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North Africa: Exceptionalism and Neglect

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Introduction

The proximity between Europe and North Africa is not just geographical, rather it includes a long common history of conquest and cooperation. With the advance of globalisation and the diffusion of risks and threats, the upcoming EU extension east- and southwards, and the apparent paradigm shift after September 11, what are Europe's security interests in its southern neighbourhood today? For the European Union, civilian power obliges that the security interests in the region are considered in terms of challenges and partnerships. Challenges include root causes of conflict such as poverty and underdevelopment, socio-economic unrest, and crosscutting issues such as international terrorism, narcotics trafficking, illegal migration and energy dependence. The stakes of Europe in the Mediterranean region go well beyond the risk of potential spillovers: they are anchored deeply in a colonial legacy and an increasingly troublesome presence of North Africa inside Europe. The Al Qaida attacks on New York, and also the killing of German tourists in Djerba, reveal a dangerous connection between Europe's North African diaspora and international terrorism. The danger lies also with xenophobic overreactions by European politicians that could lead to a strengthening of 'Fortress Europe' - a development that would invalidate EU efforts to engage in political, economic and civil society partnerships in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

To respond to these challenges, Europe is struggling to develop a coherent strategy for the Mediterranean. To achieve this strategy, the EU needs internal cohesion and an external

identity. This paper argues that these requirements are currently not present: the EU's internal cohesion is challenged by national exceptionalism and the inadequate use of multi-layered policy-making instruments, such as the intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) as well as the Common Mediterranean Strategy (CMS), and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) with its MEDA programme.¹ The EU's external identity is largely lacking because the EU has thus far not been able to ascertain its interests as a security actor. With regard to North Africa, the foreign policy issue is even more complex due to the blurring between internal and external security agendas that are linked to the colonial legacy, migration and Islamist terrorism.

From Protector to Partner?

The EU relations with North Africa are profoundly marked by the colonial legacy of European powers such as France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Algeria - by far the most populous country of the Maghreb - was until 1962 an integrate part of France. Tunisia was a French Protectorate from 1881 until 1956, Morocco from 1912 to 1956, the Western Sahara was a Spanish Protectorate from 1884 to 1976 and Spain still controls today the last remnants of colonial history with Ceuta, Melilla, the Chafarinas Islands, the Rock of Alhucemas and the Rock of Velez de la Gomera. Italy in contrast invaded Libya in 1911 and imposed there its own colonial rule until World War II.

The colonial period established the 'hub-spoke' dependency that still marks the relations between Europe and North Africa today. For the Maghreb countries, the EU is by far the largest trading partner both in terms of imports (Tunisia 71.6%, Algeria 58%, Morocco 57.7%) and even more in terms of exports (Tunisia 80%, Algeria 62.7%, Morocco 74.3%).² The South-South or

¹ The EMP is also called the Barcelona Process; the MEDA programme is the principal financial instrument of the European Union for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

² European Commission, *Country Profiles of the 12 Non-EU Mediterranean Partners*, SMAP, 2001.

'horizontal' relations are quasi-non existent, despite certain recent initiatives such as the Agadir process, the Eisenstat Initiative or the regional and sub-regional programmes under the Barcelona Process. The colonial ties combined with geographical proximity have also led to a strong influx of North Africans to Europe, including nearly one million of French decent and other Europeans who fled Algeria during its war of liberation in the mid-1960s.

The EC developed under the heading of the European Political Co-operation (EPC) its first Mediterranean policy in 1972 with the conclusion of several commercial agreements. The Arab oil embargo of 1973 and the ensuing energy crisis had for the first time highlighted Europe's energy vulnerability towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East. As a consequence, the European states engaged in a political dialogue with Arab states. This Euro-Arab dialogue represented a first attempt of the EC to create a politically structured exchange with its southern neighbours. Even though this rapprochement did not last, it accelerated the economic multilateralisation of the EC with the Mediterranean. Under the label of Global Mediterranean Policy, the EC concluded from 1973 until 1980 numerous 'first generation association agreements' with Arab states and Israel.

The EU policies toward the Mediterranean region were substantially altered by the inclusion of the Mediterranean states of Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986). These countries, together with France and Italy, would henceforth constitute a southern club within the EU that lobbies in favour of the Mediterranean in terms of policy initiatives and resource allocations.

With the end of the Cold War, the EU was able to politically reach out to a formerly East-West divided Mediterranean region. At the Lisbon European Council in 1992, the EU declared the Mediterranean region a 'zone of interest' for the Joint Actions of the newly created CFSP.³ The determining criteria for such a declaration were: geographical proximity; interests in the political and economic stability of the region; and the

existence of possible threats that could directly affect the EU.⁴

The original ideas of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by Italy and Spain were blocked in 1992 by other EU states. The breakthrough to a pan-Mediterranean strategy came only as a counterfactual by France and other southern states that were concerned with the EU's orientation eastwards under the pressure of a unified Germany. Indeed, the EMP was accepted by the EU once "France started to present a reinforced policy in the Mediterranean as a strategic counterpart to the pre-accession strategy towards the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC)".⁵

With the launching of the EMP or Barcelona process in 1995, the EU increased its strategic orientation towards the South. It provided a normative framework for a holistic policy that would cover the entire pan-Mediterranean region ranging from Atlantic Morocco to the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. But, the Barcelona Process was not an instrument for EU foreign policy; rather, it served as a basis for a long-term exercise in soft power projection. The formal objective of the EMP was to create a "zone of peace, stability and shared prosperity". The unofficial purpose was to defuse migratory pressures from the South by creating stability and support economic development.

Europe's launching of a comprehensive security area included - similarly to the OSCE - security, economic and cultural or human chapters. This policy was driven by the EU Commission, which linked its programmatic and financial EMP commitment to the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law and the free-market economy. This liberal set of values found its way into the Barcelona Declaration itself and was also enshrined in each Association Agreement that the EU signed with individual Barcelona partner states. It was supported by democracy assistance programmes, human rights projects and civil society promotions.

³ European Council, 92/253 Conclusions of the European Council meeting in Lisbon, held on 26-27 June 1992 (extracts only), in European Cooperation Documentation Bulletin (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 1995), p. 351.

⁴ See Bulletin of the European Communities, 1992, No. 6, p. 22.

⁵ Monar, Jürg, "Institutional Constraints of the European Union's Mediterranean Policy", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 50.

The political and security dimension of the Barcelona Process has been in trouble from the very outset. The Oslo breakthrough in 1993 allowed the EU to design a political forum that would include Israel and Arab states, including the Palestinian Authority. But, with Israel still being militarily present in southern Lebanon, Syria and Lebanon objected to any kind of military-political arrangements, including confidence building measures that would have a military component. After the arrival of the hard-line government under Netanyahu in mid-1996, Arab states shied away from security and defence matters in the Barcelona context. This development was fuelling the Arab scepticism about the European proposal for a Stability Pact, which was renamed the Charter for Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean. This Charter was to provide the EMP with a normative base in the broad field of security cooperation. With the worsening of Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Charter was de-linked from EMP meetings and frozen at the Marseilles Ministerial summit in 2000.

The Valencia Ministerial summit of 2002, in contrast, adopted an Action Plan that for the first time also included ESDP in the pan-Mediterranean security discourse. This action plan primarily targets the reduction of information costs in the EMP area through an institutionalised political dialogue and information exchange. The sustained impact of September 11 also produced a determination of the Barcelona Partners to pursue the mandate of an Ad hoc Group on Terrorism. Related to this, the Valencia meeting also reached agreement on a programme of cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, in combating drugs, organised crime and terrorism as well as cooperation relating to migration and movement of people.

Inadequacies of EU instruments for a coherent strategy

The EU is one of the few international actors that command a wide variety of policy instruments to foster security, development and governance with 'near abroad' regions. The problem is that the unanimity requirement in CFSP decision-making

impedes a European policy on North Africa. External trade relations and financial assistance do act instead as substitutes. This reveals the 'consistency of inconsistency' between EU external relations and CFSP, national foreign policies and EU policy, and the rhetoric and reality of EU declarations and policy.⁶ As this section will show, the EU policy instruments such as the Common Mediterranean Strategy, the Association Agreements, the Barcelona Process and the MEDA programme are only partially implemented and they do not enjoy the full support of the CFSP, because member states try to instrumentalise these programmes or they do not invest their national agendas to an EU-wide foreign policy approach. Furthermore, the emerging security and defence dimension of the EU needs to be positioned within a comprehensive EU strategy towards the region.

The Common Mediterranean Strategy of the EU

The making of a common strategy should include *prima facie* a strategic and holistic commitment of Europe toward the Mediterranean. It should provide clear roadmaps and mandates regulating the competencies and division of labour between CFSP and the High Representative for the CFSP, the Special Envoy for the Middle East and the Commission. Instead, due to its limited scope and abstract nature, the CMS is unable to produce anything close to a European grand strategy for the Mediterranean. The CMS includes a large number of points that still require clarification.⁷ There are several explanations for these deficiencies. First, the CMS document is not much more than a combination of the Barcelona principles, the Berlin Declaration on the Middle East and the Council Conclusions of the Tampere concerning Justice and Home Affairs. In other words, the 'strategy' amounts to not much more than reiterations of existing EU commitments. Second, the French, considering themselves the guardians of the Charter for Peace Stability in the Mediterranean, insisted in making the Charter a core element of the CMS at the cost of other

⁶ Stelios Stravidis and Justin Hutchence, "Mediterranean Challenges to the EU's Foreign Policy", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, No. 5, 2000, p. 38.

⁷ Felix Neugart, "Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East", Discussion paper, CAP. Bertelmann Foundation, January 2002.

substantial provisos. The CMS defers to the Charter a key role in stability-building in the Mediterranean, including the EU's role in a 'post-peace era' in the Middle East.⁸ The CMS works with the assumption that the Charter - that is still a work in progress - will be an integrate part of the EMP sooner or later. Third, the CMS is not able to position the ESDP in an overall approach to the Mediterranean.

On the positive side, the CMS provides a more explicit basis for the EU to strengthen the Barcelona Process in areas going beyond the Barcelona Declaration. This is particularly relevant with regard to the involvement of the EU and the Euro-Med Partnership in peacebuilding efforts in the Middle East under the eventuality of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. The CMS also engages the EU Presidency to evaluating the EU's progress in the Mediterranean region on a regular basis, but "not less than annually" (art. 33). Finally, the existence of a Common Strategy, even if it is not as effective as anticipated, can serve as a baseline reference against bilateralism or exceptionalism of individual EU states towards North Africa.

Problems with the Barcelona Process

The Barcelona Process is driven primarily by the Commission and the MEDA programmes. After seven years, the lack of visible results has given way to considerable criticism, both by government officials and policy analysts. This long-term structural approach cannot in itself enable the EU to act as a security actor in the Mediterranean region. Symptomatic of this situation is the fact that the formal parameters of the Barcelona Process do not allow the EU to tackle individual conflicts. For instance, conflict-solving structures on Cyprus and the Western Sahara are under UN auspices, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains under the US patronage.

The Middle East conflict has been a paramount obstacle to the EMP cooperation in the politico-security areas. Syria and Lebanon refuse to participate in EMP activities that are tied to an extensive political discourse or to confidence-building measures because of the presence of Israel. This is why several initiatives to promote cooperation among defence academies in the EMP area have been stalled. This initiative has now been taken up, instead, by NATO which is promoting seminar diplomacy with southern Mediterranean NATO partner states.

The real problem with the Barcelona Process is the rhetoric-policy implementation gap and the limits of liberal philosophy in the soft security projection. The EU, conditioned through internal constraints linked to the Common Agricultural Policy and farmer lobbies from Southern European states, restricts the import of agricultural products from the South and applies its free-trade maxim only to oil, gas and industrial products. But, even in the textile sector, for instance, the South was pressured to accept "voluntary restraint agreement", while exposing previously protected domestic sectors "to the full force of European competition".⁹ Bechir Chourou argues that the EU's policy of conditionalities and half-measures towards North Africa actually aggravated the socio-economic conditions which, in turn, "led to mounting social unrest, and where organised opposition existed, it was led by the Fundamentalists".¹⁰ Chourou's warning clearly points to the lack of EU leadership and decisiveness with regard to its southern periphery.

The future of the Barcelona Process is not just affected by its slow progress in the political and economic fields. It also risks changing its character with the impending enlargement of the EU towards the South: Malta and Cyprus are expected to join the EU as of 2004, and Turkey will take longer but as a candidate state it already has privileged access to EU funds and policy-making mechanisms that are not open to the

⁸ Javier Solana argued that the "unspoken competition between the CMS and the ongoing effort to draw up a 'Charter for Peace and Stability' in the Barcelona framework" has led to much confusion about the CMS. See Report by the Secretary-General/High Representative, *Common Strategies*, Council of the European Union, No. 1487/100, 21 December 2000.

⁹ George Joffe, "European Multilateralism and Soft Power Projection in the Mediterranean", in Tanner, *The European Union as a Security Actor in the Mediterranean*, Zürcher Beiträge, Nr. 61, ETH, Zurich, 2001, p. 39.

¹⁰ Béchir Chourou, "Security Partnership and Democratisation: Perception of the Activities of Northern Security Institutions in the South", in Brauch, Hans Günter et al., eds., *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for the 21st Century*, p. 177.

southern Mediterranean states. Thus, the EU enlargement will leave the EU in a partnership that reverts back to a Euro-Arab dialogue plus Israel. This anticipated development highlights even more the salience of the Israeli-Arab relations in the EMP and adds therefore yet another reason why Europe should be more involved in peacemaking in the Near East.

MEDA and Democracy Promotion

North Africa is an important test ground for EU democracy promotion to 'near abroads'. MEDA, a sister programme to TACIS and PHARE, was created to support the liberalisation and economic development efforts of the southern Partner states. Patten has repeatedly made the point that the EU financial commitments are "dependent on adequate progress". But, the southern states refused in their reform plans to go beyond the declaratory acceptance of EU conditionalities that were generally geared towards good governance and market liberalisation. The governing elites resisted legal changes, deregulation, privatisation and institution building under MEDA or IMF auspices.

In addition to the economic difficulties, the main obstacles to liberalisation are the authoritarian regimes reigning in some southern Mediterranean countries. The EU has not taken any clear stance against the military dominated government in Algeria, nor against the increasingly authoritarian regime under Ben Ali in Tunisia. Thus far, even in the face of reversal of political reforms in countries such as Tunisia, the EU did not take any measures, not even via the new Association Agreement that includes a suspension clause for democracy-related projects. In this context, Richard Youngs rightly observes that the EU conditionality policies towards North Africa is "oriented overwhelmingly to economic and not a political criteria."¹¹

In the aftermath of September 11, the EU has been losing even more high ground to criticise Arab states for their crackdowns carried out in the name of global anti-terrorist campaigns. Tunisia, but also Morocco, has reversed political liberalisation of the 1980s "in face of Islamist

challenges".¹² Finally, any critique of human rights violations of Israel in the occupied territories has led to Israeli and American allegations of anti-Semitism in Europe.¹³

The MEDA programme as the modicum of EU democracy promotion must be considered a failure for the 1995-99 period as disbursements have only reached 26% of the total amount committed (€4.685 billion). The pledged amount represented about 11% of the total annual EU budget on external action.

The broader reason for this failure is the disconnection between the EU's overall approach towards the South and actual policies on trade, development assistance and democracy promotion. Furthermore, the asymmetrical North-South relationship puts the South clearly in a disadvantage: the EU as a single representative of the North negotiates with each North African country on an individual basis, therefore ignoring common concerns from the South. Finally, southern states are very reluctant to engage in MEDA economic projects that are linked to political reform.

Other practical reasons for the underperformance of MEDA include understaffed Commission personnel dedicated to the Mediterranean, the complicated bureaucratic procedures in Brussels and delayed disbursements of funds. Chris Patten did acknowledge the shortcomings and he engaged "a comprehensive review of the Barcelona Process with the aim of reinvigorating the Process and making it more action-oriented and results-driven".¹⁴

As a consequence, the MEDA programme for 2002-06 was redesigned to produce faster payoffs with the help of "short and medium term goals". They include: (1) more Commission staff for the MEDA programmes; (2) deconcentration of implementation of the programme to the Commission's delegations in the partner countries; (3) faster delivery of financial assistance; and (4) fewer projects financed but with higher amounts. The amount available for

¹¹ Richard Youngs, "Democracy Promotion, The Case of European Union Strategy", CEPS, Working Document No. 167, October 2001, p. 35.

¹² Dillman Bradford, "Facing the market in North Africa", *The Middle East Journal*, Spring 2001, p. 198.

¹³ See the notorious op-ed by George Will "Final Solution Phase 2", *The Washington Post*, 2 May, 2002, p. A 23 and the reply by Chris Patten, "Stop Blaming Europe", *The Washington Post*, 7 May 2002.

¹⁴ Chris Patten, *Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process* (COM (2000) 497 final of 6 September 2000).

MEDA is €5.35 billion, this should allow the EU to sustain current efforts, but not engage in an expansion with major new projects. It is clear that the events in the Balkans and the EU extension towards the North and the East prevent a further growth of EU resource allocations to the South.

CFSP, ESDP and national 'exceptionalisms'

The notorious dichotomy between EU policies and national agendas of member states comes to the fore particularly well in the context of North Africa. The French-Algerian and Spanish-Morocco examples showed that a credible CSFP needs more constraints of member states and more coordination between the Union and member-states.

The Algerian civil war of the 1990s did at times directly involve French political and military support, especially under the reign of French Interior Minister Pasqua who had largely accepted the thesis that Europe must join in a war against 'international Islamic terrorism'. The French exceptionalism on Algeria stymied the EU from embracing a clear policy against the Algerian militaries. The EU did not attach any conditionality to existing assistance programmes and trade relations with Algeria that were quite substantial.¹⁵ Youngs argues that the EU Commission's political aid work has become an extension of French policy and that - as a result - other EU states felt "their work became more associated with French policy and consequently more politicised."¹⁶ Stavridis and Hutchence also argue that Europe's energy import dependence on Algeria played a role in the EU's reluctance "to use civilian means to pressure the Algerian government to protect its own citizens".¹⁷

Another example where parochialism prevails over the CFSP is the Spanish-Moroccan feud that simmered over fishery rights, migrant workers and cities of Ceuta/Melilla. Morocco repeatedly accused Spain of double standards by demanding free passage of goods, while denying free

passage of labour migrants. Spain accused Morocco, in turn, of being lenient on illegal migration and ineffective on transit migrants from black Africa and beyond. The dispute escalated when Morocco withdrew its ambassador from Madrid amid allegations of Spanish interference in the Western Sahara issues. The withdrawal happened on 27 October 2001, one day after a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial meeting in Agadir during which Spain could have submitted the issue into the multilateral forum, via the CFSP. The dispute further escalated in July 2002 over the forceful removal of Moroccan gendarmes from Perejil, an uninhabited islet off Morocco by a Spanish rapid reaction force. This time the EU got involved, but in most lamentable terms: The EU Commission, under the pressure from various member states and the EU presidency had to change several times its offer to 'mediate' in the dispute.¹⁸ Furthermore, France vetoed an ESDP statement of solidarity with Spain in order to punish the latter for not informing the ESDP institutions about its plan to retake the islet by force. As the *Financial Times* argued, it was the close personal relations between President Chirac and King Mohamed as well as "lucrative economic deals that took precedence over EU solidarity."¹⁹ The irony of the entire episode was that Washington finally had to mediate the dispute. The case also showed that the EU Commission could in general only play a limited role in CFSP matters. In the case of the Spanish-Moroccan dispute, the Commission was even more constrained as Spain was holding the presidency in the CFSP.

The EU has to date only a very limited possibility to support its approach to the South with soft and hard power projections. Indeed, the EU has no security concept towards the South, even though the EU Headline Force has been declared operational at the Leiken summit. NATO, in contrast, did - with its strategic concept of 1999 - not rule out operations in the Middle East and it is currently deployed in the eastern

¹⁵ Stelios Stavridis and Justin Hutchence, "Mediterranean Challenges to the EU's Foreign Policy," *European Foreign Affairs Review*, No. 5, 2000, p. 51.

¹⁶ Youngs, "Democracy Promotion, The Case of European Union Strategy", p. 18.

¹⁷ Stavridis and Hutchence, "Mediterranean Challenges to the EU's Foreign Policy," *European Foreign Affairs Review*, No. 5, 2000, p. 51.

¹⁸ The President of the Commission was asked by the Spanish Government to enter into contact with the Prime Minister of Morocco in order to express the grave concern of Europe about the further evolution of this issue. The president had then backtrack from an offer to "facilitate dialogue" to a statement that the Commission "stands ready to facilitate-while no suggesting any mediation", *Financial Times*, 19 July 2002.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Mediterranean in support of the Afghanistan campaign.²⁰ But NATO has no strategy towards North Africa or the Mediterranean region, primarily because such a regional template would not fit into the global security assessment of the US.

Especially in view of the 'exceptionalisms' of various EU member states with regard to North Africa, it is important for the EU to engage in a transparent strategic review process in order, as Francois Heisbourg argued, "to determine what is the full range of Petersberg tasks and the strategic framework in which they should fit."²¹ There exists today a distinct need to associate the southern partner states with ESDP, not just because the Mediterranean would be - together with the Balkan - one of the most likely 'theatres' of Petersberg operations. Given the colonial legacy, many observers from the Maghreb perceived the launching of EUROMARFOR in 1997 as yet another tool of western interventionism in the Mediterranean. There exists a clear information deficit in the South on European forces and ESDP. In this context, a Euro-Mediterranean Study Group proposed a number of confidence-building measures such as the accreditation of southern military liaison to the military cell in Brussels and the sending of military observers to ESDP military exercises.²² A possible association of Barcelona Partners to EU military crisis management could be seen through extending the 'third states concerned' category as defined at the Feira European Council Summit to Barcelona states. For the time being, the Feira statement concentrated on Russia, Ukraine, and Canada; but it left the door also open to "other interested States".²³ Such an involvement could go in parallel with a stronger

involvement in PfP activities, in which all of the North African states already participate *à la carte*, except Libya, through the NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue Process.

It remains unclear to what extent the ESDP will in the future be able to assume some of NATO's security co-operation with Mediterranean states. The envisaged European Defence College could become a contact point and interlocutor for Defence Academies in the Barcelona area. This may or may not be linked to the promotion of pan-regional interoperability in civilian and military crisis response. Whether the EU and its ESDP will use NATO's PfP network will depend on the future relevance of PfP on Petersberg Tasks as well as on the attitude of some European states such as France with regard to future trans-Atlantic security co-operation.

Euro-Med Co-operation under the ESDP auspices could also include the training of police forces. Here the EU has already a track record with the extensive training programme of Palestinian policemen and security forces. Equally, under the MEDA 2000 programme, the EU finances a police modernisation project in Algeria in the amount of €8.2 million. Policing will be the first official ESDP mission, as the EU will take over policing in 2003 from the UN's International Police Task Force (IPTF), which numbers 1,800 officers.

A real challenge for ESDP and transatlantic relations would be if some European states would be convinced by the US to participate in joint operations against terrorism in the greater Mediterranean, in particular Iraq. NATO or a 'coalition of the willing' drawing from NATO assets could be a potential instruments of such western interventionism, that could take the form of coercive counterproliferation policy in the Mediterranean under the guise of the global US-led anti-terrorist campaign. This scenario has gained more currency with the extension of President Bush's 'axis of evil' to include Libya and Syria.

²⁰ To NATO, there are currently five reasons why the Mediterranean matters: Instability, terrorism, link to the Middle East and Iraq, WMD proliferation and energy security, see "NATO and the Mediterranean - Moving from Dialogue Towards Partnership", Speech by NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson's at the Royal United Services Institute, London, 29 April 2002.

²¹ Francois Heisbourg, "Introduction", in Tanner (ed.) *The European Union as a Security Actor in the Mediterranean*, p. 7.

²² Euro-Mediterranean Study Group Commission (EuroMeSCo), Working Group III, *First Year Report: European Defence-Perceptions and Realities*, EuroMeSCo Paper 16, June 2002.

²³ Santa Maria de Fiera European Council, 19/20 June 2000, Conclusions of the Presidency, Annex 1: Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence.

The blurring between internal and external security agendas

The link between European and Mediterranean security has become more visible after the end of the Cold War. In terms of security, a number of crises support this observation. They include the Algerian civil war and the bombing campaign of Algerian Islamists in France in the mid-1990s, the Al Qaida attacks on New York that displayed strong North African-European connections, and the bloody escalation of violence in the Middle East. All of these events have posed a policy challenge to the EU and its CFSP. They also showed that proximity matters in the North African-European nexus.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center did not only trigger a global response against terrorism, but they have also given rise to a renewed civilisational debate on “Islam and the West”, an issue area most combusive for Europe’s relation with the Maghreb. There are approximately 10 million Muslims in Western Europe, many of whom are second or third generation Muslims from North African decent. In France alone, there are about 5 million Muslims and in Germany about 3.5 million.

Many Al-Qaida terrorists are North Africans living in European countries.²⁴ It becomes increasingly evident that Islamists maintained terrorist cells all across Europe; they benefit from disaffected Muslims in Europe. According to Sami Zubaida, many Muslims in the West and especially younger generations may have shared in the enthusiastic adulation of Bin Laden and his organisation and the fact that “some British, American and European young Muslims were found in the ranks of al-Qa’ida shows that there are organisations and networks active in these countries, recruiting young Muslims for militant action in other parts of the world, even for violent interventions in their countries of residence.”²⁵ In addition to Europe’s North African connection to the attacks of September 11, more recently a European-associated Al-Qaeda terrorist from

Tunisia was involved in the killing of 15 German tourists in Djerba on 11 April 2002.²⁶

The terrorist attacks of September 11 and Djerba have triggered an intense debate in Europe about internal and external security measures in the fight against terrorism. The Mediterranean dimension of the international fight against terrorism was highlighted also unexpectedly by Israeli accusations that the European Union finances terrorist activities in the Middle East.²⁷

The anti-terrorist debate has led to anti-Arab sentiments within European societies, which were cleverly exploited by rightist populists such as Le Pen in France. The general move to the political right, driven by anti-migratory sentiments, has therefore had an impact upon EU policies, even if these rightist groups are not in power. Currently, national, intergovernmental and community policies are under pressure from the public of member states to act against illegal migration.

As a response to the right-wing vote in France in early May 2002, the EU Commission has proposed that the EU set up a multinational EU border guard that would work with Europol to help safeguard its external borders from illegal immigration and terrorism. The fight against international terrorism raises calls for better coherence and coordination between the EU’s external and internal security concerns. It basically implies that a future strategy towards the Mediterranean would have to rely on all three pillars. This represents a great challenge to EU policy-makers as each pillar has different modes of decision-making and, as a consequence, numerous EU-North African issues, such as immigration, terrorism, and development assistance would need coordination with CFSP. But, in spite of these apparent difficulties, European states have been able to work together effectively against terrorism in the past. Under the heading of Terrorism, Radicalism, Extremism and International Violence (TREVI), EU governments co-ordinated their response against international terrorism in the 1980s which led to

²⁴ Jason Bruke, “Al-Qaeda trained hundreds from UK”, *The Observer*, February 24, 2002.

²⁵ Sami Zubaida, “Islam in Europe”, Paper presented at a GCSP Seminar on Islam and the West, 2-3 May 2002.

²⁶ German Minister of Interior Schily argued that the attack was linked to the Al-Qaeda network: *Djerba: Schily sieht Verbindung zu El Kaida*, BBV Online-Dienst, 11 May 2002.

²⁷ EU soll palästinensische Terroristen finanziert haben, *Spiegel on-line*.

the dismantling of the Hisbullah's Western European network in 1987.²⁸

Since September 11, the EU has taken several steps in the fight against terrorism which include agreements against financing terrorist organisations and activities, a common EU arrest warrant and a common definition of terrorist acts. The EU response to terrorism and migration will also have an impact on visa and immigration policies that will also apply to new member states, including the new Mediterranean states of Malta and Cyprus.²⁹ Furthermore, the EU will have to enforce more consistently its Association Agreement that requires the North African states to closely co-operate in the fight against illegal migration and in particular against transit migration from Sub-Saharan states.

The 'Fortress Europe' approach clashes with the Barcelona ideal of creating an all-inclusive Euro-Med zone of peace and prosperity. According to Claire Spencer, many of the Euro-Med co-operative programmes would be jeopardised by an increasing anti-immigrant stance of the EU: "In the socio-cultural sphere, the controversies aroused by the visa, asylum and migration questions in both the JHA (Justice and Home Affairs) arena and more immediately at national European level, have prejudiced the EMP's ambitions towards encouraging greater contacts among civil societies of the Mediterranean and European regions".³⁰

Conclusion

The EU is neither a strategic actor nor has it a strategic vision towards North Africa and the Mediterranean. This paper has shown that this is largely due to the colonial past and national exceptionalism that block EU intergovernmental decision-making. Furthermore, the Mediterranean is too large and too diverse for a focused EU policy. It may be time to have a second look at specific regions, such as North Africa, even

though this may collide with pan-Mediterranean templates of the Barcelona framework. This argument gains currency as long as Israeli-Arab conflicts threaten to paralyse EU's multilateralist approach to the region.

Given these caveats, how can the activities of the EU in the Mediterranean be strengthened and be made more coherent? First, the Common Mediterranean Strategy should be reviewed. Such a strategy should go beyond an accumulation of various *acqui* and spell out a clear strategic vision. The second requirement is to associate more closely CSFP with the implementation of Association Agreements and the MEDA programmes. Third, the EU extension policy, that is *ipso facto* an integrative policy, should avoid the impression that 'Fortress Europe' is simply moved south. It is a simple truth that North African states cannot join the inner circle of the EU. This poses implicit limits to Brussels policy of conditionality and to the southern regime's interest and motivations to go along with economic and political reform.

The EU remains for the time being a civilian actor that relies on its economic might and liberal vision, both of which are - *faute de mieux* - implemented by programme and not by policy. But, the democracy promotion experienced a serious setback with September 11 as it served as a convenient pretext for various partner states to indiscriminately clamp down on non-violent opposition groups.

The EU today is still building up a toolbox for flexible crisis management with various military and civilian instruments. The strength of the EU is the increased ability to mix the various instruments of soft and hard power. According to Heisbourg, this ability provides Europe with a comparative advantage even over the United States that "gives pride of place to the military component of policy".³¹ The need for the right combination of ESDP with long-term structural measures requires an effective cross-pillar co-ordination.

This study has shown that the delicate nexus between international terrorism, Islam and migration can have a serious impact on EU relations with North Africa. The intersection of security, political, economic and even JHA leads

²⁸ Jonathan Stevenson, "Countering Terrorism at Home: US and European Experiences", Paper presented at IISS/DCAF Conference on Implications of 11 September for the Security Sector: A Year On, 11-13 July 2002, p. 9.

²⁹ Steven Everts, "Shaping a credible EU foreign policy", *CER*, 2002, p.6.

³⁰ Spencer, Claire, op.cit., p. 15.

³¹ Heisbourg, François, "Introduction", p. 6.

inevitably to an internal EU test of multi-layered policy-making. This test is difficult to pass, given the various stakes and legacies of Southern European states in the Mediterranean region. In final account, the EU strategy towards North Africa remains very much a function of where the EU is going institutionally - a federal state or a multi-speed construct.