the first part, structured geographically, in addition to the traditional articles devoted to recent developments in the southern Mediterranean countries, there are also articles on topics such as EU enlargement and the Balkan countries, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the rhetoric of internal security in France, the uprisings in Iran, the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria on the African scene and an assessment of Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meetings.

The second part of the *Panorama* section, which is structured by sector, includes articles on the cyber-risks associated with the submarine cables crossing the Mediterranean Sea; the recovery of tourism after the pandemic in a context of climate crisis; the delicate economic situation in Egypt and its regional ramifications; green hydrogen; and the risk of environmental disasters in the region, among others. In addition, topics such as the role of Arab women's social mobilizations; Russian disinformation in the region in the context of the war in Ukraine; digitalization and migratory movements; and the global (and regional) reach of Turkish soap operas are also covered.

Lastly, it is worth highlighting the Yearbook's Annexes. The timelines, statistics and maps lend priority to information above all else. With the clear purpose of complementing the analyses offered by the articles, these selected data, indicators and information are the foundation on which the Yearbook is based and whose continuity provide an essential product for comprehending the evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean space.

In these twenty editions of the Yearbook, we have aimed to focus on the Mediterranean reality so that our readers, be they politicians, civil servants, officials, decision-makers, analysts, scholars or the general public, can advance their knowledge of the political, economic and social situation of a region that continues to determine, to a large extent, the future of world geopolitics. More than a thousand articles, thousands of statistics, indicators, maps

and graphs... Twenty years of exhaustive timelines, all this information and analysis (available on our website) leaves a wealth of knowledge that is essential for understanding the Mediterranean.

We would therefore like to thank all those who have made these twenty editions of the Yearbook possible: scholars, actors, politicians, journalists... who have shared their knowledge through the articles, but also the editorial team, the annex compilers, the collaborators, proofreaders, translators, typesetters, printers, the IEMed staff who, to a greater or lesser extent, from the fields of knowledge, communication or management, have made these twenty editions possible. They have all contributed, brick by brick, to the construction of this building. We would like to thank them all, for without them, this twenty-year journey through the Mediterranean would never have been possible.

The future is hardly rosy; we must be prepared to hold on to what we have achieved and make progress in social, economic and political improvements for the population. It is clear that progress will

not be easy, but it is still possible. The green transition will advance in the face of the impossibility of continuing with the current model and the catastrophes that threaten us, the digital transition is unstoppable and it will be fundamental not to leave no-one behind. Conflicts, wars, authoritarianism, lack of solidarity, inequality... all are present in day-to-day life in the Mediterranean. Every development brings new challenges, every conflict puts the Mediterranean under stress. The future of the region depends on the commitment of all its actors and on moving forward in regional cooperation without obstacles or hesitation; the last twenty years have taught us that, if we do not move forward together, improvements will be paltry. A vision of the future that is aware of the need to advance jointly and in solidarity is the only way to confront the emergencies we are experiencing.

We do not know where the future of the region will take us, but the IEMed and the Yearbook will continue to be there, discussing developments and providing relevant reflections and analysis.