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THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CO-OPERATION

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Different circles of co-operation

The Eastern Mediterranean concept remains partly heir to Cold-War geopolitics, when it focused on Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, other countries on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean being referred to as Levant, Near East or Middle East. The concept was first and foremost strategic in its character, as it alluded to Greece's and Turkey's membership in NATO as well as to their special geographic location and military posture with respect to the communist world (Yugoslavia and the Warsaw Pact countries).

As matter of fact, however, Eastern Mediterranean identified also an issue which has lived out the end of the Cold War, namely the Greek-Turkish dispute and Cyprus' entanglement in it. The endurance of the Greek-Turkish dispute as well as the failure to solve Cyprus' issue make it sensible to retain the concept of Eastern Mediterranean even today. Still, one has to account for the fact that, while the focus on Greece, Turkey and Cyprus continues, the context of such focus has changed remarkably, by including, further to the Levant and the Northern Tier's countries (another geopolitical concept coming from the Cold War) i.e. Iraq and Iran, the Black Sea adjoining areas and the Balkans, which play completely new roles with respect to the old Eastern Mediterranean focus. It is to this enlarged and fresh notion of Eastern Mediterranean that this paper makes reference to.

Today's Eastern Mediterranean area is part to various formats or circles of co-operation. Greece and Turkey are both members of NATO, the Partnership for Peace, and the OSCE. Besides, they are both members of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation as well as a number of sub-regional co-operative arrangements regarding South-eastern Europe. Important circles of co-operation, however, do cut across Eastern Mediterranean, beginning with the EU and WEU, where Greece and Turkey statuses differ significantly, while Cyprus is in a transition towards full EU membership (the outcome with respect to its partition looking still unclear). Furthermore, Eastern Mediterranean is divided by different cultural kinship and political alliances with respect to the European East and the Caucasus area as well as the Levant and the Middle East.

Greece and the Greek Cypriots are strongly linked to the world of Orthodox faith, from Serbia through Russia. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, despite domestic jacobeanism, tend to link up with Muslim countries and peoples internationally. This combinations are first and foremost determined by structural, long-term factors. Partly, however, are the result of the very basic dispute characterising the Eastern Mediterranean area. This appears especially true with respect to the Middle East — the Levant in particular — where respective relations with Arab countries and Israel are strongly commanded by national security reasons.

In this context, what are the significance and role of the 1995-born Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) to the Eastern Mediterranean sub-region and the countries it comprises?

As it is well known, the EMP is an international understanding enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration, whereby 27 signatory Partners — the 15 members of the EU plus Cyprus, Israel, Malta, Turkey, the Palestinian National Authority and six Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon Morocco, Syria and Tunisia) — have established a so-called holistic or multi-dimensional arrangement of co-operation contemplating political, security, economic-financial and cultural relations with a view to enhance “peace and stability” as well as “prosperity” in the region.

EMP’s trends and results have been widely commented (1). It is not worth going back to this debate here. With respect to Eastern Mediterranean problems, four issues have to be highlighted, instead: (a) the multilateral character of the EMP and the inherently indivisible character of its security concept; (b) the comprehensive security notion the EMP has adopted and its tendency to move less towards the achievement of security than broad partnership-building; (c) the role of the EMP with respect to Turkey; (d) the role of the Black Sea in the Eastern Mediterranean countries’ national security.

Sub-regionalism in the EMP

In a scheme of security co-operation — so much so in a scheme based on co-operative security (2) — security must have an indivisible character, in the sense that no factor or measure must increase one country’s security while diminishing that of other countries. For this reason, security co-operation must be achieved in principle in a multilateral context where a kind of “most favoured nation” clause is working. In the starkly-opposed but strategically-homogeneous Cold-War context of the CSCE, such indivisibility helped the countries involved to build up a common framework of security and attenuating security dilemmas. It was the strategic coherence of the context that allowed the CSCE members to gradually achieve an equal security by applying the same measures.

The area encompassed by the EMP, far from being strategically consistent, is highly fragmented. In this area there are many disputes and conflicts, each one fostered by different factors, like the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Western Sahara dispute, and the Greek-Turkish dispute, just to mention the most important ones. These conflicts cannot be brought to a common denominator. Consequently, the establishment within the EMP of security measures pertaining to the whole of the Mediterranean has proved practically unfeasible. To be fair, in the debate on this point which took place in the past four years in the EMP, it was the Arab-Israeli conflict to highlight the incongruity between the Mediterranean setting and the aim of establishing a multilateral scheme of security co-operation (3). Still, it is clear that parties to other conflicts or disputes in the Mediterranean would raise objections similar to those put forward by the Arabs towards the establishment of CBMs or CSBMs in what they perceive as a unique political and military context.

In the relations between Cyprus, Greece and Turkey a number of CBMs and CSBMs have been implemented (4). These measures are strictly linked to the situation of the Eastern Mediterranean area, however, and could progress in the sub-regional context only.

The experience made so far suggests that the EMP cannot be a surrogate for bilateral or sub-regional negotiations, by taking into account specific factors and trends. This is not say that the EMP is a useless, perhaps dangerous “rationalist” gadget. The problem the EMP and their members are facing is to finding out the right level for taking joint action. This level cannot be singled out that easily. It cannot be so specific as to interfere with

sub-regional or bilateral relations; at the same time, must not be so broad as to get void.

With respect to these questions, current negotiations on the Euro-Med Charter for Peace and Stability (5) may bring about a more operational EMP in its own multilateral context. First, the EMP is beginning to set out a new generation of measures which are directed at building broad confidence and transparency with a view to increase partnership rather than fostering military security (like it was the case with the CSCE/OSCE three generations of CBMs/CSBMs we are generally more familiar with). These CBMs/CSBMs have been called Partnership-Building Measures (PBMs) by the EMP *ad hoc* ministerial conference which took place in Palermo in June 1998. One such PBM approved in the EMP context relates to joint action in case of natural or man-made disasters. This PBM contemplates a co-operation between national civil protection services. It is close to the kind of peace support operations defined as Petersberg tasks in the WEU/EU circle.

Second, while the current draft of the Euro-Med Charter stresses security indivisibility as a pivotal principle in regulating relations among Partners, there are pressures in the EMP towards adopting a certain degree of flexibility in the implementation of such indivisibility. The implementation of the above mentioned PBM on disaster, when considered in more detail (6) is an example of such flexibility. On the other hand, while the Euro-Med Charter asserts security indivisibility, it points out the principle of voluntary participation as well.

The outcome of this debate on flexibility will be very important for the EMP to be enabled to support sub-regional conflicts or crises. Eastern Mediterranean could take advantage from this flexibility as well as other Mediterranean sub-regions. At the occasion of the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Greece, collaboration between civil protection services emerged as a factor of confidence- and peace-building. In the event, the collaboration took place independently of the EMP, Still, it shows that the EMP is moving in the right direction.

Comprehensive security

Another important character of security in the EMP is its comprehensiveness, meaning that Euro-Mediterranean security is perceived as dependent on a plurality of factors of different nature rather than military factors only. This notion is clearly reflected in the Barcelona Declaration, where the achievement of the area of peace and stability contemplated by the first chapter is linked to the achievement of the area of shared prosperity envisaged by the second chapter as well as to the co-operation in the social, cultural and human realms of the third chapter. In the debates which brought about the establishment of the EMP the inherent linkage between these different factor with respect to the achievement of security was unequivocal. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the EU was willing to include in the new Mediterranean security initiative a notion of broad security that characterises the EU itself and its fundamental experiences in shaping security in Europe.

The difficulties in setting out a viable security co-operation in the military field, which have been illustrated previously, have accentuated the multi-dimensional character of security of the EMP and provided the latter with a concept which is definitely tilting towards non-military factors (and the possibility of taking joint action less in crises management and peace enforcement than in conflict prevention and peace-building). The

decision to establish PBMs rather than CBMs/CSBMs is an evidence and a result of this trend towards a non-military concept of security in the EMP.

In principle, this trend would suggest a Euro-Med Partnership focusing on fostering economic and social development as well as strengthening the human dimension, the rule of law and democratisation. On the Southern side, however, while the goal of social and economic development is welcome, that of strengthening human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance tends to be regarded as a destabilising intrusion. Problems relating to human rights and democratisation in the Eastern Mediterranean are not new. With respect to Turkey and the situation in Cyprus, the EMP is facing the same problems faced in EU-Turkey relations. Could the EMP help solving EU opposition with Turkey in relation to human rights and the rule of law? One may be sceptical thereon for a number of reasons.

The most cogent reason is not at all the weakness the EMP is showing in convincing the Southern Partners to move to different standards in the field of human rights, democracy and governance. It is now clear that the EMP perspective is one of long-term. In fact, many Partners may be even willing to converge towards similar Euro-Med standards in democracy, governance and human rights. At the same time, it is also clear that they cannot do it overnight. At the same time, Southern Mediterranean countries feel culturally different from Europe and want this difference to stay. For this reason, their convergence not only will take time but will be in any case different from the movement of re-identification of Eastern European countries towards their real or imaginary “mother Europe”. This means that their convergence will be, so to speak, reduced in its character and purport with respect to what is expected from Eastern European countries.

After the end of the Cold War, the identity of Turkey is less clear than it used to be, and this is more true with respect to Europe than with respect to the West as a whole. This author believes that Turkey will remain a secular country despite the importance of its Muslim component. Still, it has to accommodate this religious component by including it in its secular polity rather than suppress it in an old-fashioned kemalist-jacobean way. On the other hand, Turkey must also find the way to accommodate its cultural differences, thus giving some degree of autonomy and identity to the Kurds. If Turkey will be unable to come to terms with these problems, its convergence with Europe is destined to be also “reduced” in its character.

Eventually, this could be a solution leading to an EU-Turkey relationship similar to, say, EU-Egypt or EU-Israel relations. But it cannot be so, because Turkey is envisioning its participation in the EU as a full member rather than a “reduced” convergence with the EU in the long term. Consequently, the most cogent reason the EMP cannot act effectively with Turkey in a context of comprehensive security like the one prevailing in the EMP today, is precisely that Turkey wants to become a member of the EU and believes (correctly) that these issues of human rights and democracy must be solved in its bilateral relations with the EU rather than in the EMP.

In sum, when looking at the question from the point of view of comprehensive security and the prominence human rights and democracy do have in this very notion, the EMP doesn't look like the most appropriate instrument to deal with Turkey and to contribute to solving the Eastern Mediterranean dispute between the countries of the region. When it comes to such question, EU-Turkey relations seem more in order.

The role of the EMP with respect to Turkey

Let's elaborate a little bit on the point just raised, as it is crucial to the relations between the EMP and Eastern Mediterranean. If Turkey were really to go its own way as a power with a distinct identity from Europe and were to be happy with it, a "reduced" political and cultural convergence within the EMP — as it is the case with NATO — would be possible and bring co-operation to bear with the EU and its Eastern Mediterranean members. But, despite recurrent declarations that Turkey will go its way no matter what Europe thinks or does, Ankara continues to envisage a special link with the EU, including membership. In this perspective, the EMP can be easily perceived by Turks as a discriminatory and divisive factor. If this were true, the EMP initiative would not help solving conflicts and disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean area. On the contrary, it might exacerbate existing negative perceptions and make any action geared to conflict resolution more difficult than it is already.

Something more must be said on Turkish perceptions of the EMP and the contradictions its non-European location within the EMP seems to bring about. With the establishment of the latter, for the first time Turkey has found itself on the other side with respect to Europe. In a good number of international organisations, Turkey is siding with the West and Europe. In the EMP, it finds itself on the side of the Southern Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, while Cyprus and Malta are candidate to become members of the EU, the Turkish candidature has been rebuffed at the 1997 Luxembourg Council, thus confirming its non-European identification by the Europeans.

As we have pointed out in previous sections, the evolution of the EMP has put off to an indefinite time (the draft of the Charter approved in 1999 Stuttgart ministerial conference says "at the appropriate time") the achievement of the measures of arms control, arms limitation and disarmament envisaged by the first chapter of the Barcelona Declaration including CBMs and CSBMs of military or military-related character. Still, the role of Turkey in the EMP military-related security co-operation remains an issue to be clarified. For Turkey is an EU ally in NATO and has a status in the WEU. This entanglement (and the one with NATO) cannot be overlooked in relation to the possible implementation of regimes of security co-operation between the EU and the Middle Eastern area.

The most intractable problem, however, is the trend of the EMP towards reinforcing its non-military notion of security, thus reinforcing its interest towards human rights and democracy. This trend complicates EU relations with its Southern Partners in the EMP, but creates a greater problem in Turkish European relations. For Turkey may accept to discuss its democratic deficit as a European country, much less so as a Southern Mediterranean one.

In this situation, no wonder if Turkey has maintained in the EMP a very low profile and expressed reservations (??). The EMP exposes its problematic relationship with the EU vividly. In this sense, the EMP may tend to hindering rather than fostering regional crisis management and solving, to the extent (a very important extent) Eastern Mediterranean conflicts are related to Turkey-EU relations, instead.

Mediterranean and Black Sea

It must be pointed out that Turkey's reactions to the impact of the EMP on sub-regional security are not only negative. One significant discourse that emerges from the Turkish debate on Turkey's relations with EU points out the important convergence of Turkey

and the EU on the Black Sea rather than the Mediterranean (8). This is a good argument both in the EU-Mediterranean and the Eastern Mediterranean sub-regional perspectives.

In the perspective of the relations between the EU and the Mediterranean there is no doubt that the lesson of the last four years with the EMP is that there is no specific problem of security across the Mediterranean but a limited set of stability issues, generally related to social trends like immigration, criminality and the like. In the same years or so, the Balkans and Russia came up as problems of security strategically affecting the EU and the wider trans-Atlantic security system the European countries are linked to. There is no doubt that from the EU point of view the Black Sea concerns areas more security-intensive than the Mediterranean Sea.

In the sub-regional perspective, that is the Eastern Mediterranean perspective, undoubtedly there is a convergence of security views between Cyprus, Greece and Turkey about the most relevant role the Black Sea adjoining areas do play with regard to respective national security and interests. To be sure, Greece is strongly supporting the EMP but — like all the EU countries — more because it is part of the Union's common ground than because of its real priority in the Greek national security and foreign policies. Like in the case of Italy, the EMP is an important complementary factor for the Mediterranean policy of the country but doesn't coincide with national priorities. The latter are elsewhere: for Italy as well as for Greece security concerns are related to the Balkans and Russia. In this sense, there is a convergence of national interests with Turkey.

Thus, Eastern Mediterranean countries' national interests look towards the same areas. Priorities are very similar. In these priorities the Mediterranean ranks lower than the Black Sea. In a sub-regional perspective of conflict resolution, this indication may be very important. It is important in the EU-Eastern Mediterranean relations as well. In the latter perspective, it suggests to give prominence to the Black Sea rather than the Mediterranean for the former may act as a unifying factor.

Conclusions

The paper has tried to comment on the significance and role of the 1995-born Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) to Eastern Mediterranean and the countries it comprises.

Four issues have been highlighted: (a) the multilateral character of the EMP and the inherently indivisible character of its security concept; (b) the comprehensive security notion the EMP has adopted and its tendency to move less towards the achievement of security than broad partnership-building; (c) the role of the EMP with respect to Turkey; (d) the role of the Black Sea in the Eastern Mediterranean countries national security.

The multilateral character impressed on the EMP entails a more or less strict application of a principle of security indivisibility. The paper points out that in a strategic perspective the actual very fragmented character of the Mediterranean area makes the implementation of security indivisibility very difficult. The Eastern Mediterranean countries have already adopted a set of CBMs and CSBMs attuned to sub-regional and bilateral security requirement. The application of region-wide CBMs and CSBMs may not fit with specific situations, unless region-wide policies are implemented at a very general, maybe ineffective level. Within the EMP, however, the implementation of non-military related PBMs, like that providing co-operation between civil protection services in case of

disasters, may help upgrading broad confidence and become a factor of co-operation in sub-regional situations, despite differences. Furthermore, there is trend in the EMP debate towards making the application of indivisibility more flexible.

After four years, it is clear that the EMP is putting off its ambitions of establishing a security co-operation comprising a strong military-related component and is directing itself towards a comprehensive security co-operation in which non-military factors have a strong prominence. In the European vision, these non-military factors, besides economic and social aid, would include important elements of human rights protection, democratisation and good governance. This tendency is opposed by Southern Partners, who would like to give prominence to economic development. The risk of this trend with regard to the Eastern Mediterranean is that it singles out Turkey by displacing its human rights/democracy debate from a European circle, in which Turkey is available to discuss its position, to an exclusive non-European circle, where Turkey may feel it helpless and humiliating to negotiate.

The paper points out that, in more general terms, the role of the EMP towards Turkey may expose the problematic Turkish-EU relationship to the point of radicalising Ankara and generate a negative impact on the sub-regional conflict management and resolution perspective.

The paper concludes by highlighting the convergence of the EU, Greece, Cyprus and Turkey on the higher importance, from a sub-regional perspective, of the Black Sea co-operation with respect to co-operation in the Mediterranean. While this direction would not necessarily detract from the EMP co-operation, it would enhance the chances of a conflict resolution perspective in the Eastern Mediterranean sub-region.

Notes

(1) The establishment of the EMP has given way to an extended literature. Among other references to general works, see: Aliboni R., "Südmediterrane Herausforderungen. Antworten der EU-Staaten sind gefragt", *Internationale Politik* (vol. 51, no. 2, Februar 1996), pp. 9-14; Attinà F. et al., *L'Italia tra l'Europa e il Mediterraneo: il bivio che non c'è più*, (Bologna: Il Mulino for AREL, 1998); Bin A. (ed.), *Cooperation and Security in the Mediterranean. Prospects After Barcelona*, (Malta: Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta, 1996); Bistolfi R. (sous la direction de), *Euro-Méditerranée, une région à construire*, (Paris: Publisud, 1995); Marks J., "High Hopes and Low Motives: The New Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Initiative", *Mediterranean Politics*, (vol. 1, no 1, Summer 1996), pp. 1-24; Tsardanidis Ch., "Common and conflicting interests of Mediterranean EU member states and third Mediterranean countries", in E. Ahrim, A. Tovias (eds.), *Whither EU-Israeli Relations? Common and Divergent Interests*, (Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang, 1995), pp. 29-44. Comments on recent developments can also be found in: Aliboni R., *The Charter for Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean*, (presentation to the Informal EuroMeSCo -Senior Officials Seminar on "Euro-Mediterranean Security Dialogue" organised by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs), (Bonn: 19-20 March 1999) (mimeographed); Calleya S. C., "The Euro-Mediterranean Process After Malta: What Prospects?", *Mediterranean Politics*, (vol. 2, no. 2, Autumn 1997), pp. 1-22; Joffé G., *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Two Years After Barcelona*, (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Middle East programme, Briefing no. 44), (London: May 1998); Joffé G.(ed.), "Perspectives on

Development: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, (vol. 3, no. 2, special issue, Summer 1998); Spencer C., “Building Confidence in the Mediterranean”, *Mediterranean Politics*, (vol. 2, no. 2, Autumn 1997), pp. 23-48.

(2) Nolan J. E., “The Concept of Cooperative Security”, in J. E. Nolan (ed.), *Global Engagement. Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994), pp. 3-18.

(3) Heller M., *WMD and EMP Policies of Arms Control and Limitation: An Israeli Perspective*, (Rome: EuroMeSCo Working Group on Confidence-Building, Arms Control and Conflict Prevention, 1998), (mimeographed). Mohammed El-Sayed Selim, *Towards a New WMD Agenda in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: An Arab Perspective*, (Rome: EuroMeSCo Working Group on Confidence-Building, Arms Control and Conflict Prevention, 1998) (mimeographed) [to be both published by Frank Cass, London in a book edited by R. Aliboni, G Joffé, A.M. Said Aly, Ávasconcelos].

(4) Tanner F., “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Prospects for Arms Limitation and Confidence-Building after Malta”, *The International Spectator*, (vol. 32, no. 2, April-June 1997), pp. 3-25; Miller S., “CBMs in the Maritime Arena”, in S. Feldman (ed.) *Confidence Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East*, (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1994), pp. 71-79.

(5) The Euro-Med Charter is being negotiated as the functional instrument which should enable the EMP to implement the principles pointed out by the Barcelona Declaration. After three years, all these talks have brought about is a draft presented by the German EU Presidency to the 1999 ministerial conference in Stuttgart under the name of “Guidelines for Elaborating a Euro-Med Charter for Peace and Stability”.

(6) Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, *Co-operation between Civil Protection Services*, Information Note no. 32, in www.euromed.net. For details in implementation see www.euromed.net/document/12091998eng.htm.

(7) Turan I., “Mediterranean Security in the Light of Turkish Concerns”, *Perceptions*, (vol. 3, no. 2, June-August 1998), pp. 16-31. Tashan??

(8) Tayfur F., *The Turkish Vision of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation: Observations on Sub-Regional Cooperation*, (Ankara: EuroMeSCo Working Group on Sub-Regional Co-Operation, 16 March 1999) (mimeographed).