ANALYSIS

PEACE AND SECURITY

FRANCE'S MEDITERRANEAN POLICIES

Ambitious initiatives but lack of momentum?

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The first contemporary Mediterranean partnership was launched in 1995 as the Barcelona Process. The originality of the partnership resided in an action philosophy incorporating the economic, environmental, political, social and security parameters. However, it's limits were quickly reached.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was created in 2008 to give new political momentum to Mediterranean cooperation. Three problems prevented this: the non-resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the financial crisis of the EU and the political instability in Arab countries since 2011.

There is a fear that in the future Arab states will favour partners such as the United States, Russia or China. In this context France initiated the Summit of the Two Shores.

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Executive summary

In addition to bilateral partnerships, a significant share of the relations between the European Union (EU) and countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is organised through multilateral partnerships. The Mediterranean, analysed as the epicentre of threatening crises, also appears as a geographical and conceptual framework likely to provide a coherent response to the challenges faced by shoreline countries.

The first contemporary Mediterranean partnership was launched in 1995 as the Barcelona Process between the 15 EU member states and 12 countries of the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, including eight Arab states. This partnership was organised around three axes of activity: politics and security, economy and finance, society and culture. The strong intuition of the Process resided in the understanding of the indivisible nature of this triptych and of the impossibility of building balanced partner relationships between the two shores of the Mediterranean if one of these constituent parts was missing.

However, the limits of the Process are quickly reached, in particular because of the incapacity to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also due to the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004, which modifies the relationship framework of EU countries with their immediate environment: the aim was to create, via bilateral agreements, a periphery of countries subject to a »good governance« designed by the Europeans. Therefore, the project of creating multilateral cooperation agreements based on common objectives is put on the back burner and countries on the European periphery are no longer partners but neighbours. The shift is not just semantic and the ENP, which gradually replaces the Barcelona Process, is reduced to a security-trade liberalisation tandem quite removed from the concerns of the countries on the southern and eastern shores, given that trade opening alone cannot constitute a development strategy in itself.

Very rapidly, the Barcelona Process thus becomes ineffective and it is in this context that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is created in 2008, in order to give new political momentum to Mediterranean cooperation. Based on a union of projects with a variable geometry, the UfM never managed to generate the expected momentum. Three negative factors are combined here: the persistence of the non-resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which blocks the development of efficient projects; the economic and financial crisis suffered by the EU that leads to its inertia; and the political instability, consequence of the uprisings in several Arab countries starting in 2011 that de facto ruined the ambitions of the UfM.

Thus, the Mediterranean policies of the EU proved to be unable to initiate a true partnership. The inability of the Union to project itself as a strategic player and the difficulty that southern shore countries have in taking the path of firm economic development make partnership a remote perspective. Especially considering that, for now, while the Arab states of the southern shore must increasingly rise to meet European requirements, they do not obtain, in exchange, significant advances on matters that are vital for them.

In this situation, there is a fear that the two shores of the Mediterranean will be less and less able to formulate common visions and projects and that Arab states will then think in terms of advantages/disadvantages and, in the future, favour partners such as the United States, Russia or China. This would mean that security, political or economic challenges would not be handled by the regional players who are the most directly affected. The stake is nonetheless for the states committed to this Mediterranean partnership to ultimately be able to build their strategic autonomy and in a position to face any common challenges without having to obey humiliating conditions imposed by any foreign powers.

These challenges will remain as they are if the partners are unable to reactivate the initial method of the Barcelona triptych. The originality of the partnership resided in an action philosophy that attempted to promote a global approach incorporating the economic, environmental, political, social and security parameters. Unfortunately, at this stage, there is a lack of this strategic vision and the two shores seem to be growing further apart rather than closer.

It is in this context that France has decided to relaunch the Mediterranean project through the initiation of a Summit of the Two Shores. Several guidelines must structure the latter while avoiding the pitfalls that sank previous initiatives. However, it is also important to clearly define and limit common methodological bases to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Today, the Mediterranean is probably one of the seismic fault lines of international relations. Indeed, countries of the southern and eastern shores are experiencing both strong internal tensions (weak legitimacy of most regimes, authoritarian obstruction, radicalism of the opposition that is rarely allowed to legally express itself) and regional conflicts that are of varying intensity, but some of which are enduring and worsening (Israel-Palestine, Morocco-Algeria, Aegean disputes, Cyprus, etc.). Furthermore, the region is subject to the competing strategies of many international players – the United States, Russia and, increasingly, China – especially because of the major energy-related prizes that are located in immediate proximity to its territory. These combined factors make the Mediterranean a fragile region in which political and geopolitical parameters are crucial for the decryption of ongoing developments.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, a semantics comment is necessary. The concept of a »Euro-Mediterranean« area is often used to discuss the region we are interested in. However, this term is ambiguous, to say the least. Indeed, it could be interpreted to mean that Europe per se is not part of the Mediterranean region or, in other terms, that the southern shore is the Mediterranean and that Europe is only a supplementary factor. It is easy to understand that, beyond the question of the term, essential political problems emerge. For this reason, we choose to speak of a »Mediterranean partnership,« which allows us to integrate the northern and southern shores as partnership entities with equal rights and duties.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AS A PLACE OF DANGER… AND NECESSARY COOPERATION

Mediterranean cooperation was invested with political content at the start of the 1990s. At the time, the relationship between Europe and the southern as well as eastern shores of the Mediterranean was increasingly perceived in terms of confrontation. The destabilisation factors were accumulating back then: first Gulf War; Algerian crisis, leading to a civil war that ended with 200,000 dead and 15,000 missing persons; flow of Maghrebi immigration that increasingly became a domestic policy challenge in northern shore countries.

The Mediterranean was a source of concern and was interpreted as the epicentre of a looming crisis. The sea, that fluid space that conveys humans, ideas and goods, became once again anxiety-provoking. Simultaneously, however, the Mediterranean appeared as a geographical and conceptual framework likely to provide a coherent and global European response to what is perceived as a threat. This belief is the source of the reform of Europe's Mediterranean policy.

Initially promoted by southern European countries, the Mediterranean topic is progressively communitised, and the European Commission decides to fundamentally update the objectives and instruments of Mediterranean policy with the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP or EuroMed) in 1995. The recentering of Europe is therefore, first and foremost, a strategic choice that is in alignment with a clearly stated external security concern following the fall of the Berlin Wall, considering that the potential threat zone had shifted from the East to the South.

The EMP, recorded in November 1995 in Barcelona – hence the term »Barcelona Process« commonly used to refer to all of the institutions, mechanisms and projects implemented then – is structured around a triple focus: politics/security, economy/finance and society/culture/humanitarianism. The audacity of the project was to attempt to formulate a global response to all of the challenges by reaffirming the unbreakable link that exists between security, economic development and political democracy. From the point of its initiators, it was also an attempt to limit the risk of a violent confrontation resulting from the glaringly unequal development between the two shores of the Mediterranean. This just goes to show how central the concerns regarding the risk of unrest, and therefore security issues, were from the very beginnings of the EMP, while it was simultaneously attempting to provide a global response to all of the challenges within the Mediterranean area.

However, under pressure from Washington, the Europeans agreed, starting in 1995, to dissociate the EMP from the question of peace in the Middle East in a context where, it must be said, the Oslo process still seemed viable. It must be noted that, over the years, the context became radically different, shaped by the consolidation of the United States' strategic grip on the region, especially after September 11 2001, and by the strengthening of the security dimension, represented by the affirmation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) through the Mediterranean Dialogue established at the end of 1994 – bringing together Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and then Algeria in 2000 – which made the EMP less legible, at least with regard to its security aspect.

However, despite the evolutions of the strategic equation, the European Union (EU) has, more than ever at the time, a political obligation to implement a process that takes into account all of the challenges of the region, this being in line with its fundamental interests. And, even though the EMP was designed as a coherent whole, it can hardly be said that both shores of the Mediterranean have come to a common perception of said security and development questions.

As a matter of fact, the disconnection of the »security aspect« from the general framework recorded in Barcelona accelerates negative centrifugal tendencies, especially the acceptance of granting the United States priority on this matter through the intermediary of NATO, which, in other words, was equivalent to an admission that the EU was incapable of building an autonomous security concept, what's more in its immediate periphery and with partners it is connected to in various ways.

Beyond these difficulties, partly due to the ambitiousness of the project, the EMP raised many hopes. Indeed, the Med-

iterranean was suddenly idealised and mythologised as a space where only exchange, racial mixing and co-development were conceivable. The Barcelona Declaration became a waking dream, a moment of euphoria shaped by the blossoming of political promises without restraint. In reality, however, little-known among the population in the North or in the South, this project failed to win over hearts and minds due to a lack of specific achievements and shared progress. In the absence of means and results, the EMP gradually lost its meaning.

THE LIMITS OF THE BARCELONA PROCESS

Even though the EMP's track record is not void, observers all agree that the specific results did not meet original expectations, as evidenced by the obvious failure of the tenth anniversary of the partnership in November 2005, which only two out of the ten heads of state and government from southern shore countries attended. In order to understand the prevailing situation at the time, a first problematic element is what we might refer to as the temptation of European unilateralism. Indeed, what is the justification for the EU de facto imposing a reconfiguration of the cooperation architecture in the Mediterranean when it decided, during the European Council of June 2003, to modify the framework of its relations with its peripheral countries through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which includes three regional groups (Mediterranean, Caucasus, Eastern Europe) and 17 countries[1] – as well as the signing of bilateral action plans? We may legitimately ask ourselves if grouping Moldavia and Algeria, Ukraine and Morocco in the same partnership method is strategically pertinent and, thus, have serious reservations regarding the *de facto* competition between a multilateral process – the EMP – and a bilateral process based on national action plans – the ENP. To that extent, the intrinsic dimension of the EMP, which gave it its originality, completely lost its substance.

Moreover, the semantic shift is revealing since, in this case, there was a transition from the concept of »partnership« to that of »neighbourhood,« which carries a dual risk. First of all, it risks a real weakening of Mediterranean cooperation projects, if the EU and southern shore countries no longer pursue common objectives. The EMP was then faced with a pivotal challenge, to the extent that there was a real risk of dilution of the »partnership« into the »neighbourhood,« because the rule might become that of the project à la carte, in contradiction with the inclusive dimension of the Mediterranean relationship as it was initially defined in Barcelona. The second risk is that of Europe isolating itself by attempting to implement a type of security buffer, with the aim of protecting itself from Middle Eastern, Maghrebi and African turbulences. In this situation, it became difficult to articulate genuine joint security projects. After a decade of existence, the EMP was thus faced with a major contradiction: the necessity of staying the course set by Barcelona and a requirement to formulate new operating conditions.

Finally, it seems imperative to recall the central role of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The all in all limited achievements of the EMP are also, in large part, due to the failure of the peace process as it was managed under exclusively American leadership. It therefore appears that a reform of the EMP largely depends on the resolution of the Palestinian question, because it ultimately interlinks and condenses all the risks of worldwide and regional upheavals: non-compliance with international law, enduring conflict regarding the incarnation of a cause perceived as common by the peoples of the region, and antagonism symbolising the fault line of the hypothetical »clash of civilisations.«

The difficulties that arose were therefore significant, especially since the ENP, which gradually replaced the Barcelona Process, was itself little by little reduced to a security-trade liberalisation tandem that was quite removed from the concerns of southern shore countries. However, trade opening per se cannot constitute a development strategy. Last but not least, this is the moment when a recurring criticism developed, formulated by players on the southern shore regarding the lack of transparency and parity in the EMP decision-making processes, thus frequently accusing Brussels of making decisions alone and presenting them with accomplished facts.

NICOLAS SARKOZY: FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN UNION TO THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

If there is one good thing to be said for the idea of a Mediterranean Union supported by Nicolas Sarkozy, who was at that time President of the French Republic, it is that it helped reopen the debate regarding the centrality of the Mediterranean in the foreign policy of France and the EU, as well as that regarding the suitability of European policies for facing the multiple challenges faced not only by the shoreline countries but also all those located »beyond,« meaning the countries of the Sahel-Saharan strip, or even of sub-Saharan Africa.

The idea of a Mediterranean Union was formalised during the Toulon speech of 7 February 2007, given in the course of the French presidential election campaign. The candidate Sarkozy declared that »by turning their backs to the Mediterranean, Europe and France believed they were turning their backs to the past,« but in fact »turned their backs to their future,« for »the future of Europe is in the South[2].« A few minutes after the announcement of the presidential election results, in May 2007, he called for the establishment of »a Mediterranean Union that will be a link between Europe and Africa« and stated that this project would be one of the

1 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia, Russia, Ukraine, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia.

2 »Toulon Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy,« 2007, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1djxc

main ambitions of his five-year term. A while later, Nicolas Sarkozy specified his idea further by indicating that what was needed was the initiation of a policy inspired by the founding fathers of Europe, meaning the creation of de facto solidarity through actual actions on specific subjects, and therefore a union of projects with a variable geometry.

However, in the mind of its initiator, the Mediterranean Union only concerned Mediterranean shoreline countries. For this reason, this project particularly irritated Chancellor Angela Merkel, who refused to see Germany assigned to Central and Eastern Europe and France to the Mediterranean, fearing that this kind of distribution of roles would release, within the EU, dangerous centrifugal forces. For her, there was no question of going back to the system of shared zones of influence, as in the 19th century; European projects must concern all member states of the Union.

In addition to this position of principle, the German chancellor could also not accept being solicited for the financing of the projects if she did not have a political part in their elaboration. Tensions between France and Germany became extremely high at the time, and Nicolas Sarkozy finally had to give in and switch from a project for a Mediterranean Union to a project for a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to be ultimately carried by the EU and not just the countries with a Mediterranean shoreline.

Since the method chosen by the UfM was characterised by the will to implement specific projects, the first projects chosen were articulated around cleaning up the Mediterranean, the construction of sea and land highways, the reinforcement of civil protection, the development of replacement energies and of a Mediterranean solar plan, the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean university and, finally, a Mediterranean initiative for corporate development, especially geared towards small and medium enterprises (SME)[3]. It is paradoxically for these reasons, among others, that the Mediterranean Union as initially conceived by Nicolas Sarkozy could not meet the scope of the financial challenges presented by the realisation of such projects. Furthermore, the French president's vision mainly suffered from a structural method error. At the time, he could frequently be heard to explain that we needed to do for the Mediterranean what had been done for Western Europe following the Second World War, meaning using the economy as a factor of peace. However, the comparison is not admissible, because the first specific European projects, in particular the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), were initiated after peace was concluded between the conflict participants, especially France and Germany. Proof that political will and decisions do indeed precede economic achievements. As it happens, we were not in that situation in the Mediterranean region in 2008, nor are we today, and it would be completely unrealistic to claim that it is possible to finally build an efficient Mediterranean partnership without first resolving the ongoing conflicts, chief among them that opposing Israelis and Palestinians. To that extent, a »Mediterranean of projects« cannot be considered sufficient.

Despite these contradictory parameters, the Barcelona Process – Union for the Mediterranean was finally formally proclaimed on 13 July 2008. This was an indisputable logistical success for French diplomacy – largely trounced by the candidate Sarkozy and often decried as old-fashioned and inefficient – since it managed to bring together 43 countries. Only Libya under Muammar Gaddafi refused to participate.

It should be noted, however, that the final resolution was an absolute masterpiece of political cant and boilerplate, that there was no group photo, and that any and all decisions regarding the chairmanship, the upcoming co-presidencies and the general secretariat were postponed. However, that is maybe not the main point. The criticism must focus first and foremost on the time and energy wasted before arriving at what we should have started with: a vigorous relaunch of the Barcelona Process.

Despite its many faults, this project, which should nonetheless be credited for even existing, was also unable to deliver the expected results. It must be conceded that, independently of the initiators' will, the regional and international political parameters that characterised the political situation at the time proved to be insurmountable obstacles, preventing the UfM projects from coming to fruition. There were multiple reasons for these failures. First of all, the international economic and financial crisis, along with its violent repercussions for the EU, prevented the release of the necessary funds for the implementation of structuring projects. Then, the profound political shock wave that went through the Arab world in 2011 was another blow to the UfM: not only were citizens' concerns focused on other subjects at the time but, in addition, two of the key partners from the southern shore, Hosni Mubarak and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, were dismissed by their own people. Finally, there were two other reasons, even more essential, to these failures. The first and most important one is the Palestinian question, the non-resolution of which prevents any cooperation project worthy of the name between the two shores of the Mediterranean; the second one is the often condescending attitude European leaders keep displaying towards their southern partners. The combination of situational and structural reasons has thus made impossible the relaunch of a genuine partnership, which remains objectively desirable. There is then the impression of a freeze period for any Mediterranean project worthy of the name, and we have to wait until June 2019 for a new initiative to see the light of day, carried this time by Emmanuel Macron.

EMMANUEL MACRON: THE SUMMIT OF THE TWO SHORES

In August 2018, in his speech to the traditional Annual Conference of French Ambassadors, President Macron stated his wish to »pick up the thread of a different Mediterranean

3 »Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean,« Paris, 13 July 2008.

policy, by learning each and every lesson from what we have achieved and from what, occasionally, we were unable to do, with the involvement of all the civil societies concerned, but also including the recreation of a more inclusive Mediterranean policy, which is probably also a condition for the reconsolidation of the Maghreb.«[4] As this intention gradually took shape through the perspective of the organisation of the Summit of the Two Shores, two characteristics began to emerge. First of all, its format is restricted to that of the 5+5 Dialogue,[5] bringing together ten shoreline countries of the western Mediterranean basin[6]. Then, the explicit intention to largely involve the civil societies in the preparation process. This choice quite clearly revealed an attempt to sidestep the underlying political problems, in order to avoid being directly confronted with the upheaval and instability of the eastern Mediterranean, on the one hand, and the inertia as well as resistance of regional state entities, on the other hand. Learning the lessons from the recent past, Emmanuel Macron thus decided to remove himself from the heaviest political constraints in order to focus on the attempt to initiate a projects dynamic.

Furthermore, the French president started operating on the basis of a strong distinction between western and eastern sides of the Mediterranean basin, explained by parameters pertaining to the far-reaching history of the region as well as recent political and economic developments. Emmanuel Macron's presidential team seems to consider that the strongest tensions are concentrated in the eastern Mediterranean and that, consequently, it is easier to establish partnerships with the western side. However, this ignores the endurance of the Western Sahara issue and the decomposition of Libya, for which, incidentally, France's policy carries a heavy responsibility.

Thus, it is within the restricted framework of the western Mediterranean that the Summit of the Two Shores tried to take off, given that bonds seem strongest there, as shown, it is true, by the few advances of the 5+5 Dialogue. This scenario shows the attempt to activate sub-regional North-South partnerships, reinforced because the connections and interdependencies are stronger there. The aim is then for this initial core to be able to prove itself by contributing, to the extent possible, to the integration of the Maghreb, and by attempting to eventually create a larger Mediterranean cooperation dynamic. Looking back at the track record of previous Mediterranean projects, the implementation of strengthened sub-regional partnerships, designed as a necessary step to subsequently advance the aforementioned cooperation as a whole, might be a pertinent choice. Within this ambitious framework, it is then conceivable that a relaunched EMP might evolve based on diversified achievement rhythms, but while maintaining the general frame and objectives that were stated in Barcelona in 1995.

The strategy of avoiding the political disputes favoured by Emmanuel Macron risks preventing the achievement of the stated objectives. The attitude that consists of favouring civil society does indeed make a certain sense but, despite the colossal difficulties due to the often tormented situations of the Mediterranean shoreline countries, there is no possible exemption from the necessary political dialogue with all of the latter. There is no effective shortcut and the meagre results of the Summit of the Two Shores offer resounding, albeit regrettable, proof of this. The invitation that was extended to eight additional national and institutional players[7] to participate in this event, held in Marseille on 23 and 24 June 2019, did not improve this in any way, since only one head of state attended, who happened to be the event's initiator, Emmanuel Macron.

The text adopted during this summit, called the »Commitments for a new ambition in the Mediterranean,« is based around fifteen or so projects, structured by five series of commitments: a Mediterranean of knowledge and mobility, a sustainable Mediterranean, a multicultural Mediterranean, an innovative, digital and enterprising Mediterranean, and a Mediterranean community rooted in its cities and territories[8]. There are strange similarities with the method that prevailed during the launch of the UfM: focusing on the projects and postponing the resolution of the underlying political problems. In light of the lessons from the recent past, there is cause to doubt the validity of such a method and to fear that the Summit of the Two Shores will, unfortunately, hardly produce more results than previous initiatives.

BETWEEN MILITARY BUILD-UP AND POLITICAL POWERLESSNESS IN THE FACE OF THE LIBYAN AND SYRIAN CRISES

The inability to implement the objectives of the Barcelona Process or those of the Union for the Mediterranean have led, over the past few years, to serious consequences in two severe regional crisis situations that directly concerned the EU and, therefore, France. Indeed, neither in Syria nor in Libya were the most directly affected countries in the region

4 »Speech of the President of the Republic at the Conference of Ambassadors«, Paris, 27 August 2018, https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2018/08/27/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-a-la-conference-des-ambassadeurs

5 The 5+5 Dialogue is an informal political dialogue platform that brings together ten shoreline countries of the western basin of the Mediterranean. Launched in 1990, it was interrupted the following year and relaunched only in 2001. Since then, it has provided a quite efficient framework for the ministers of the ten countries in question to discuss sectoral topics (migration, security, tourism, industries, etc.), in the hopes of contributing to the general development of a Mediterranean partnership.

6 Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia.

7 Germany, European Union (EU), Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Anna Lindh Foundation, World Bank, European Investment Bank (EIB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). See: »Summit of the Two Shores, Forum for the Mediterranean: General Presentation,« France Diplomatie, 23–24 June2019, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/presentation_ge_2__cle8417b2.pdf

8 »Commitments for a new ambition in the Mediterranean,« France Diplomatie, 23 June 2019, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/engagements_de_marseille_fr_cle0b11b2.pdf

capable of positively influencing the resolution of these conflicts and initiating political propositions to remedy them. The result being that, in 2020, meaning nine years after the start of said crises, the regional players are nothing more than powerless bystanders.

France has made mistake after mistake in Syria: incapable of understanding the actual political logic and the workings of the system, it has, on multiple occasions, forecast the rapid fall of Bashar al-Assad; it closed its diplomatic representation post in Damascus as early as March 2012, thereby preventing any direct line of communication with the regime in power; and finally, it supported rebel groups, considering that they represented a political alternative to the Syrian regime when said rebel groups gradually fell under the influence and authority of jihadist forces hostile to any form of compromise. Favouring the unrealistic military solution at the expense of seeking a negotiated political solution perfectly illustrates the impossibility of separating the different parameters that make up the causes of a conflict if one wishes to resolve said conflict.

The case of Libya is an even more extreme caricature of the errors to avoid. We know that, following the vote on 17 March 2011 of resolution 1973 at the Security Council, the resulting military intervention logistic was in particular handled by France and the United Kingdom. The mandate of the UNO resolution did not include the fall of M. Gaddafi as an objective; it is in that sense that the letter and the spirit were not observed, since the military intervention rapidly stated its aim of destroying the Libyan regime. The effects of this military operation are terrible: breakdown of Libyan society, installation of a culture of war within the country, inability to promote political reconciliation formulas, crystallisation of a failed state, powerlessness of the countries of the region and said international community. The list of the negative consequences of the decisions made in 2011 is long.

We therefore have two cases of countries that could have played an important role in the construction of Mediterranean partnerships, but negatively illustrate the impasses we find ourselves in if the military option is favoured. To that extent, it is necessary to reactivate the method that presided over the elaboration of the Barcelona Process, based on the triptych developed previously. The Mediterranean is located on one of the seismic fault lines of international relations, on which are concentrated many of the contradictions affecting societies in this early 21st century, which is why it is urgent to invent new modes of operation for international relations and their regulation. This urgency is all the more significant because there is now a genuine divide within said international community between the supporters of unilateralism and of multilateralism.

In other words, it appears that no regional security issue can be positively solved by strictly military means, meaning that it is therefore more necessary than ever to promote approaches that can incorporate every political, economic, social and cultural dimension. For this reason, the methodology initiated in Barcelona in 1995 must be reactivated if the protagonists of the crises affecting the Mediterranean region – and there are many – hope to be efficient.

ON THE NECESSITY OF OUTLINING A FEW GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES FOR RELAUNCHING THE MEDITERRANEAN PROJECT

The brief summary above shows that, even though France displayed genuine voluntarism with regard to Mediterranean projects on several occasions, the results do not really match the efforts made. We have mentioned the objective political reasons that prevent potential partner countries from contributing more to these initiatives; however, we must also ask ourselves if, in reality, these repeated failures cannot also be explained by a lack of appetite for any collective Mediterranean project. To put it bluntly, is there a longing for the Mediterranean? Many French political leaders probably remain convinced of this, which is why, if they want any chance of success, they must accept the need to take over some structuring guidelines and always keep them in mind, as a kind of compass, if there is to be any chance of success.

First guideline: clearly recall the principle of the equality of rights and duties of the parties to the Mediterranean partnership. Even though this principle may seem self-evident, it is not redundant, considering the frequency of recriminations from countries on the southern shore regarding the political decision-making centres, which are, in their opinion, exclusively located on the northern shore. While these concerns may only be part of the reality, the question of appearances is often essential in the context of international relations; it is therefore necessary to compose said appearances as best as possible, as early as the launch phase of any new partnership. Failing that, it seems impossible to escalate the implementation of the project, because neither the governments nor the civil societies of the southern shore will truly commit.

Second guideline: link the initiatives related to the sovereign prerogatives of the countries to those that can be attributed to regional or local authorities, or even to non-government organisations (NGOs). Therefore, generous and necessary though they may be, abstract general proclamations are insufficient, as is the mere addition of local projects that do not have a coherent and unifying framework. There has to be the ability to establish virtuous dialectics likely to promote local initiatives with connecting them through a common project and framework. Standing on one leg would be the best way to weaken the global project and exhaust local energies, thereby setting ourselves up for potential failures. In this context, it is necessary to achieve the labelling of the local projects initiated to allow for the provision of overall visibility and the awareness, for each project, of belonging to a common framework.

Third guideline: define the term »civil societies« with the greatest precision. Since the concept is often abused within countries on the southern shore, disclaiming its specific meaning within the affected societies – constrained by the

regimes in place but bearers of an undeniable creative energy – becomes an imperative. To this end, we must start with what already exists: chambers of commerce, professional and/or trade unions, entrepreneurial sectors, press outlets/groups, NGOs, etc. This delimitation is all the more necessary because it allows for the initiation of forms of desirable symmetries between the northern and southern shore partners involved.

Fourth guideline: reaffirm that the Mediterranean is a matter for the entire European Union. The fates of the two shores of the Mediterranean being inextricably linked, this solidarity is both a political necessity and a political challenge. However, this postulate implies, at minimum, clarity on what the European project itself means. Even though the Mediterranean is a matter for the EU, that does not justify the whiffs of neocolonial competition, one of the achievements of the Barcelona Process being precisely to have recorded that the fate of Mediterranean shoreline countries was the concern of all Europeans. The Mediterranean partnership is a vision of the European Union and there is, in this regard, no zero-sum game: just because less is being done surrounding the Mediterranean does not mean that more will be done for Central or Eastern Europe, and vice versa.

Fifth guideline: the fourth guideline does not conflict with the necessity of hedging against unrealistic and illusory ambitions that would claim to bring together in a common framework all of the member states of the EU and countries on the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean. Therefore, initially focusing on a 5+5 format type may prove efficient. The latter, despite its limits, is already tried and tested. The aim is now for it to become more inclusive and reasonably multiply projects. For instance, Greece, Egypt and Turkey could conceivably be included in the medium term.

Sixth guideline: the Mediterranean partnership must be a political ambition before being a security matter. Too often, for domestic policy reasons and in order to convince public opinions assumed to be reluctant, northern political leaders put forward the argument of the security of the EU, and especially the means of guaranteeing control of migratory flows. This security approach is insufficient and reductive. The Mediterranean partnership project does not consist of first strengthening common walls and »bunkerising« the European Union but must, on the contrary, be the expression of a desire of openness.

Seventh guideline: the Mediterranean partnership must be a vector of development, to be invented jointly. Indeed, the aim is to bridge the enormous economic disparities that exist between the northern and southern shores. The southern countries have frequently accepted the need to implement the structural adjustment plans demanded by northern countries, and have opened their markets to northern economies. Despite that, economic development has yet to materialise and neoliberal formulas offer no guarantees, in fact often proving to be disastrous. The rehabilitation of the role of states acting as strategic players seems indispensable and requires, at the same time, the breaking of the bilateral collusion maintained between Europeans and the often corrupt southern leaders, which remain harmful to an actual development dynamic. The objective is therefore to initiate and develop integrated economic projects with the aim of carrying out the reconnection of northern and southern economies.

Eighth guideline: the Mediterranean requires rethinking northern countries' relationship with Islam. The Islamophobia that has been gradually instilled in northern countries has a very strong impact on southern societies, often promoting »symmetrical« identitarian closure speech. Building a Mediterranean partnership community requires respectfully cohabiting with the realities of Islam. In Europe, the overwhelming majority of Muslim men and women observe republican and democratic laws, and mainly request the right to indifference. The same reasoning must be able to apply to southern shore partners that are culturally Muslim, and probably to some of the forces claiming adherence to political Islam that agree to act within the framework of a pluralistic and competitive political life.

If these guidelines are not constantly present in the reflections and the initiatives of all the Mediterranean partners, then there is reason to doubt their success. At the risk of appearing simplistic, two scenarios seem to constitute the real stakes of the future of the region.[9]

The first consecrates a form of inconsistency of the Mediterranean. This is the scenario that corresponds to the current situation, meaning a Mediterranean that is at the heart of the most worrying international tensions and accumulates major challenges without being capable of resolving them. This situation reveals both the inability of the Union to project itself as a strategic player and the inability of southern shore countries to finally take the path of firm, sustainable and fair economic development. One of the problems lies in the fact that, for the time being, while the states of the southern shore must increasingly rise to meet European requirements, they are not obtaining, in exchange, any significant advances on matters that are vital for them. The challenge of the movement of people particularly jumps to mind – an issue symbolised by the visa question.

In this scenario, there is a fear that the two shores of the Mediterranean will be less and less able to formulate common visions and projects and that, in a rapidly evolving international situation, southern shore states will then think in terms of advantages/disadvantages and, in the future, favour partners such as the United States, Russia or China. This would mean, in other words, that the most directly affected regional players would be incapable of tackling in an independent and autonomous manner the security, political, economic or social challenges that nonetheless directly concern them.

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9 To address more diversified scenarios, we highly recommend reading the useful article by Sébastien Abis: »2007: Year zero for the Mediterranean?,« *Futuribles,* no. 321, July–August 2006, pp. 47–65.

The second, more optimistic, scenario is that of a successful Mediterranean, capable of integrating a long-term perspective between the EU and the southern countries. This requires the reactivation of a partnership pact that is based on the few essential strategic guidelines that are recalled below. This scenario requires setting a political framework and sustainable co-development objectives; it also requires the EU to stop considering its periphery as a neighbourhood and see it as a source of symbiosis and synergies. The stake is for the states committed to this Mediterranean partnership to ultimately be able to build their strategic autonomy and reach a position where they can face any shared challenges without having to obey humiliating conditions imposed by any foreign powers. The Mediterranean basin and the Middle East are geopolitical areas of strong competition between the United States, which is often unable to avoid the pitfalls of unilateralism, and a European Union with the obligation to be attentive to its partners and a promoter of multilateralism. If these choices become fully conscious, the Mediterranean could then become a field of experimentation for new forms of interaction in international relations and positive synergies could arise.

IN CONCLUSION

The Mediterranean project cannot be designed as a simple addition of initiatives or, worse, reduced to the proliferation of bureaucratic rules and constraints. The various initiatives must be constantly placed within a global framework, expressing the political will to build a regional partnership likely to reduce the tensions prevailing therein as well as to forge perspectives integrated in a globalised system.

The project is ambitious. Yet the social and economic disparities, the manipulation of election dates and the strong dissimilarities between the civil societies make shared understanding difficult. Nonetheless, the two shores of the Mediterranean have common interests. While it is perfectly necessary and legitimate to address security parameters, it is also imperative to politicise them, meaning to always recall the political and social dimensions of the challenges to be faced (Islamism, migratory phenomena, environmental challenges, structural reforms, etc.). Make no mistake, if the parties to Mediterranean projects are not in a position to reactivate the initial Barcelona triptych, then the strictly security-related challenges cannot be faced. Especially since the political shock wave going through the Arab world since 2010–2011 has reshuffled the deck.

The originality of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership primarily resided in its action philosophy, which attempted to promote a global approach incorporating the various economic, environmental, political, humanitarian and social parameters. Unfortunately, in contrast to 1995, there is now a lack of this strategic vision for the Mediterranean, and the two shores seem to be growing further apart rather than closer. The scenarios outlined here show what might happen around the Mediterranean. Time is of the essence if we wish to thwart in practice the Clash of Civilisations theory, make the region a space that unites rather than divides, and definitively leave behind imperial nostalgia and migratory threat delusions.

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FRANCE'S MEDITERRANEAN POLICIES

Ambitious initiatives but lack of momentum?

The Mediterranean, analysed as the epicentre of threatening crises, also appears as a geographical and conceptual framework likely to provide a coherent response to the challenges faced by shoreline countries. The first contemporary Mediterranean partnership was launched in 1995 as the Barcelona Process. However, it's limits were quickly reached, because of the incapacity to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and due to the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004: countries on the European periphery were no longer framed as »partners« but as »neighbours«. The originality of the partnership resided in an action philosophy that attempted to promote a global approach incorporating the economic, environmental, political, social and security parameters.

The first contemporary Mediterranean partnership was launched in 1995 as the Barcelona Process. The originality of the partnership resided in an action philosophy that attempted to promote a global approach incorporating the economic, environmental, political, social and security parameters. However, it's limits were quickly reached, in particular because of the incapacity to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also due to the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004: countries on the European periphery were no longer framed as »partners« but as »neighbours«.

There is a fear that Arab states will in the future favour partners such as the United States, Russia or China. This would mean that security, political or economic challenges would not be handled by the regional players who are the most directly affected. Unfortunately, at this stage, there is a lack of this strategic vision and the two shores seem to be growing further apart rather than closer. It is in this context that France has decided to relaunch the Mediterranean project through the initiation of a Summit of the Two Shores. Several guidelines must structure the latter while avoiding the pitfalls that sank previous initiatives.

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