

# 17 PAPERS IEMed.

joint series with EuroMeSCo



## The European Union and the Arab World: from the Rome Treaty to the Arab Spring

Bichara Khader

# IE Med.

European Institute of the Mediterranean

## **Consortium formed by:**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation  
Government of Catalonia  
Barcelona City Council

## **President:**

**Artur Mas**

President of the Government of Catalonia

## **Vice-Presidents:**

**José Manuel García-Margallo**

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

**Joana Ortega**

Vice-President of the Government of Catalonia

**Xavier Trias**

Mayor of Barcelona

## **President of the Executive Committee:**

**Senén Florensa**

## **Director General:**

**Andreu Bassols**

## **Board of Trustees:**

Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, BBVA  
Caixa d'Estalvis i Pensions de Barcelona  
Cambra de Comerç, Indústria i Navegació de Barcelona  
El Consorci. Zona Franca de Barcelona  
Endesa  
Iberia  
Telefónica  
Consell Interuniversitari de Catalunya

## **PapersIE Med.**

Published by the European Institute of the Mediterranean

Coordination: Pol Morillas

Proof-reading: Neil Charlton

Layout: Núria Esparza

ISSN: 1988-7981

Legal deposit: B-27445-2011

March 2013

On the occasion of the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference "Europe, the Mediterranean and the Arab Spring: Crisis as an Opportunity", held in Barcelona on 4th and 5th October 2012, distinguished analysts presented the results of their research on the new dynamics in the region following the Arab uprisings. Three major issues were explored: the internal dynamics of Arab countries and the role of civil society, the geostrategic consequences of the Arab Spring and the future of Euro-Mediterranean relations. This series of EuroMeSCo Papers brings together the revised research works presented during the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference.



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the AECID or the European Institute of the Mediterranean.

## CONTENTS

---

# The European Union and the Arab World: from the Rome Treaty to the Arab Spring

*Bichara Khader\**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PART 1: EUROPEAN POLICIES TOWARDS THE ARAB WORLD AND THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION (1957-2012)</b>	<b>10</b>
Euro-Arab Dialogue (1973-1989)	12
Multilateral-Bilateral Agreements	13
Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP)	14
Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1990-1996)	15
Specific Sub-Regional Relations	15
Multilateral Agreement with Sub-Regional Organisations: EU-Gulf Relations (1988-2012)	19
Going Back to the Multilateral-Bilateral Track in Euro-Mediterranean Relations (EMP-ENP-UfM)	22
Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) or Barcelona Process (1995)	23
European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (2004-2012)	26
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) (2007-2012)	29
Conclusion of Part 1	30

---

\*Director of the Arab Study and Research Center, University of Louvain, Belgium.

<b>PART 2: THE EU AND THE ARAB SPRING</b>	<b>32</b>
Introduction	33
European Response	34
Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean	35
A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: a Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)	36
Critical Comments on the Communications	36
The Instruments of the New European Approach	39
The EU as a Peace-Promoter	41
<b>GENERAL CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>44</b>

---

---

## Introduction

---

For many Europeans, the Arab World is seen, at best, as an oil well and a huge market and, at worst, as a turbulent and dangerous environment. Thus, access to oil, market penetration and security interests have largely driven European policies towards this region.

Under different denominations and umbrellas, European policies in the past 65 years have pursued the same objectives: energy, market and security. This has been the case of the Global Mediterranean Policy (1972-1992), the Euro-Arab Dialogue (1974-1989), the Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1990-1996), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995-2008), the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004-2012) and, finally, the Union for the Mediterranean (2008-2012). Sometimes, two or three overlapping policies were conducted at the same time.

Other objectives, such as conflict resolution and human rights and democracy promotion, have often been mentioned in the EU official documents (communications of the Commission, declarations of the European Councils and resolutions of the European Parliament). However, the discrepancy between rhetoric and deeds has been appalling. The European role in the Arab-Israeli conflict resolution has been marginal, declaratory and often hesitant if not incoherent. Meanwhile, the question of human rights and democracy, supposedly the core of European policies, was put on the backburner for reasons of “realpolitik”: Arab Civil society has not been taken seriously as a partner in dialogue.

The Arab Spring caught the EU off guard and demonstrated the vibrancy of Arab civil society. The EU took note of the developments unfolding in many Arab countries and was forced to respond urgently to the new challenges. This paper is an attempt to shed some light on past European relations with the Arab World and to critically assess the new European response.



**Part 1: European Policies towards the Arab World  
and the Mediterranean Region (1957-2012)**

---

Relations between the European Economic Community (EEC), later denominated the European Union (EU), and the Arab countries fall into four categories: the Euro-Arab Dialogue (1973-1989); the network of multilateral (EU)-bilateral agreements (each southern country) under the so-called Global Mediterranean Policy (1972-1992), the Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1992-1995), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP, 1995-2008), the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004-2012) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM, 2008-2012); the multilateral agreements with sub-regional organisations such as the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council Agreement (1988); and other sub-regional relations between some European member states and some Arab or Mediterranean countries, such as the idea of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (1990), the 5+5 initiative (1990) and the Franco-Egyptian initiative entitled the Forum of the Mediterranean (1992).

Such a plethora of initiatives derives from simple evidence: the Arab World is Europe's first frontier. Only 14 kilometres separate Spain from Morocco: one can even say, if we take into account the Spanish enclaves (Ceuta and Melilla) in Morocco, that European territory is adjacent to Arab territory. No wonder, therefore, that Arab history, economics and politics are so intertwined with European history, economics and politics. Proximity is, therefore, the cornerstone of Euro-Arab relations but the Arab World is perceived in Europe as the nearest "difference" while Europe perceives itself as the nearest "reference".

Europe's colonial history in the Arab World has left its mark on the dynamics of relations across the Mediterranean basin. The EU has been and still is the major trading partner of the Arab World (almost 50% of total Arab trade and 62% of total Maghreb trade). Such an extreme verticality in trade relations contrasts with weak inter-Arab trade. Here lies the first specificity of Euro-Arab relations; we have two different groupings: the first, the EU, is the most integrated region in the world, with almost 72% of internal trade, and the second, the Arab World, is the least integrated region in the world with, at best, 10-12% of intra-zone trade.

The Arab World is an indispensable partner of the EU in one single sector: energy. More than 50% of EU imports of oil and 18% of total gas imports<sup>1</sup> come from the Arab World. The non-oil producing Arab countries mainly export agricultural products, some weak added-value industrial products (textile), raw materials but also migrants. In a recent study, I estimated the total number of Arabs living in Europe at between 7 to 8 million (80% of them of Maghreb origin), taking into account Arab migrants and Arab expatriates, naturalised and non-naturalised, regular and irregular migrants.<sup>2</sup>

1. B. Khader, "European interests in the Arab World", in Casa Árabe, *European Union and the Arab World*, Madrid, Casa Árabe-CIDOB, 2010, pp. 14-29. See also M. Sakbani, "Europe 1992 and the Arab Countries", in B. Khader (ed.), "The EEC and the Arab World", special issue of the *Journal of Arab Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 1993, pp. 113-124.

2. B. Khader, *Les migrations dans les rapports euro-arabes et euro-méditerranéens*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011, 229 p.

With such a high degree of dependency, no wonder that the EEC and then the EU always endeavoured to tie the Arab World to its market through a wide range of policy frameworks and initiatives. Without going too much into detail, this study seeks to assess the contribution of these policies and initiatives to bridge the gap between the two regions and to promote democratic change in the Arab World.

## Euro-Arab Dialogue (1973-1989)

On the eve of the signing of the Rome Treaty in 1957, Europe was losing ground in the Middle East. France was grappling with the Algerian liberation movement and, after the Suez War in which France, England and Israel took part, the new superpowers (the US and the USSR), acting in unison, indicated that times had changed and it was they who would be laying down the rules from now on and filling the strategic vacuum. However, after the Six Day War in 1967, Europe started to make a comeback on the Arab scene thanks to General De Gaulle and the so-called "French-Arab policy". But it was the October War (1973) and the first oil crisis (1973) that triggered the Euro-Arab Dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

The initiative to kick-start a dialogue between Arabs and Europeans was an Arab initiative, embodied in the Algiers Summit Declaration (28th November 1973) proposing a dialogue to the EEC. The proposal was submitted by four Arab ministers to the European Summit in Copenhagen (10th-14th December 1973) and was welcomed by the Europeans mainly concerned with a stable supply of oil "at reasonable prices". The truth is that the oil crisis, with a quadrupling of oil prices in 1973, just served as an eye-opener. The Europeans discovered how dependent and vulnerable they were. Therefore, they did not hesitate to accept the Arab offer of dialogue.

Launched in Paris at ministerial level on 31st June 1974, the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD) was officially endorsed by the Arab Summit in Rabat (28th October 1974). But the objectives of both sides were different in nature: while the Arabs were mainly concerned by the definition of a common and coherent European policy on the Palestinian question, the Europeans essentially sought economic, financial and energy dividends.

From 1974 to 1980, the dialogue proceeded smoothly although criticised by Israel and the United States for obvious reasons. All European declared objectives had been achieved: no further oil embargo had been imposed, oil supply remained uninterrupted, Arab surplus money had been largely recycled in European financial markets and Arab markets<sup>4</sup> had been widely open to European exports.

3. B. Khader (ed.), *Coopération euro-arabe : diagnostic et prospective*, 3 Vol., proceedings of the conference organised in the University of Louvain, 2nd-3rd December 1982. See also H. Jawad, *The Euro-Arab Dialogue: A Study in Collective Diplomacy*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1992.

4. In a report I submitted to the Arab League in 1984, the sovereign funds of four Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait) totalled \$400 billion. See B. Khader, *Arab Money in the West*, report to the Arab League, 1984.

Arab objectives had also been achieved. The Common European stand on the Palestinian question had been remarkably stated, without ambiguity, in the Venice Declaration of June 1980. It was probably the first litmus test of the European capacity to forge a common political foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

With the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat in 1981, Egypt's isolation from the Arab regional system, the internal divisions of the Arab countries during the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1989), the Israeli invasion of Lebanon (1982), the first oil price slump (1982), the election of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and François Mitterrand in France (1981) and internal European concerns (Single Market Treaty of 1985 and the second enlargement, with Greece in 1981, and the third with Spain and Portugal in 1986), the Euro-Arab Dialogue was put on the backburner. The Arab regional system became fragmented more than ever while Europe was keen not to further antagonise the United States of President Reagan.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall (October 1989) and the perceived strengthening of Germany's role in the East, François Mitterrand, changing his mind, tried to resurrect the moribund Euro-Arab Dialogue by convening the Euro-Arab Paris Ministerial Conference (22nd December 1989) with the declared aim of breathing fresh life into the Euro-Arab Dialogue. In reality, Mitterrand was trying to enhance the French role in the South in order to counter the reinvigorated German role in the East. However, the endeavour was short-lived: the dialogue was put back on track but, eight months later, the invasion of Kuwait derailed it indefinitely.

In this multilateral diplomatic exercise, the Europeans dealt with the incumbent Arab regimes, thus indirectly shoring up their authoritarianism. Arab civil organisations were totally marginalised or even ignored. The question of democracy and human rights was sometimes evoked but immediately sidelined. At the height of their power, the Arab regimes were in no mood to accept any foreign interference under the false pretext of "cultural specificities".

## Multilateral-Bilateral Agreements

By this formulation, I mean the policy initiatives taken by the EU during the last 40 years with the aim of propping up cooperation between the European Community (EC), at a multilateral level, and each single Mediterranean country, at a bilateral level.

---

5. My brother Naïm Khader, first PLO representative in Brussels at that time, played a significant role in the Euro-Arab Dialogue. He was assassinated in Brussels one year after the Venice Declaration (1st June 1981).

### Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP)

This global “approach”, developed in 1972, offered a general umbrella to all previous trade concessions and encompassed a series of bilateral agreements for development assistance and trade cooperation with seven riparian states on Europe’s Southern borders plus Jordan (excluding Libya and Albania). The Palestinian Territories were not included in the global approach but the EC provided limited financial assistance to the Palestinians (contribution to the UNRWA’s budget and member states’ aid) and, since 1986, a preferential agreement has offered some trade concessions. Non-member Mediterranean states, such as Turkey, Cyprus and Malta, were included in the Global Mediterranean Policy. However, the EC proposed to these countries an “association agreement”, which foresaw eventual membership in contrast with the “cooperation agreement” signed with the Mashreq and Maghreb countries.

All cooperation agreements included two elements: financial protocols (aid and loans of the European Investment Bank) and preferential trade arrangements. The overall objective is to increase European trade in the Mediterranean while opening up the European Market, through strict conditions, to Mediterranean industrial and agricultural products. They also included a social clause related to the management of the migration issue, which became a great concern in Europe, mainly with the closure of European territories to new migration flows after 1973.

But after 18 years of implementation (1972-1990) the Global Mediterranean Policy did not deliver on its promises. It remained trade-driven, did not spur European investments (only 1% of total European investments was channelled to the Southern Mediterranean), did not contribute to bridging the prosperity gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean (1 to 10 in terms of GDP) and did not promote regional integration in the South.

In defence of the European Community’s policy against such blame, it must be recognised that the Arab-Mediterranean countries themselves showed no interest in shelving their differences and promoting cooperation arrangements. The only successful cooperation arrangement was the setting up in 1981 of the successful Gulf Cooperation Council but it was not concerned with the Global Mediterranean approach. The Marrakech Treaty instituted the Union for the Arab Maghreb in 1989 but proved to be less promising.

All cooperation agreements signed with Arab-Mediterranean countries evoked the question of human rights without spelling out a specific and vigorous “democratic conditionality”. The value-based regional approach of the European Union was often

“called into question by the interest-based approach of the member states, keen to build a privileged relation in terms of trade, investment, public procurement and energy.”<sup>6</sup>

### Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1990-1996)

As previously noted, the global approach contributed to increasing European trade in the Southern Mediterranean basin. Member states pursued their commercial interests as usual while the EU paid lip service to the necessity of regional integration and human rights issues. In response to its critics, the Commission came up with a new policy endorsed by the Rome II European Council in December 1990 entitled Renewed Mediterranean Policy.

Same wine in new bottles? Not really. European grants and loans were substantially increased with total funds made available for the region (including Turkey, Cyprus and Malta) peaking at ECU (the predecessor of the euro) 5 billion for the period 1991-1996. For the first time, the EU reserved specific funds to be used for regional projects (feasibility studies, training courses, mission in support of regional institutions and cooperation in environmental protection). Trade access to the European market was further advanced. People-to-people contacts were encouraged through decentralised cooperation such as MED Campus, Med Urbs and Med Media.

Nevertheless, a deeper assessment shows no significant novelty in the new approach. Funds devoted to regional cooperation represented only a tiny share of total assistance and decentralised cooperation was adversely affected by mismanagement. Perversely, improvement of trade access was “furthest advanced for the two most well-developed countries: Israel and Turkey.”<sup>7</sup>

The people-to-people approach was the first real attempt to involve civil society in EuroMed policy through cooperation networks of universities, cities, journalists, women and migrants. But, on the whole, the human security dimension was missing, whether in European dealings with Israel during the first Intifada (1987-1993) or with Arab-Mediterranean countries.

### Specific Sub-Regional Relations

In this section, I will briefly review the CSCM proposal, the 5+5 formula, the Forum of the Mediterranean and, finally, EU-Gulf relations.

#### Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean

The proposal of such a conference was made jointly by Spain and Italy at the CSCE

6. M. Leigh, *European Response to the Arab Spring*, Policy Brief, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 2011, p. 2.

7. G. Miller, “An Integrated Communities Approach”, in B. Khader, *The EEC and the Arab World*, op. cit., p. 66.

(Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) on the Mediterranean held in Palma de Mallorca on 24th September 1990, which was attended by the European members of the CSCE plus eight Mediterranean countries (including Libya but without Jordan). The proponents of the initiative wanted to set up a forum of discussion similar to the one launched in Helsinki in 1975, bringing together countries from the Western and Eastern blocs. The geopolitical context in the Mediterranean region (tensions around Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the muscular Western reaction to it, the Israeli repression of the first Intifada and the ongoing crisis in Cyprus) did not look appropriate for convening such a conference. The CSCM never took off.

#### **5+5 Formula (Western Mediterranean Group)**

Although the idea of setting up a smaller format of cooperation between the four big European Mediterranean states and the five Maghreb countries had already been floated in 1988, it acquired momentum after the launching of the Union of the Arab Maghreb in 1989 and the personal involvement of Bettino Craxi (Italian Prime Minister) and Felipe González (Spanish Prime Minister). The first formal ministerial meeting was held in October 1990 in Rome. Later, Malta joined the European group, as a fully-fledged member, thus having five countries on each side. With the exception of the Western Sahara dispute, there was no major stumbling block to this cooperation approach. Thus, eight working groups were set up to promote regional cooperation and to tackle specific issues: debt, migration, food, self-sufficiency, cultural dialogue, technology and scientific research, transport and communication, environment, and a specific financial institution. A second meeting took place one year later (26th-27th October 1991) to discuss the repercussions of the Gulf War.

Because of its small format, the 5+5 Group was supposed to focus on specific issues of common concern to riparian states, while its intergovernmental character, outside the formal and more rigid Community framework, was supposed to display more flexibility in responding to common challenges. However, from its inception, this initiative was met with suspicion from Northern European countries, which believed that it undermined European consensus. In the South, a country like Egypt felt left out despite being the most populous and influential Mediterranean country.

Nevertheless, the 5+5 Group did not bow under such pressures; rather the blow came from within: the Algerian crisis starting in 1992 and the embargo imposed on Libya after the Lockerbie case tensed the relations between Northern and Southern members, bringing this collective endeavour to a halt.

With the end of the Algerian crisis and the reconciliation of Libya with the West, the process resumed in Lisbon in January 2001 and then in Tripoli (May 2002) and in Sainte-Maxime (April 2003) in the wake of the American invasion of Iraq (19th March 2003) and the formal support of three European member states in the 5+5 Group (Italy, Spain and Portugal).

Yet, for the first time on 5th-6th December 2003, Heads of State and Government convened in Tunis. Since then, regular meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs have taken place. The ninth was held in Rome in February 2012 in a totally transformed political landscape.

Given its pronounced intergovernmental character, the 5+5 Forum is particularly appreciated by Arab-Mediterranean countries, in their belief that such a forum shores up their authority and increases their legitimacy. But as we shall see, in 2010-2011 it did not shield them against popular discontent. Two countries participating in the 5+5 Group (Tunisia and Libya) were the theatre of a political earthquake.

#### **Forum of the Mediterranean (FOROMED)**

As noted, the 5+5 Group excluded Egypt. In reaction, Egypt convinced France to co-sponsor another forum. It was called the Forum of the Mediterranean and was launched in Alexandria on 3rd-4th July 1994. Although the problems tackled were almost the same, FOROMED differed from the 5+5 Group because of its membership. Indeed, it included five European countries (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece) and six Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Turkey, Malta, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco). Libya and Mauritania were not invited to join while other Mediterranean countries such as Turkey and Greece were included.

FOROMED was initiated as another informal intergovernmental framework for cooperation. Three working groups were set up (political, economic and cultural). But from its inception, the 11 members committed themselves to a “real, comprehensive and effective partnership” in areas of common concern (security, prosperity, mutual understanding, etc.) within the framework of “promotion of the rule of the law and multi-party democracy.”

The launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in November 1995 put into question the usefulness of FOROMED but regular meetings took place in member countries, without a significant impact or added-value.



Again, contacts were held at official level. Some Southern countries adopted reform agendas only for “Europe to see”, without any conviction.

#### **NATO Mediterranean Dialogue 2004<sup>8</sup>**

To complete the picture of small format initiatives regarding the Mediterranean area, we can also mention this NATO initiative, which translates the shift of focus of NATO towards the Mediterranean and the Arab region. The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue was launched in 1994. The initiative has to be analysed within the context of NATO’s transformation after the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the perceived increasing risks and challenges to NATO countries emanating from the Mediterranean and the Arab World in general. At that time, NATO officials argued that the alliance did not have a future unless its geographical area of responsibility was extended to the South. The argument was that NATO members had vital interests in the region and that NATO should be ready to intervene if these interests were put in jeopardy or to defend countries against possible threats according to the axiom “deter if you must, integrate if you can.”

Curiously, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue included in the beginning five Arab countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan) plus Israel. Later, Algeria joined, making it the sixth Arab country but, given the special relationship of Israel with the West, which does not need to be enhanced, the reality remains the following: what is inaccurately called the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue is, in fact, a NATO Arab dialogue.

Why did the Arab countries accept a NATO-driven offer of dialogue at a time when NATO was perceived as a military alliance and not the appropriate institution to deal with “soft security issues”, and at a time when NATO was so handicapped by “an image deficit” among Arab peoples? The response is simple: to increase the international legitimacy of incumbent Arab regimes which were under heavy attacks at home and from international human rights organisations.

Since 1994, regular meetings have been held. A programme of practical cooperation has been laid down, including a wide array of activities ranging from public diplomacy to civil emergency planning, crisis management, border security, observation of military exercises and visits by NATO standing naval forces.

After the 11th September 2001 attacks, NATO decided, in the Prague Summit of 2002, to upgrade the Mediterranean Dialogue, giving it more substance. The idea of joint

---

8. See P. Razoux, *Comment redynamiser le Dialogue Méditerranéen de l’Otan avec les pays du Maghreb ?*, Research paper, Nato Defense College, December 2010, 12 p.

ownership was introduced in the Istanbul Summit of 2004 in which four Gulf States (Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain), fearing the possible fall-out of the American invasion of Iraq, pressed for a similar connection with NATO giving birth to the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative of 2004. But in contrast to the NATO-driven Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative looks demand-driven from the Gulf States themselves.

### **Multilateral Agreement with Sub-Regional Organisations: EU-Gulf Relations (1988-2012)**

When the EEC-Gulf Dialogue was proposed at the start of the 1980s, the Gulf States were at the height of their economic strength. The German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was the first to advocate the idea of opening a dialogue with the Gulf States at a meeting in Brussels on 15th January 1980. On 5th February 1980, the European Council of Ministers approved the German proposal and asked the Commission to sound out the six Gulf States and Iraq “on the possibilities of following up the Community initiative.”

After exploratory talks of the Commission representatives in the Gulf States, the European Council decided to halt the dialogue in September 1980. The French were reluctant because they believed that there was already a framework for dialogue – the Euro-Arab Dialogue – and there was no need for duplication<sup>9</sup> while, in the Gulf States themselves, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia argued that the EEC-Gulf Dialogue was oil-driven and did not stem from a strategic vision which encompasses the short-term and the long-term issues as well as the economic and political dimensions. They also confirmed that they would prefer to develop their relations through the Euro-Arab Dialogue.

The dialogue initiative was thus shelved for a while but, soon after the establishment of the GCC, the European Council decided, in September 1981, to initiate preliminary talks with the Secretariat of the GCC in order to examine the proposed cooperation. An exchange of visits took place between Abdallah Bishara, Secretary General of the GCC, who visited the European headquarters in June 1982, and European representatives, who paid a visit to Saudi Arabia in March 1983. The exploratory talks were followed by a series of other meetings with the aim of exploring the possibilities for formal negotiations on a cooperation agreement between the two regions.

The first meeting at ministerial level took place on 14th October 1985 in Luxembourg. With the EU Parliament’s green light, following the discussion of a report on EU-Gulf relations at the European Parliament (19th February 1987), a second ministerial meeting took place in

9. See B. Khader, *L'Europe et les pays arabes du Golfe : partenaires distants*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1994.

Brussels on 23rd June 1987. One year later, on 15th June 1988, the cooperation agreement was signed by Hans-Dietrich Genscher, President of the Council, and Claude Cheysson, Commissioner, on the European side and by His Highness Prince Abdul Aziz Saud Al Faysal (Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia) and Abdallah Bishara, Secretary General of the GCC.

The agreement established a contractual relationship between the EEC and the GCC countries. It covered a wide spectrum of subjects: economic cooperation, agriculture and fisheries, industry, energy, science, technology, investment, environment and trade. But the agreement did not solve the major issue that has been the bone of contention in all EEC-GCC contacts, namely Gulf petrochemical exports.

What induced the Gulf States to drop their reservations with regard to a specific agreement with the EEC remains a question of debate. I believe that the Gulf States came to realise that the dramatic slump in oil prices and slowdown of their economies offered them new incentives to reach a region-to-region agreement with Europe and that, being a smaller unit than the Arab League, the GCC was more likely to show coherence and enhance its negotiating power. Unfortunately, the invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990, the catastrophic fall-out of its liberation by Western-led military action and the second reverse oil-shock of 1998 eroded the GCC's ability to negotiate an upgraded cooperation agreement with the EU from a strong position.

Since the 1990s, the EU and the Gulf States have been negotiating a second cooperation agreement. Conflicting views related to questions of human rights, exports of sensitive products like petrochemicals or the question of membership of the World Trade Organization continue to hinder the signing of an upgraded agreement. A patronising European attitude is questioned by many Gulf States, not without reason. The EU is thus blundering a golden opportunity to consolidate its presence in a region<sup>10</sup> where its total trade amounts to 128 billion euros with an economic surplus of more than 15 billion euros (EU imports from the Gulf were 56 billion euros and EU exports were 72 billion euros in 2011).

Why then did EU-GCC cooperation take off but is still flying too low after more than 24 years of negotiations? Usually some reasons are singled out:

The different nature of the two regional organisations. The EU has been economy-driven while the GCC has been security-motivated.

The reluctance of some countries, like France and England, to Europeanise their traditional ties with the Gulf States.

---

10. See E. Woertz, "Qatar y el descuido europeo de la región del Golfo Pérsico", *Notes internacionales*, Barcelona, CIDOB, February 2012.

The EU does not want to antagonise the USA in a region believed to be their “political reserve” and their geopolitical “jumping pad”. Although this perception may be correct from the political point of view, it is incorrect to suggest that the Gulf is a captive market for the USA, since the economic ties of the GCC with Europe are far greater than those with the USA.

The vital interest of the EU in the GCC is to have access to energy and a secured supply. Yet, this interest is shared by the world community. So, there is a feeling in European circles that a privileged relation with the Gulf countries does nothing to foster the interests of Europe. Energy is beyond the sole mandate of Europe. A strategic partnership with the Gulf is, therefore, not a pressing need.

The fierce opposition of the European petrochemical industry to the signing of a strategic agreement including a free trade area.

Whatever the reasons, it is clear that EU-GCC relations have been timid and shallow for the last 24 years. But, on the bilateral level (country to country), business continues as usual.

However, new developments are pushing Europe to change course and to give more momentum and impetus to its relationship with the Gulf. Without delving into excessive details, let us single out some of them:

The burgeoning trade between Asia and the GCC is forcing Europe to reconsider its attitude in order not to be overtaken and eventually replaced by countries whose image is not linked to past colonialism and to present patronising.

There is a widespread conviction in European circles that the huge energy potential of the Gulf States cannot be matched by any other country and that it is in the interest of Europe to entertain a privileged relation with the Gulf region.

China’s new appetite for oil is straining the supply-demand equation. Although the immediate effect of world oil demand may be overstated, there is no doubt that the classical rivalry between producers will give way to a new rivalry between consumers. Europe cannot afford to remain arms crossed and watch. It has a vital interest not only in having access to oil, which poses no real problem for the time being, but in getting involved in the upstream oil operations and in the oil industry itself.

Should world demand for oil continue to rise, there will be difficulties in physically raising output to meet consumers' future needs. Only the GCC, with the world's largest reserves, is in a position to increase output but only over time, and with the investments and technical expertise required. There is, therefore, a growing feeling that Europe cannot afford to be absent or distracted from this potentially huge market.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, a fresh new start in the EU-GCC is not only desirable but also necessary. It is dictated by shared interests and common concerns. The importance of the GCC is expected to increase in the coming years. Those who think that the oil age is over are simply playing with false expectations. The replacement of oil, however desirable it may be from an ecological perspective, will not occur soon. Therefore, Europe has to show decisiveness and clarity of purpose. A free trade agreement with the GCC is in its interest. This may antagonise the petrochemical industries but collective gains will certainly outstrip individual pains.

The insistence of Europe on the human rights issue is understandable and necessary but Gulf officials recognise that the situation of human rights should improve and that, indeed, it is improving. However, they emphasise that many of the problems are largely due to traditional social and cultural practices rather than systematic governmental abuse and that the EU would be well-advised to give it time because change in social practices cannot be dictated or imposed but must come from within and be socially assumed.

### **Going Back to the Multilateral-Bilateral Track in Euro-Mediterranean Relations (EMP-ENP-UfM)**

At the start of the 1990s, the European Union or some European states were engaged either in multilateral policies (Renewed Mediterranean Policy) or in smaller cooperation initiatives (5+5, FOROMED) or even in the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue. Yet, with the end of the bipolar system, the EU came to shift its focus to the North-South divide. It felt that the Renewed Mediterranean Policy was not sufficiently ambitious to ward off potential destabilisation deriving from socio-political and economic disparities and that it must forge a more comprehensive policy towards the Mediterranean. This shift in emphasis on the Mediterranean came at a time when some controversial but influential political thinkers, such as Samuel Huntington, raised the question of the cultural dimension of security in that the clash of civilizations<sup>11</sup> occurs along the lines of religiously-inspired militancy against Western values.

---

11. S. Huntington, "The clash of civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

Concerned by the fallacy of such a thesis, the EU felt the urgency to demonstrate the perils which may derive from such a simplistic diagnosis that overemphasises the notion of the clash of civilizations. It was crystal clear, for the vast majority of Europeans, that many of the security-related concerns in the Southern Mediterranean are not military- and culturally-based but are mainly “soft security issues,”<sup>12</sup> such as economic disparities, demographic divide, migration flows and the persistence of authoritarian regimes. The idea of a “New Partnership” came to the fore in this context of conflicting views about Mediterranean security.

### **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) or Barcelona Process (1995)<sup>13</sup>**

In the beginning, the proposed idea of partnership was only limited to the Maghreb countries. The Communication of April 1992 on “the future of relations between the Community and the Maghreb” underscored the necessity to move forward to building a Euro-Maghreb Partnership.<sup>14</sup> In the meantime, secret negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis were conducted and concluded in Oslo and officially signed as an “Interim Accord” at the White House (13th September 1993). A few days before the signing ceremony, the Commission published a Communication on “the future relations and cooperation between the Community and the Middle East,”<sup>15</sup> followed at the end of September 1993 by another Communication on “the support of the Community to the Peace Process in the Middle East.”<sup>16</sup>

The new developments in the Middle East (the start of the Peace Process) spurred the EU to transform its “Euro-Maghreb Partnership” into a “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership” in its Communication of 19th October 1994. One year later, a conference was convened in Barcelona (27th-28th November 1995) to launch the Partnership. The Barcelona Declaration was then signed by 15 European member states of the EU and 12 Mediterranean countries (eight Arab countries – Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Syria – plus Israel, Malta, Cyprus and Turkey). Libya, with its 1,300 kilometres of Mediterranean coast, was excluded because of the embargo imposed on it. Organised in an atmosphere of “high hopes”, the Barcelona Conference brought together Arabs and Israelis while clearly indicating that the European Union is not a “peace broker” but a “peace facilitator”.

The novelty of this new process, called the Barcelona Process, was the introduction of comprehensive cooperation structured into three “baskets”: political and security, economic and financial, and socio-cultural. The main objective was the establishment, by 2010, of a free trade zone in the Mediterranean through economic liberalisation. But

12. S. Stavridis and N. Fernández Sola (eds.), *Factores políticos y de seguridad en el área euro-mediterránea*, Saragossa, Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2009.

13. B. Khader, *Le partenariat euro-méditerranéen après la conférence de Barcelone*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997.

14. Communication de la Commission sur l'avenir des relations entre la Communauté et le Maghreb, Brussels, European Commission (Sec/92/401).

15. European Commission (COM (93)375).

16. European Commission (COM (93)376).

the real concern of the EU was about insecurity in its Southern flank epitomised by the Algerian crisis and its repercussions on the European territory and the irregular migration flows. As Malcolm Rifkind, the then British Foreign Secretary, stated: “one of the most important ways in which we can achieve political security is economic growth.” The EU should thus help North African and Middle Eastern countries to develop their economic potential. And Rifkind added: “political stability will flow from that.”<sup>17</sup>

From 1996 until 2000, the EMP proceeded smoothly. Some association agreements were signed and ratified. One billion euros was allocated annually to the Southern partner countries. Civil society organisations were encouraged to create networks. Research institutes (FEMISE, EUROMESCO) set up their own networks. Economically, tariff barriers were either lowered or dismantled and many public sectors privatised but the benefits, in terms of job creation or increased GDP per inhabitant, remained limited.

After 2000, the regional geopolitical landscape deteriorated. The failure of the Camp David negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis (July 2000), the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada (October 2000), the 11th September 2001 attacks and the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) followed by the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 (with the support of three major Mediterranean countries: Spain, Italy and Portugal) poisoned the general climate in the Mediterranean and revealed the ambiguity of the whole Barcelona Process.

It became clearer than ever that the Barcelona Process was not to promote reform in the Southern Mediterranean but to promote “order” and “stability”. As Mona Yacoubian candidly wrote: “Europe launched the Barcelona Process in order to erect a ‘cordon sanitaire’ to protect itself from potential insecurity.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, Mediterranean economic modernisation and liberalisation were not pursued as “objectives per se” but as instruments to reduce the desire to migrate, to lessen the appeal of radical movements and to create a less turbulent environment considered by the EU as its “nearest abroad”.

Culturally speaking, the EMP's contribution to the dialogue of cultures through the financing of hundreds of seminars and reports on this question did not prevent skyrocketing Islamophobia in Europe. The EMP provided for some general rules but failed to develop a common identifiable set of accepted norms. In this respect, the ambitions of the third EMP basket on social and cultural relations have not been fulfilled, prompting Romano Prodi, the then President of the Commission, to set up in 2003 a Group of Wise Men for the Dialogue of Cultures in the Mediterranean with the aim of injecting some ideas to promote mutual understanding. This led to the creation of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, based in Alexandria.

17. M. Rifkind, *British Initiative in Investments, Barriers*, Foreign Secretary's Brief, British Foreign Office, 1995.

18. M. Yacoubian, *Promoting Middle East Democracy: European Initiative*, Special Report, 127, US Institute of Peace, October 2004, p. 7.

As for the security basket, the intended Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Security, which was supposed to be an “exercise of pre-emptive diplomacy,”<sup>19</sup> has never been signed for lack of common language, perceptions and priorities. None of the pending conflicts in the Mediterranean has been untangled and resolved. On the contrary, the Peace Process has been totally derailed, the Cyprus crisis is still pending, the Western Sahara issue remains unresolved and, in 2006, Lebanon was the theatre of a new conflict opposing Israel and Hezbollah, with the EU standing on the sidelines. Obviously, the EU did not have the courage, the means and the will to play its part in problem-solving diplomacy. Constrained by a hesitant Foreign and Common Security Policy and conflicting views and priorities of member states, its policy remained trapped by the paradigm of the “lowest common denominator”.

In terms of political reform, the results of the EMP have also been disappointing, in spite of the statement of the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) underlining the linkage between internal and external security and highlighting that “the best protection of our security is a world of well-governed democratic states,” through a process of transposition of the EU’s own experience of democratisation, development and integration. Roberto Aliboni underlines the logic which underpins the European Security Strategy: “If good governance can be fostered in neighbouring states – i.e., if they can be helped to become democratic, prosperous and internationally cooperative – the resolution of regional crises will be easier and regional factors of instability, with their spill-over effects, can be brought under more effective control. This should make it easier for the EU to preserve its own stability.”<sup>20</sup>

Regrettably, subsequent events would reveal the hollowness of this wishful thinking. The Southern Mediterranean states have not seriously engaged in cooperative security or in significant reforms and regional cohesion. The EU continued to deal with authoritarian regimes. The political conditionality, which is part and parcel of the association agreements, has never been applied. Even worse, some European leaders even applauded the progress achieved in this area by some Arab regimes, such as the Tunisian regime of Ben Ali. Hence the criticism of the EMP by many civil society organisations, which consider that their voices have not been sufficiently heard because the EU continued to entertain cosy relations with the regimes and sometimes with elitist civil society organisations, without a real social base in their countries but “in line with European taste.”<sup>21</sup>

All these inconsistencies derive from a general process of “securitisation”: the fear of Islamist parties coming to power through free elections has led to a general shift of

19. See D. Xenakis, *The Politics of Order-Building in Europe and the Mediterranean*, Athens, Themata Policy and Defense, 2004, p. 123.

20. R. Aliboni and A. Saaf, *Human Security: a New Perspective for Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation*, “10 Papers for Barcelona 2010”, ISS and IEMED, February 2010, p. 12.

21. L. Fioramonti, “Promoting Human Rights and Democracy: a New Paradigm for the European Union”, in J. Peter, *The EU and the Arab Spring*, Lexington Press, UK, 2012, p. 28.



European priorities from democracy promotion to securing the “stability” of their friendly regimes. And those regimes played on this fear by presenting themselves as bulwarks against international terrorism, gate-keepers against irregular migrants or simply as security providers while engaging in “cosmetic reforms” to disguise their authoritarian grip on power.

After 2000, it became clear that the initial “cooperative security” strategy was shifting to “policies of security cooperation”. The first signs of this shift were visible during the Algerian crisis (1992-1999) but it became even more apparent after the 11th September terrorist attacks, the American invasion of Iraq (2003) and after the Egyptian elections of 2005, in which the Muslim Brotherhood won 88 seats out of 454. However, its most spectacular demonstration was the reaction of the EU to Hamas’ victory in the Palestinian elections of 2006, where the atavistic fear of the “Islamist” alternative simply outweighed the democratic imperative.

With the increasing trends in irregular migration, the EU invested more time in negotiating readmission agreements, in managing human mobility and externalisation and outsourcing border controls with their Mediterranean partners than in promoting the rule of law. To put it in a nutshell, the predicament of region-building in the Mediterranean has been replaced by control-building or order-building. The EU’s ideals of “well-governed partners” have simply been challenged by the necessity of having stable and well-controlled partners.

### European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (2004-2012)

In early 2000, negotiations for the fifth enlargement were underway. It concerned 10 countries, eight of them in Central and Eastern Europe and two Mediterranean islands: Cyprus and Malta. This enlargement was the biggest ever, especially if we add the two countries of the sixth enlargement in 2007 (Rumania and Bulgaria). With the latest enlargements, the EU increased its total population by more than 103 million (thus reaching 500 million inhabitants), added 11 new languages to the other 12 languages (reaching 23 different languages), enlarged its territory by 40% and extended its land borders to 6,000 kilometres and its maritime borders to 85,000 kilometres. Thus the obsession of the EU, around 2003-2004, was how to secure its external borders from the new neighbours. The ENP was supposed to be the answer.

In a lecture delivered to my students at the University of Louvain in December 2002, the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, clarified the core philosophy of the new

initiative. Two central elements were highlighted: “ring of friends” and “all but the institutions”. These elements were further elaborated in the Communication of the Commission of 11th March 2003, entitled “Wider Europe: a New Framework for the Relations with our Neighbours of the East and the South”<sup>22</sup> and in the European Security Strategy of 12th December 2003.<sup>23</sup> By ring of friends, the Commission meant a policy of the “good fence” whose main objective is to promote a good neighbourhood of prosperous and well-governed states. To this effect, the EU would lend its assistance financially, technically and politically. Those countries that perform well would be rewarded by increased access to the Single Market: they would get all except taking part in the “institutional decision process”.

Like the EMP, the ENP is supply-driven: it is the strategic response of the EU to the changes in the geopolitical landscape of Europe. More than a policy with the neighbours, it is a European policy for the neighbours: an “inside-out policy” aiming at preventing the import of external instabilities and risks (outside-in risks). Engagement and ownership are the cornerstones of this new policy: “engage not coerce,” wrote Emerson and Noutcheva.<sup>24</sup>

Was it fortuitous that the ENP Communication was published in March 2003, the very month of the American invasion of Iraq? Although the ENP was not meant as a European response to “muscular American diplomacy”, there is no doubt that the EU sought to distance itself from the culturist discourse of Huntington and the dangerous notions, such as the “crusade of good against evil” or the “war on terror”, which were understood in many Muslim countries as a new crusade of the West against their religion. The EU, which was divided on the question of the American invasion of Iraq, felt that it was of paramount importance to spell out its own vision of security. No wonder, therefore, if in the years 2003-2004 it published two important documents: “Strengthening the EU’s Relations with the Arab World” (2003) and “Interim Report on the EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East” (2004). These two documents insist on the importance of preserving the EU’s soft power (in contrast to hard power), the promotion of multilateralism (in contrast with American unilateralism), the necessity of comprehensive foreign policy strategy and, most of all, the commitment to democratic reform. In the same period, the USA adopted the US Greater Middle East Initiative (2004)<sup>25</sup> and the Group of Eight (G8) made public the Partnership for Progress and a Common Future (June 2004).

This proliferation of initiatives following Iraq’s invasion (2003) and the European fifth enlargement (May 2004) and sixth enlargement (2007) reflected a common consensus,

22. COM/2003/0104 final.

23. *A secure Europe in a better world*, Brussels, European Commission. See also A. Vasconcelos (ed.), *The European Security Strategy 2003-2008: Building on Common Interests*, Paris, ISS Report, Institute of Security Studies, 2009.

24. M. Emerson and G. Noutcheva, *From Barcelona Process to Neighbourhood Policy*, “CEPS Working Paper”, No. 220, March 2005, p. 20.

25. For a critical assessment of the American initiative, see B. Khader, “Le Grand Moyen Orient : télé-évangélisme ou destinée manifeste”, in B. Khader, *Le Monde Arabe expliqué à l’Europe*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2009.

despite differences of approach, that authoritarian regimes in the Arab World are the problem and not the solution to instability and therefore it is in the interest of the West to focus on reform and on civil society organisations as “actors of change”.

However, the ENP's overall philosophy and architecture contradict proclaimed intentions of bottom-up gradual reform. Indeed the ENP is an intergovernmental policy based on a “hub and spokes” pattern of bilateralism<sup>26</sup> and its main pillar is the Action Plan, which is presented by each neighbouring state and discussed with European officials. In such conditions, it is difficult to imagine authoritarian regimes willingly giving up or even agreeing to share power and sincerely ensure the rule of law. In other words, real democratic reform means the political suicide of repressive regimes. Hence the paradox of the ENP: how can the EU contribute to democratisation of authoritarian regimes with their own will?<sup>27</sup>

After the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and in London (2005), and with the increasing flows of irregular migration in the EU, the security paradigm came back to the fore. Pressure for reform lost momentum and the notion of “governance” eclipsed that of “democratic reform” in order not to antagonise Arab regimes engaged in the ENP. Quite astutely, the regimes themselves introduced some insignificant “reforms” as a minimal response to European demands. Some set up their own “Organisation for the Defence of Human Rights” and co-opted some civil society organisations which did not challenge the established distribution of power – such as some labour unions or chambers of commerce – or were financially dependent – such as non-governmental organisations service. In sharp contrast, advocacy of NGOs, whether Islamist, liberal or others, has been severely repressed.

Clearly, the EU continued its “business as usual” with its neighbours and was not even happy with its own performance. In a Communication issued in 2005,<sup>28</sup> the EU criticised the prioritisation of security over reform. In reality, the EU was torn apart: if it remained true to its values, it had to press for real democratic reform, but if it sought to defend its immediate interests, it had to entertain friendly relations with autocracies. Until the Arab Spring, the EU remained trapped in this uncomfortable dilemma and its policy was marred by incoherence. Thus, it pressed, in 2005, for the end of the “Syrian occupation of Lebanon” while it enhanced its relations with Israel, whose occupation of Arab territories goes back to 1967. It punished Hamas for its victory in the Palestinian elections in 2006, imposing three conditions on it which it never imposed on Israel. And it failed to listen to unfamiliar voices, such as Islamist civil society organisations.<sup>29</sup>

26. R. Aliboni: op. cit., p. 21.

27. See R. Youngs, *Europe's Uncertain Pursuit of Middle East Reform?*, “Carnegie Papers”, No. 45, June 2004.

28. European Commission, “Tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: a work programme for the next five years, (139 final)”, Brussels, 2005.

29. See K. Kausch: “Europe's engagement with moderate Islamists”, in M. Emerson, K. Kausch and R. Youngs (eds.), *Islamist Radicalisation: The Challenge for Euro-Mediterranean Relations*, Madrid, Center for European Foreign Policy Studies and FRIDE, 2009, pp. 129-150. See also, N. Mikhedize and N. Tocci, “How can Europe engage with Islamist movements?”, *ibid.*, pp. 152-169.

With so many inconsistencies, the ENP had rather disappointing results, failing to bring about significant change. The EU's appeal was challenged by unequal treatment of neighbours (East and South) and by "the projection of a Fortress Europe image."<sup>30</sup>

By the year 2007, the EU was plunged into anxiety. Its soft reaction to the war which opposed Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon (July 2006) adversely affected its credibility in the region. The support given to the Palestinian Authority to the detriment of Hamas, which seized control of Gaza (2007), challenged its aid-driven Palestinian policy. Frustration among Arab people and intellectuals with the EU was tangible and there was a general feeling that the EU remained a reluctant player and not a credible actor. Strangely enough, Israel was convinced that the EU was not a reliable "ally" either because of its declaratory policy of support to Palestinian legitimate rights.

#### **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) (2007-2012)<sup>31</sup>**

While the EU was conducting its twin policies (EMP and ENP) and while sub-regional initiatives were navigating their own way, Nicholas Sarkozy, French presidential candidate, took everybody by surprise by announcing a new French initiative, in February 2007, called the Mediterranean Union, later denominated the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) at the Paris Summit of 13th July 2008.

This is not the place to explore all the details of the genesis, reactions and subsequent developments of this initiative. Suffice to say that the French idea was "Europeanised" (European Council of March 2008), that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed in Marseilles, in November 2008, a work programme, that a Secretariat was set up in Barcelona (2009) and that we have had three Secretary Generals until now: Ambassador Masa'deh of Jordan who stepped down quickly, Youssef Amrani who quitted because he was appointed minister in the new Moroccan government, and the incumbent Moroccan Ambassador Sigilmassi.

In sharp contrast with the EMP and ENP, the Union for the Mediterranean is a union of projects. Its architecture differs from the three baskets of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the action plans of the European Neighbourhood Policy. It aims to carry out six priority projects supposed to promote regional integration: sea and land highways, de-pollution, renewable energy (mainly solar energy), civil protection, business cooperation and research. But the UfM does not differ from its predecessors in that it includes in the same format Arab countries and Israel.

30. E. Soler and E. Viilup, "Reviewing the Neighbourhood Policy: a weak response to fast changing realities", *Notes internationales*, Barcelona, CIDOB, No. 36, June 2011, p. 2.

31. B. Khader, *L'Europe pour la Méditerranée de Barcelone à Barcelone*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009, pp. 173-232.

The logic which underpins the UfM is that regional integration can only be promoted through regional, visible and important projects. And the general philosophy is based on equality, ownership, gradualism, co-responsibility and multilateral partnership. To some extent, the UfM restored multilateralism, which was almost absent in the ENP, but this multilateralism is based on “interstate-conventional relations rather than a community-like model of relations.”<sup>32</sup>

Arab countries agreed to participate in the new initiative, some with enthusiasm (Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia), and others reluctantly (Syria, Lebanon and Libya). Algeria was not even interested but it changed its mind later. Mubarak of Egypt was chosen as “co-president” working in tandem with Nicholas Sarkozy (President of the UfM). The first Secretary General was the Jordanian Masa’deh. Both Egypt and Jordan have peace treaties with Israel. Is it simple coincidence or a diplomatic option? This deserves further investigation.

However, what is certain is that Israel was the first stumbling block of this infant policy. Indeed, the first Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the UfM (3rd-4th November 2008) was on the brink of collapse due to the opposition of Israel to the participation of the Arab League. The obstruction was removed but Israel obtained a “vice-general secretariat”. Two months later, Israel unleashed its offensive on Gaza (December 2008-January 2009) and the UfM was paralysed for almost six months.

The UfM now has a functioning General Secretariat in Barcelona: feasibility studies are being prepared but the economic crisis is crippling the EU while private business shows little urgency in getting involved in the identified projects. Should the economic situation clear up, it is safe to say that the UfM will probably take off under the rule of “variable geometry” with the participation of the willing and capable.

Here again, the question of the rule of law and human security is missing. Big projects are prioritised. Political reform is hinted at but is far from being the cornerstone of the initiative.

## Conclusion of Part 1

Democracy promotion policies have been a longstanding objective of the EU. The EU, itself, is “a grand peace project through integration,” together with the gradual move, beyond mere economic integration, towards a community of values.<sup>33</sup> But this brief review of European policies in the Mediterranean and in the Arab region does not suggest

32. R. Aliboni, op. cit., p. 21.

33. I. Menéndez González, *Arab Reform: what role for the EU*, “Egmont Papers”, No. 8, Brussels, Academia Press, May 2005, p. 6.

that the EU, as a democracy promoter, had an excellent record. For sure, the EU did not want to antagonise incumbent authoritarian regimes: EU conditionality, although never applied, was gradually replaced by the principle of co-ownership, which links reform to agreement by the partners themselves and, obviously, the partners have been too reluctant to engage in real reform, for understandable reasons.

No wonder, therefore, after more than 50 years of cooperation and association agreements with Arab countries, no single Arab democracy has burgeoned. On the contrary, what we have witnessed was not a “liberal market economy” but “modernised illiberal autocracies” cultivating crony capitalism with unequal distribution of power and wealth. The flaw does not lie in the methods, instruments or means utilised by the EU but in the prioritisation of security to the detriment of political reform, termed as the “democratization-securitization dilemma.”<sup>34</sup>

This explains why European policies on “political reform” remained broadly inconsistent: failure to apply the conditionality clause, unconditional support to Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco, and indulgence with others. Even in the EU-GCC negotiations, political reform has been marginal, if not conspicuously absent. This tendency to engage with incumbent authoritarian regimes derived from “the atavistic fear of the Islamic alternative to Arab secular nationalists.”<sup>35</sup> This sheds some light on the incapacity of the EU to engage with mainstream Islamic reformers.<sup>36</sup>

Against this backdrop, the Arab Spring came as a wake-up call for the EU, forcing it to reconsider past policies and to readjust its policies to the new reality emerging in the Mediterranean and the Arab World at large.

34. See H. Malmvig, *Cooperation or Democratisation? The EU's Conflicting Mediterranean Discourses*, “DIIS Working Paper”, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2004.

35. A. Vasconcelos, *Listening to unfamiliar voices*, Paris, Institute of Security Studies, 2011, p. 106.

36. See R. Aliboni, *Promoting Democracy in the EMP: Which Political Strategy*, “Euromesco Reports”, November 2004, 20 p.

## **Part 2: The EU and the Arab Spring**

---

## Introduction

The Arab popular uprising, starting in Tunisia and spreading to other Arab countries, caught the vast majority of the academic specialists by surprise: the uprising was unexpected, its demonstration effect unforeseen and its results not even dreamed of. In less than a year, four Arab regimes, which had survived over decades, in which democratic waves rolled through the entire world, were toppled. The Tunisian regime, considered as a bulwark of stability, crumpled and President Ben Ali fled his country. Mubarak of Egypt was forced to step down, and later sentenced and jailed. In Yemen, Ali Saleh had to agree on a transition plan concocted by the GCC. Colonel Gaddafi of Libya was injured, probably by a NATO air strike, lynched by his people and killed.

Popular upheavals took place in other countries. To forestall this, the King of Morocco introduced some modest reforms. The King of Jordan promised to fight corruption. Algeria braved the storm: the recent civil war (1992-1999), subsidised economy and heterogeneous social fabric have been “powerful demobilising factors”.

In Bahrain, the Sunni monarchy called in the GCC's armed forces to restore order. In Syria, peaceful protests have turned into armed rebellion but the regime, although weakened, continues its exactions against villages and towns, inflicting a heavy death toll on its own people.

Whether peaceful or violent, the democratic wave in the Arab World has already shaken many of the myths circulating in the West and especially in Europe. Among these myths, we have the myth of the so-called “Arab exception”, which posits that the Arabs were not interested in, concerned by or prepared for democracy. The other myth which has been put to rest is the myth of “our good dictator” – *our son-of-a bitch theory* – which posits that pro-Western dictators are better bets than the Islamist alternative. In an article published in 2005 in *Foreign Affairs*, a respected American journal, Gregory Gause argued that “the United States should not encourage democracy in the Arab World because Washington's authoritarian Arab allies represented stable bets for the future.” In 2011, the same author made this incredible confession: “on that account, I was spectacularly wrong,” adding “I was hardly alone in my skepticism about the prospect of full-fledged democratic change in the face of these seemingly unshakable authoritarian regimes.”<sup>37</sup>

The third myth is that the Arab World is, itself, a fiction and that the cross-border appeal of Arab identity had waned. The Arab uprisings proved the fallacy of such a myth. It is no

37. G. Gause, “Why Middle East studies missed the Arab Spring”, *Foreign Affairs*, June-August 2011, p. 82.



coincidence that the wave of change has swept across many Arab countries simultaneously, with the same method and almost the same slogans, chanted in the same Arabic language. Gregory Gause recognises that “academics will need to assess the restored importance of Arab identity to understand the future of Middle East politics.”<sup>38</sup>

The fourth myth is the so-called “Arab street” presumed to be irrational, capricious, vociferous and violent. The Arab uprisings put this myth to rest. Not only is there an Arab public opinion, diversified and rational, but there have always been forces for change bubbling below and above the surface and vibrant civil society organisations, in spite of all forms of coercive state control.

The fifth myth is that authoritarian regimes are unshakable. The Arab Spring proved how fragile they are. Indeed, it is not because the regimes were unshakable that the society did not dare, it is because the society did not dare that the regimes seemed unshakable. That’s why breaking up the wall of fear has been a decisive factor in the current uprisings. The Arab uprisings have also shattered other myths: mainly the myth of “creative destruction” (invasion of Iraq), the myth of democracy militarily imposed or even the myth of “Facebooked revolutions”. Arab revolts resulted from indigenous factors, and not from decisions taken in the United States or the EU. Facebook and social media have served as instruments but never replaced the real actors themselves.

The EU was caught by surprise by the magnitude of the unfolding events in the Southern rim of the Mediterranean. It had to respond to what an author dubbed “the Arab tsunami.”<sup>39</sup> In this part, I will analyse the European response to the Arab Spring and see whether it rises to the challenges ahead.

## European Response

After a short period of hesitation, the EU came to realise that what was occurring in the Arab World was not just a “bread riot” but something of outstanding significance and felt that it had to cope with the new dynamics. The response was enshrined in two communications of the Commission: the first, published in March 2011 and entitled “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”,<sup>40</sup> and the second, published in May 2011, and entitled “New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”.<sup>41</sup> A new Civil Society Facility (of 22 million euros for 2011) was created along an aid package labelled as Strengthening Partnership and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) (with 65 million euros for 2011 and 285 million for 2012), and a European Endowment for Democracy was proposed.

38. Ibid., p. 86.

39. A. Basbous, *Le Tsunami arabe*, Paris, Fayard, 2011, 383 p.

40. Joint Communication by the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”, available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011\\_200\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf)

41. Joint Communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: A Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy”, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com\\_11\\_303\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf)

## Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean<sup>42</sup>

Issued on 8th March 2011, this Communication of the Commission describes events taking place in “our Southern neighbourhood” as “of historical proportions” that will have lasting consequences. Therefore, the EU must not be “a passive spectator” and needs “to support the wish of the people in our neighbourhood” through a “qualitative step forward” in “a joint commitment” to “common values: democracy, human rights, social justice, good governance and the rule of the law.”

The proposed new approach will be based on differentiation, conditionality and mutual accountability and will be built on three elements: democratic transformation and institution building, stronger partnership with the people, and sustainable and inclusive growth.

In the immediate term, the EU decided to increase humanitarian aid to offer food and shelter for refugees pouring out of Libya, to facilitate the evacuation of EU citizens through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and to deal with “possible new inflows of refugees and migrants into European countries.”<sup>43</sup>

More generally, the Communication proposed a new incentive-based approach based on more differentiation. This approach is labelled “more for more”, which rewards faster reform by greater support in terms of aid, trade and advanced status.

The EU also says that it must be ready to expand support to civil society, to establish a Civil Society Neighbourhood Facility, and to conclude “mobility partnership”, making full use of improvement in its visa policy.

Special attention is paid, in the Communication, to the promotion of small and medium enterprises and job creation, the increase of European Investment Bank loans, the extension of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development to countries of the Southern region and the negotiation of “deep and comprehensive free areas”. Sectorial cooperation is mentioned in energy, the rural support programme, development of education and communication technologies. The Communication insists on “regional cooperation” and states that the Union for the Mediterranean is a good step in that direction, adding, in a critical note, that the implementation of the UfM “did not deliver the result we expected” and that the UfM “needs to reform” in order to be “a catalyst” which brings countries and institutions together around “concrete projects” according to the principle of “variable geometry”.

42. COM (2011)200 Final, Brussels, 5th March 2011.

43. Frontex Joint Operation HERMES 2011, 20th February 2011.

And, finally, the EU intends to increase direct financial assistance to the Southern Mediterranean (5,700 billion euros provided under European Neighbourhood Partnership Instruments for 2011-2013) and to leverage loans of the European Investment Bank through the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF).

### **A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood: a Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)**

The review of the ENP was undertaken before the Arab Spring but recent events have made the case for this review even more urgent and compelling. Thus, this joint Communication<sup>44</sup> reasserts that “partnership with our neighbours is mutually beneficial,” but needs an overhaul. The new approach must be based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the universal values, a higher degree of differentiation, comprehensive institution-building, and imperative and deep democracy. But the Communication adds that “the EU does not seek to impose a model or a ready-made recipe for political reform.” To achieve the proclaimed objectives, the EU supports the establishment of a European Endowment for Democracy and a Civil Society Facility (CSF).

On the political front, the Communication emphasises the European intention to “enhance its involvement in solving protracted conflicts.” That’s all.

Clearly, economic partnership is the cornerstone of the Communication, which reiterates the importance of industrial cooperation, rural development, inclusive growth, direct investments, trade ties and job creation. In this respect, the most salient proposal is a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with gradual dismantling of trade barriers and progressive economic integration. Complementary to this objective is the proposed development of a “common knowledge and innovation space”.

On the thorny issue of human mobility, the EU will “pursue the process of visa facilitation, develop the existing mobility partnership and encourage people-to-people contacts.” No details are given as to the operationalisation of this objective.

### **Critical Comments on the Communications**

Curiously enough, although it was the Arab Spring which prompted the EU's response, there is a gaping absence in the two communications of any clear reference to the Arab World, to Arab Youth or to Arab Identity. Both communications (the first of 16

---

44. COM(2011)383, Brussels, 25th May 2011.

pages, the second of 21 pages) refer to the “Southern neighbourhood” or the “Southern Mediterranean”, although Yemen and Bahrain are neither of these. Only some countries are mentioned by name (Egypt and Tunisia). This is not a trivial omission.

Leaving this point aside, the three main policy goals of these two communications are money, market and mobility. Does that constitute a real “new response”? A shared feeling among analysts seems to suggest that the answer is “no”.

Of the three goals, money is the easiest to deliver, although the economic crisis may cripple its delivery. As for market access, it is obvious that lifting all the European barriers on Mediterranean agricultural products will be met with resistance by some member states and, anyway, will remain constrained by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). As for mobility partnership, the EU is faced with a dilemma: the market requires new flows of migrants but European leaders are “incapable of selling this truth to their public opinion,”<sup>45</sup> which is opposed to new waves of migration.

The principles guiding the whole reflection are: “more and more” and “mutual accountability”. The “more for more” principle links rewards to reform. It is a “carrot” policy supposed to constitute a better enticement or “incentive” than the “stick policy” associated with negative conditionality. Any country which engages in “deep and sustainable democracy” will be rewarded with “upgraded status”, increased aid and enhanced political dialogue. Implicit in this principle are the elements of compliance, differentiation, reward and positive conditionality. Obviously, it is much better than the “less for less” approach but it remains an ambiguous notion. Indeed, who sets the benchmarks of “deep reform”? Who is entitled to make the performance assessment? Are the Southern neighbours ready or willing to accept and fully implement external prescriptions, even in exchange for reward?

On the other hand, what is meant by “mutual accountability”, which is another guiding principle? Can the Southern neighbours hold the EU accountable for its shortcomings on the question of mobility, the rise of Islamophobia and its lack of consensus on questions of foreign policy, like the membership of Palestine in the United Nations system? Can the Southern neighbours question EU double-standards in its dealings with Hamas and Israel? Can they ask for clarification as to why the European Council bypasses the EU Parliament’s resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, like the one adopted on 5th July 2012, which was very critical of Israeli practices in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. And how can such accountability be exercised and enforced?

---

45. B. Kodmani, “The logic of European actors in the face of democratic change in the Arab World”, in Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to Support Human Rights Defenders and Democratic Change, *Democratic Change in the Arab World*, Brussels, 2011, p. 38.

There is a host of other disturbing questions. As has been reiterated here, the “more for more” and the “mutual accountability” guiding principles have become the new icons of the European lexicon. However, these notions have not been discussed with the stakeholders themselves. How can a paradigmatic European response that rises to the challenges of the new environment be adopted without being open to the intellectual input of those concerned? This is another legitimate question which explains, to a large extent, the negative reaction of Arab social networks to the European response, considered as a “non-consensus response”. Recent European communications suffer, therefore, from a lack of local ownership: i.e. the absence of Arab intellectual input. No wonder, then, as the Oxfam Report points out, that “the shift to carrots from sticks is (...) not altogether new.”<sup>46</sup>

What about the notion of a “Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area”? It seems too intrusive and certainly not convincing. No doubt, free trade has many merits: it enhances efficiency through increased competition, spurs productivity, props up foreign direct investment, trade and trade logistics, and improves the general business climate.

In liberal and democratic states, liberalisation and privatisation are conducted according to rules and norms but, in authoritarian states, they often lead to the concentration of economic power in the hands of a minority, impeding growth to trickle down to the vast majority of the population. This has been the case in the Arab countries since the imposition by the International Monetary Fund of the structural adjustment programmes. Privatisation hastily imposed has simply transformed plan economies into clan economies while liberalisation usually benefits the more developed and diversified economies.

Therefore, as a general rule, it is unwise for donors, such as the EU, to attach economic policy conditions such as liberalisation. This view is endorsed by the Arab NGOs (non-governmental organisation) network, considering that “support for economic growth should be rooted in support for peoples’ choices of a revised economic model.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, the people should decide what economic model they want, and what kind of liberalisation is most suitable, at what speed and in which sectors. Liberalisation is not a panacea per se, especially if it is applied in countries where the private sector is still in limbo.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, the Arab countries which are in democratic transition are facing huge economic challenges. So their first priority is to put the economy back on track, alleviate poverty and tackle budgetary imbalances. A Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area will therefore remain a remote objective and certainly not an immediate goal.

46. Oxfam, *Power to the People? Reactions to the EU's response to the Arab Spring*, “Oxfam Briefing Note”, 14th November 2011, p. 5.

47. Oxfam, op. cit., p. 3.

48. Letter of Arab civil society organisations to the EU, “More for more as the EU's response to the Arab Spring”, 18th October 2011.

The EU should not rush in that direction. It cannot apply in the Mediterranean and Arab regions the “same toolbox” as in Eastern Europe and should show flexibility by adapting its approach to changing circumstances. The emphasis should be placed on poverty alleviation, women’s empowerment, gender equality, youth participation, job creation and sustainable development. The search for more equitable economic relations seems more urgent than mere liberalisation policies. In this respect, a multiyear assistance programme should be put in place to bolster competitiveness, innovation and knowledge technology. The EU should encourage Arab countries to engage in comprehensive and deep integration with each other. Otherwise, they will remain simple “captive markets” for external players. So, their priority should be precisely to create a level economic playing field by promoting regional integration. This is in the interest of the Arabs and in the interest of the EU itself. The volume of trade between the EU and Arab countries could be, at least, three times larger if Arab countries could reach the same degree of integration as in the EU.

### The Instruments of the New European Approach

In its quest to engage with peoples and not only with governments, the EU proposed two major instruments: the Civil Society Facility (CSF) and the European Endowment for Democracy

#### Civil Society Facility

Through this instrument, the EU aims to “support civil society organisations, to develop their advocacy capacity, their ability to monitor reform and their implementing and evaluating EU programmes.”<sup>49</sup> This support is deemed essential since it would enable civil society organisations to voice concerns, contribute to policy-making, hold governments accountable, and ensure that economic growth is geared towards poverty alleviation and inclusive growth.

Although laudable and praiseworthy in its intention, this proposal is met with scepticism by Arab civil society organisations. Similar proposals in the past have little impact: allocated financial support is insufficient, bureaucratic hurdles discouraging and disbursement very slow. Moreover, the selection of civil society organisations to be funded has often been inadequate and sometimes arbitrary: the EU engaged more with civil society organisations perceived more palatable and shunned others with a real social base. In many cases, European aid was diverted to paying salaries for the operating staff and many organisations would simply disappear without European assistance.

---

49. Oxfam, op. cit., p. 4.

Moreover, financial allocation looks meagre in comparison with the total funds allocated. Thus, not only should resources be increased and their delivery made swift and agile but the financed civil society organisations should primarily target rural areas, farmers' unions, youth organisations, gender issues, training, networking and coalition-building.

In the Arab countries where political transition is underway, the EU should avoid taking the driving seat and thereby delegitimizing a transition led by the people. It should be clever enough not to antagonise countries which have regained pride and which ask for more transparency in the relations between external donors and local actors.

### **European Endowment for Democracy**

This instrument differs from the CSF (Civil Society Facility) because it seeks to promote the creation of civil society organisations and provide assistance to trade unions and other social actors, such as non-registered non-governmental organisations.

This instrument is still under discussion and has not yet garnered sufficient support, with many analysts questioning its added-value in relation to existing instruments such as the old European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which was put in place in 2007 to support democracy promotion.

As a general conclusion of this section, the EU's new initiatives have taken the form of "piecemeal initiatives" falling short of a comprehensive strategy that is required to constitute a significant and effective response to the Arab region's huge challenges. Constrained by a deep economic crisis and a general mood of pessimism about the future of the Arab Spring, the EU has not much to offer. In terms of financial assistance, the Gulf States have made impressive financial pledges totalling billions of dollars to Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen. And while Tunisia bore the brunt of hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring out of Libya, European states were making a great fuss about 20,000 migrants seeking refuge.

Does this mean that the EU is missing an opportunity to consolidate its actorship? It is too early to give a definitive answer. Indeed, humbled by the courage and the sense of dignity of Arab youth, the EU is endeavouring to draw lessons from what happened in the Arab World, why and how. One lesson is that the EU should focus more on peoples and not only governments. That's why it came with the new instruments of the Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy but the EU should allocate more resources and put more substance in these instruments to be effective. There

should be a switch from the logic of how much funding to what kind of funding and to whom funds should be channelled. Indeed, it is misleading to think that actorship is gauged by the amount of money spent.

Another lesson is that the EU has a greater stake in promoting reform than other regional donors, which may “see democratic transitions in any Arab country as a challenge to their own legitimacy.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, promoting reform is not only a moral imperative but also a geopolitical goal.

### The EU as a Peace Promoter

It is a vital interest for the EU to have a neighbourhood living in peace. Hence, the Joint Communication of 25th May 2011 insists on the necessity for the EU to intensify political and security cooperation with neighbours, “enhancing the EU’s involvement in solving protracted conflict,” “promoting joint action with ENP partners in international fora on key security issues” and pushing for “concerted action of the EU and its member states.” With many unresolved conflicts at its doorsteps in the East (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and Nagornokharabakh) and in the South (Cyrus, the Western Sahara and the Arab-Israeli conflict), the EU is faced with serious security issues which require decisive leadership. The Joint Communication reaffirms that “business as usual is no longer an option if we want to make our neighbourhood a safer place and protect our interests,” and adds that “the EU is already active in seeking to resolve several of the conflicts” as part of the Quartet on the Middle East, as Co-Chair of the Geneva talks on Georgia, as an observer at the 5+2 talks on the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova. The EU is also engaged operationally on the ground (EU humanitarian mission in Georgia, EU Border Assistance mission in Moldova-Ukraine, EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah). We can also add the appointment of two special European envoys to the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos and Marc Otte, and a Special Envoy for the Mediterranean, Bernardino León.

All these actions would suggest that the EU is playing a significant geopolitical role as peace promoter in its neighbourhood. But if we take the Middle East as a litmus test of European involvement there is little reason to rejoice. The European role has often been incoherent, inconsistent and ambiguous. Without trying to be exhaustive, let us pick up some examples.

Clearly, the European Union has been a key “paymaster” of the Peace Process. I estimated total European aid to the Palestinian territories between 1993 until 1999 at

---

50. U. Dadush and M. Dunne, “American and European Responses to the Arab Spring: What’s the Big Idea?”, *Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2011, p. 135.



1.7 billion euros (direct European assistance, contributions to UNRWA budget and bilateral aid).<sup>51</sup> And according to more recent European figures, from 2000 to 2009, the EU disbursed 3.3 billion euros in aid to the Palestinians.<sup>52</sup> This is a significant amount of money. Clearly, the EU has been the single largest donor to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinians are thankful for such financial aid. But in a certain way, as Rosemary Hollis puts it bluntly, this aid “shouldered the cost of continued occupation and containment of violence in the absence of conflict resolution.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, the European Union is helping the Palestinians to remain quiet, to ensure the security of the occupying force and the Jewish settlements and to shore up a spineless Palestinian authority. This view is not shared by European officials but it is widely held by Arab opinion.

To a certain extent, it is easier to be “payer” than “player”. Real political clout is not gauged by the amount of money spent but by the quality of the results achieved. Real leadership requires a sense of purpose, economic and military resources, an attractive image, a long-term vision, a strong decision-making process, qualified diplomatic personnel and, above all, a unified actor. Although the EU does not lack qualified people, resources and image, it is not a unified actor. When agreement is reached among the 27 member states, it is most of the time on the “lowest common denominator”. Germany, for example, remains constrained by past memories and feels reluctant to openly criticise the Israeli practices in the occupied Arab land. Britain usually sides with the United States, whose alliance with Israel remains unshakable. France has been diplomatically active but with scarce concrete results. Overall, the EU prides itself on being a staunch advocate of the two-state solution, “without a strategy for making it happen.”<sup>54</sup>

Israel is an important trading partner of the EU with 26 billion euros in 2010. Already in 1994, the European Council of Essen stated that “Israel should enjoy (...) special status in its relations with the European Union on the basis of reciprocity and common interests.”<sup>55</sup> At that time, Israel had been occupying Arab territories for 27 years. Does Europe reward occupation with a “special status”?

Europe’s intent to upgrade its relations with Israel is another example of incoherence.<sup>56</sup> Since 1996, Israel has been a full participant in the EU Research and Development Framework Programme. It has signed an “association agreement” within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and an action plan with the EU within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. A few years later, on 16th June 2008,

51. B. Khader, *L'Europe et la Palestine des croisades à nos jours*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999.

52. A. Bertrand-Sanz, “The Conflict and the EU’s assistance to the Palestinians” in E. Bulut Aymat, *European involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict*, “Chaillot Papers”, December 2010, pp. 43-53.

53. R. Hollis, “The basic stakes and strategies of the EU and member states”, in Ezra Bulut Aymat, op. cit., p. 32.

54. R. Hollis, op. cit., p. 39.

55. European Council Meeting on 9th and 10th December 1994 in Essen. Presidency Conclusions, available at [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00300-1.EN4.htm](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00300-1.EN4.htm)

56. See Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, *EU-Israel Relations: Promoting and Ensuring Respect for International Law*, Brussels, 2012, 61 p.

the EU announced its intention to upgrade its relations with Israel. It was to become official on 15th June 2009 but the Israeli assault on Gaza (December 2008 and January 2009), which resulted in the death of 1,300 Palestinians and 13 Israelis and the destruction of many EU-funded infrastructure projects, forced the EU to put its plan on hold, while repeatedly stating that "it was not intended as a punishment on Israel."<sup>57</sup>

Three years later, in 2012, with the peace process on the wane and the settlement policy being pursued without respite, the EU decided on 2nd June to deepen and reinforce its relations with Israel in more than 60 concrete fields. Since then, concrete practical steps have been taken in spite of a tough resolution adopted by the European Parliament (5th July 2012) in which it severely condemned Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories. If we add to these incoherent initiatives the non-recognition of Hamas' victory in the Palestinian elections in 2006 and the failure of the Quartet to achieve anything, we can better grasp the depth of Arab mistrust of Europe's capacity to chart a new course in its Middle East foreign policy.

Can the Arab Spring constitute a clarion call for a pro-active and more coherent EU foreign policy? It remains to be seen. It is argued that the Lisbon Treaty provides the EU with a unique opportunity to become a more effective player. I have some reservations about this argument. The EU will continue to suffer from a lack of common will, conflicting interests and an inherent incapacity to act autonomously. On the question of the American invasion of Iraq or the NATO-led operations in Libya, the EU did not show a common front. Neither did it do so diplomatically, as we saw in the last vote in UNESCO on the question of Palestinian membership.

Can we then speak of the EU as a peace promoter? The analysis of the last 50 years suggests not. As for the future, I remain dubious.

---

57. N. Tocci, "The conflict and EU-Israeli relations", in Ezra Bulut Aymat, op. cit., p. 62.

## **General Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

---

In the last 50 years, from 1972 to 2012, EU relations with the Arab and Mediterranean States have been framed by a variety of initiatives: the Global Mediterranean Policy, the Euro-Arab Dialogue, the Mediterranean Renewed Policy, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean. Some group to group regional initiatives have also been launched: the 5+5 formula (10 states), the Forum of the Mediterranean (11 states) and the EU-CCG Cooperation (27+6).

All agreements between the EU and Mediterranean and Arab countries included a human rights clause based on respect for democratic principles. Nevertheless, the EU has always dealt with authoritarian Arab regimes, which often paid lip service to reform but never engaged in a real democratisation process.

By sidelining civil society actors, and with the gradual prioritisation of security over reform, the EU, as one author puts it “did not live up to its image of normative power,”<sup>58</sup> thus indirectly contributing to the political “status-quo”. By entertaining cosy relations with autocrats, the EU has not only caused embarrassment in the European Parliament but also undermined the EU in Arab eyes.

The Arab Spring calls the entire EU-Arab relations into question and forces the EU to rethink its strategy and partnership with its “nearest abroad”. This paper has analysed the EU response to the Arab Spring. In two communications, made public in March and May 2011, the EU spelled out its “new partnership” based on some guiding principles: “more for more”, “mutual accountability” and “Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area”. It also announced the creation of a Civil Society Facility and a European Endowment for Democracy.

Clearly, “the more for more” formula is supposed to be a cornerstone of the new partnership and a ground-breaking step towards more policy differentiation. However, the careful reading of the official documents does not suggest that the old paradigms have changed: the “more and more” “is very similar to the previous rhetoric of tailor-made approaches,”<sup>59</sup> and continues to over-rely on neo-liberal capitalist market economy recipes based on an “almost sacred belief in liberalisation and privatisation.”<sup>60</sup>

Translated in simple terms the “more and more” formula means faster reforms and better rewards. The rewards are encapsulated in the so-called 3M: money, market and mobility. No doubt, increasing aid is generous, opening-up the markets is valuable and enhancing mobility is necessary. More important, however, is supporting democracy and promoting

58. H. Pfeil, “The EU and the Arab Spring”, *Open Democracy*, <http://www.opendemocracy.net>, 20th July 2011.

59. E. Soler and E. Viilup, op. cit., p. 4.

60. T. Schumacher, “The EU and the Arab Spring: between spectatorship and actorship”, *Insight Turkey*, No. 3, 13th October 2011, p. 110.

human security through advice rather than lessons to contribute to peace-building, cultivating an image of “credible partner”, learning to “listen to unfamiliar voices” and speaking to the real actors of Arab civil society and not only to those elites who are more palatable in European eyes. The EU must not confuse “democratization” with “Europeanization”<sup>61</sup> given that such confusion may lead Arabs to think that Europe is simply exporting its institutional model and value system.

The EU should show real involvement in conflict resolution, mainly in the core conflict which is the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since 1967, the EU has reiterated on various occasions its condemnation of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories. This declaratory policy has not been matched by concrete actions, beyond the financial assistance given to the Palestinians and which, in reality, covers the cost of occupation. The time has come for the EU to chart another course of action in order to match its words with deeds.

Recent initiatives by the EU do not indicate that the EU is going in the right direction: it is reinforcing its ties with Israel while this occupying power is tightening its grip on the Occupied Territories through confiscation of land, rampant settlement policy and collective punishment; it does not speak with one voice. Moreover, it remains constrained by the difficulty to forge a Common Foreign Policy. In spite of constantly repeating, ad nauseam, that its Mediterranean policies like the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the UfM have the merit of putting Arabs and Israelis around the same table, it is preferable for the EU to put Arabs and Israelis on the same footing.

The Arab Spring offers the EU a rare opportunity to show leadership, to “strategically reassess its policy”<sup>62</sup> and to assert itself as a coherent, consistent and credible actor. The EU has vital interests in the Arab World. The two regions complement each other. No doubt the future of Europe lies in its immediate South. As the former Prime Minister of Italy, Massimo d'Alema, aptly wrote: “it is a make or break challenge for the EU's global role.”<sup>63</sup>

61. R. Youngs, *Lo que no se debe hacer en Medio Oriente y el Norte de África*, Policy Brief, Madrid, Fride, March 2011, p. 6.

62. See S. Calleya, “The EU's relations with the Mediterranean neighborhood in a regional perspective”, in S. Calleya and M. Wohlfeld (eds.), *Change and Opportunities in the Emerging Mediterranean*, Malta, MEDAC, 2012, pp. 397-413.

63. M. d'Alema, in *Europe's World*, Autumn 2011, p. 106.



## IEMed.

The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), founded in 1989, is a consortium comprising the Government of Catalonia, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Barcelona City Council. It incorporates civil society through its Board of Trustees and its Advisory Council formed by Mediterranean universities, companies, organisations and personalities of renowned prestige.

In accordance with the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's Barcelona Process, and today with the objectives of the Union for the Mediterranean the aim of the IEMed is to foster actions and projects which contribute to mutual understanding, exchange and cooperation between the different Mediterranean countries, societies and cultures as well as to promote the progressive construction of a space of peace and stability, shared prosperity and dialogue between cultures and civilisations in the Mediterranean.

Adopting a clear role as a think tank specialised in Mediterranean relations based on a multidisciplinary and networking approach, the IEMed encourages analysis, understanding and cooperation through the organisation of seminars, research projects, debates, conferences and publications, in addition to a broad cultural programme.

## EuroMeSCo

Comprising 93 institutes from 32 European and South Mediterranean countries, the EuroMeSCo (Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) network was created in 1996 for the joint and coordinated strengthening of research and debate on politics and security in the Mediterranean. These were considered essential aspects for the achievement of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

EuroMeSCo aims to be a leading forum for the study of Euro-Mediterranean affairs, functioning as a source of analytical expertise. The objectives of the network are to become an instrument for its members to facilitate exchanges, joint initiatives and research activities; to consolidate its influence in policy-making and Euro-Mediterranean policies; and to disseminate the research activities of its institutes amongst specialists on Euro-Mediterranean relations, governments and international organisations.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes a research programme with three publication lines (EuroMeSCo Papers, EuroMeSCo Briefs and EuroMeSCo Reports), as well as a series of seminars and workshops on the changing political dynamics of the Mediterranean region. It also includes the organisation of an annual conference and the development of web-based resources to disseminate the work of its institutes and stimulate debate on Euro-Mediterranean affairs.