

## 4th International Seminar on Security and Defence in the Mediterranean

## Ten years of the Barcelona Process: Results and new aims

10th anniversary of the Barcelona conference: achievements and  
challenges in the security chapter

Democratic security ten years on  
Álvaro de Vasconcelos

### Álvaro de Vasconcelos

*Director, Institute for Strategic and International Studies (IEEI), Lisbon*

#### Back to Barcelona

As noted in the EuroMeSCo Report, “Barcelona Plus: toward a Euromediterranean Community of Democratic States”, the Barcelona Declaration has to be the starting point of any assessment of the Euromediterranean Partnership (EMP). In 1995, given the prevalence of multilateralism and regionalism and progress with the Middle East Peace Process, the signatories of the Declaration focused on the need to build an area of peace based on fundamental values. In short, political issues were the priority. Ten years on, one does well to remember this, particularly as this founding intention was forgotten over time.

Defence issues *per se* were put aside because there was a reluctance to take on board NATO and subsequently the US. The fact remains, however, that security was a major concern of the EU and its member States in 1995, particularly in southern Europe, where countries were anxious about signs of instability in the region, particularly in the Maghreb, and its potential spill-over effects. The Barcelona Declaration portrays security as being part of a comprehensive long-term policy that dialectically links democracy, development and security. In this sense, the Partnership is an heir of the European experience with peace through integration and democratisation, rather than of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process, which is based on confidence-building measures suited to a bipolar world. The Neighbourhood Policy further reinforces the links between the Partnership and the European *acquis*, namely with the widening of the European area of peace and democracy to the south and east. A dialogue on defence issues and the potential for cooperation in this area –a new component in the Process– cannot be viewed separately from this strategic orientation.

#### A Summary Assessment

It is very difficult to assess a long term process like Barcelona and to decide at which point long-term goals should be achieved. Nonetheless, ten years on, one cannot but conclude that the Process has not contributed significantly to promoting security in the region. The ongoing south-south conflicts remained outside the scope of the Partnership. Not

only were they not an object of Partnership initiatives, but EMP political and security cooperation was paralysed by those conflicts, as were other areas essential to the EMP goals (as demonstrated by the difficulties faced by south-south integration and sub-regional cooperation in the Maghreb and the Middle East).

Despite the limitations, the political and security basket of the Partnership was a wide-ranging north-south confidence-building measure at the diplomatic level that aimed to diminish mutual distrust, and it achieved this essential aim. While the southern suspicion that Europe was preparing for a conflict in the Mediterranean was largely overcome, European governments realized that the view that the south was a serious and potential threat was incorrect. Ten years of regular interaction between the diplomatic apparatuses and other state administrative sectors of both sides contributed to this change. And although the confidence-building measures that were launched –the creation of EuroMeSCo, the Malta diplomatic seminars, and the civil protection pilot project launched in 1998– remained isolated initiatives, they still demonstrated the potential inherent in the Partnership.

## A Changed Context and Early Progress

What the last ten years have also shown is that there has been a desire to develop strong ties with Europe –initially within the Maghreb and later and increasingly in the Middle East– but that there are also mixed feelings about the EU. The various EuroMeSCo surveys undertaken to date,<sup>1</sup> particularly those prepared after the US intervention in Iraq, show that positive expectations regarding the Partnership and European involvement in international issues are strong. Indeed, there has been a growing sentiment of the need for “more Europe”, although this desire is mitigated by a strong dose of pessimism about the future of the Union as a political and security actor. While the Union is seen increasingly as an indispensable partner, sectors of southern civil societies also criticise the sustenance that the Partnership has given the statu quo and its focus on stability to the detriment of reform. Indeed, the EU is accused of intervening too little when human rights are violated or the promotion of democratic governance put at stake in the south. These surveys also allow us to conclude that there is little information and awareness about the Partnership both in the north and in the south, and that the existing information is restricted to elite/government circles.

The change in US policy after September 11 had a contradictory impact in the Mediterranean. The adoption of a policy based on the use of force and lack of respect for international legality contributed to a *tout securitaire* vision of how to respond to a variety of challenges, but it also led the US to conclude that there was a link between security and democracy and to launch a set of various initiatives to pursue the latter aim. The US

1. *European Defence: Perceptions vs. Realities*, EuroMeSCo Working Group III Report, June 2002, and *Southern Mediterranean Perception of European Security and Defence Policy (2003-2004)*, EuroMeSCo Working Group III Report, April 2005.

administration has affirmed that promoting democracy and political reform in the Arab states is the best way to prevent terrorism and to counter anti-American sentiments in the region. But the intervention in Iraq, later justified as a democracy-promoting action, had the opposite effect, generating real opposition to so-called democratic interventionism and actually increasing levels of anti-Americanism. The tension generated by US initiatives ended up making European approaches based on inclusion and the use of soft power more attractive and meaningful.

The countries that blocked political and security dialogue in the Partnership concluded that EMP was an alternative to the US approach in the post Iraq context, so that obstacles to a substantive dialogue within the Euromediterranean Committee have gradually fallen away. To date, the effect of this change has been limited to discussions about the terms of reference that might be appropriate in the context of the organisation of diplomatic seminars on proliferation and de-mining. It has yet to acquire greater expression. Another important factor in the change of attitude towards defence cooperation was the development of a European Defence Policy that, after initial hesitations, was incorporated into the Partnership dialogue.

Barcelona 2005 will take place in a particularly demanding international context, but also under conditions that are particularly propitious for the Partnership to make a qualitative leap forward in the security and defence domains. For this to occur it is essential to:

- clarify the specific role of security in the euromediterranean strategy and its relationship with other goals, namely democracy;
- develop a democratic security culture that keeps the values of the Barcelona Declaration;
- clarify the relationship between the Partnership and the Middle East conflict;
- consolidate the role of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in the Partnership;
- give a common sense to the already vast range of bilateral cooperation in place, and
- prioritise concrete measures.

## **A Clear Link between Security and Democracy**

Although the Declaration does not establish a sequence of priorities where economic development, security and democracy are concerned, the Barcelona Process has done so in practise. The majority of states accepted that economic development had to come first; that it would guarantee security; and that over the long term, it might also foster democratisation. It was implicitly understood that the key security problem was political islam, and that its growth was a result of a social and economic context of underdevelopment. This implicitly understood causality was belied by the

facts, however, as is concluded in the EuroMeSCo report. Indeed, it is important to recognise and to learn lessons from the fact that the development/security/democratisation causal sequence that became the basic strategy of the Partnership does not work. Efforts made to develop the economic pillar of cooperation did not lead to the isolation of political islam, which has become an unavoidable force and a necessary actor in any process of political transition. Nor did such efforts help diminish regional tensions or contribute to democratisation. Indeed, in some cases, economic development was accompanied by regime hardening.

It is now apparent that the Barcelona Process mistakenly adopted a developmental view of security and failed to place politics (democracy and rule of law) at the heart of the agenda, in contradiction to the spirit of the Declaration. According to the spirit of Barcelona Declaration, democracy and respect for human rights and international legality are the basic conditions for sustained security. For the first time, the Commission's reports about the EMP have underlined the close links between democracy and security, stating that "advancing political reform towards human rights and democracy is key to achieving sustainable security and stability"<sup>2</sup>. This constitutes a significant change in the focus that predominated after 1995 and even before, when economic development was seen as a precondition for security. This change does not come across that clearly in the conclusions of the foreign ministers meeting in Luxemburg, since the latter does not emphasise democracy enough, valuing instead stability as essential, calling for "a peaceful, secure and stable euromediterranean region, which is underpinned by sustainable development, rule of law, democracy and human rights"<sup>3</sup>. The need to focus on political reform, democracy and human rights does not, of course, diminish the urgent need to resolve the severe economic and social problems of the region, or lessen the financial and market-opening responsibilities of Europe. Indeed, it can be argued that those measures are essential to the success of political reforms.

## A Democratic Security Culture

If there is one topic of common interest it is combating terrorism. Terrorism which has produced victimis in various euromediterranean countries indiscriminately. In the period following September 11 there were attacks in almost all the countries in the south of the Mediterranean, from Turkey to Morocco, as well as in Madrid and London. The inability to reach an agreement about how to define terrorism conditioned the Partnership, but whatever the definition adopted, what is more important for the future of the Partnership is the need to discuss how to respond to that threat. This is a debate that is closely intertwined with the process of political reform and democratisation in the region. The efficiency of anti-terrorist policies is closely linked with the reinforcement of the rule of law and so it is important to underline how a key achievement of the Partnership is the clear link

2. *Tenth Anniversary of the EMP: A Work Programme to Meet the Challenges of the Next Five Years*, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, 14.04.05
3. *Conclusions of the VII Euromediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Luxemburg*, 30-31.05.05

(apparent in the Valencia Action Plan) established between security and justice (all Justice and Home Affairs issues were considered within the framework for issues like combating terrorism, once seen from a purely security-based perspective). Finally, it has become possible to discuss the problem of terrorism in ad hoc meetings, including to debate the conditions that favour the recruitment of radicals, as well as to accompany UN level debates on legal and financial issues. This is progress that must be noted.

The debate about the nature of the response to terrorism is also essential if cultural and political pluralism are to thrive in Europe and beyond. European measures to combat terrorism are viewed as examples by some governments in the southern Mediterranean, which are also in the process of reshaping the balance between security and justice as they reform criminal law. European examples may be positive when they affirm a close link between punitive action against terrorism in a context of respect for basic civil rights and justice; or they may be negative, as when Member States distance themselves from key provisions of the European Human Rights charter on the basis that some of its restrictions will diminish their capacity to combat terrorism effectively. Obviously, the impact of the latter on Europeans' civil liberties and on those of southern Mediterranean citizens whose governments follow such examples is extremely negative.

A second issue at stake is the fate of muslim communities in Europe with strong ties to the southern Mediterranean. Indeed, one of the most delicate problems facing the euromediterranean process is the temptation to approve exceptional measures that single out specific communities, notably such muslim communities. A third, related but separate problem is the nature of the link made between migration and security since 1995. At that time, migration was seen as a problem that needed to be contained. The subsequent growth of xenophobic tendencies in Europe, and the development of mafias linked to migration movements led to the development of a more *tout securitaire* view of migration and refugees. Migration was introduced to the defence concepts of the US, various EU Member States and NATO as a challenge, and often appears as part of an undifferentiated list of threats to national security, in which migration is listed alongside problems such as organised crime, trafficking in human beings, and international terrorism. Migration cannot be treated as a security problem, however. EuroMeSCo surveys show that for southern citizens a top concern regarding the CFSP is the possibility that it may be involved in dealing with migration.

Over the 2004, in the process of preparing Barcelona 2005, a new attitude towards migrant communities in Europe and migration has been emerging. In this context, the Barcelona Declaration should be amended or, to avoid going against the consensus, deepened with a new declaration on immigration. The fact that the conclusions of the Euromediterranean Conference of Ministers of May 2005 affirmed that "the partners should agree on a strategic approach that aims to optimise the benefits of migration for all partners" is a step in the right direction.<sup>4</sup> This more positive vision is not compatible with an internal or external

4. *Ibid.*, p. 13

security perspective that continues to view migrants and migrant communities in Europe as a threat. It was this change of attitude in some European countries that led to the Franco-Spanish-Moroccan initiative to deal with, *inter alia*, migration, the social integration of migrants and the circulation of people. It should be noted that the need to review defence concepts and to remove migration from them is not incompatible (much to the contrary, in fact) with the need to protect migrants from clandestine trafficking mafias, and to put an end to the human tragedy that leads many migrants to drown in our shared sea.

### **The EMP and the Middle East Conflict: What Relationship?**

It cannot be denied that the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, constitutes a central obstacle to the development of EMP cooperation, and is a key problem in the Middle East that has multiple repercussions (radicalisation, proliferation, terrorism). Many feel that the sidelining of the political and security issues in favour of the economic basket is a natural consequence of the failure of the Israeli-Arab peace process. Cooperation was indeed held hostage by the Israeli-Arab conflict, particularly the Israeli-Syrian one over Lebanon. The EU Security Strategy itself states that “the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict is a strategic priority for Europe and a condition without which there will be few possibilities to resolve the other problems of the Middle East.”<sup>5</sup> Taking the security debates within the EMP as a point of reference, one has to agree with that view. The fact that there is an ongoing conflict between two members of the Partnership, and given the inability of the EMP to contribute to a solution to that conflict not only constitutes a great obstacle to multilateral cooperation but also diminishes the legitimacy of the Barcelona Process. It is true that there is not much that can be done from within the Partnership at present but Member States can give the issue the attention it deserves in their foreign policies. Indeed, as a member of the Quartet, the EU has specific responsibilities, as do the partners that are directly involved in the conflict.

Despite the overwhelming “presence” of this conflict, the problems facing the Mediterranean should not be reduced to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nor should the latter be used as a pretext for paralysis, unlike what has happened in many instances, particularly where political reform and south-south cooperation initiatives are concerned. But the Middle East conflict is not what stands in the way of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) or inter-Arab cooperation; it did not prevent defence cooperation between various southern States and the Union, nor the participation of partner countries in ESDP missions, and nor did it put a stop to Agadir or the 5+5 Dialogue. So it is essential to understand that support for democratic reform and a number of initiatives on sub-regional integration cannot depend on the resolution of the Palestinian question, although the implementation of the two-state solution would certainly be a great boost to cooperation in the Middle East.

5. *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, December 2003

## Consolidating ESDP in the Partnership

ESDP is now a reality and obviously this has had an impact on euromediterranean relations. Faced with the need to revitalise the Mediterranean dialogue on security that was once conducted by the Western European Union (WEU) outside the Partnership, the EU opted to develop that dialogue within the framework of the Partnership, although it also chose to maintain the highest possible level of flexibility where decision-making formulae are concerned. The conditions are ripe for the countries of the south to participate, if they wish, in the various initiatives that the Union is developing, be they training programmes, closed seminars like that which took place in Athens, or the observation of exercises or participation in Union peace missions (like Moroccan troop participation in Operation *Althea*, in Bosnia-Herzegovine). The dialogue and cooperation between the EU and its 'willing' southern partners can create the conditions for the signature of bilateral security agreements.

A further point that must be made is that any dialogue or cooperation effort will be attentively followed not only by the governments of the region but also by civil societies concerned with the internal repercussions of such cooperation, particularly on processes of political reform. So it must be made clear that under no circumstance is cooperation to focus on internal security; to the contrary, it must be clear that it will contribute to democratic reform within military forces, as occurred during the process of European enlargement. The relationship between European and NATO initiatives must also be clarified. NATO is viewed as a credible institution (viz. the EuroMeSCo surveys) but is also a victim of anti-American sentiment. Explaining what NATO is all about and the growing weight of the Union in its structure is vital.

An important project in this context could be the publication of a White Book on European-Mediterranean security cooperation. In fact, this could become an interesting initiative for the EuroMeSCo network in the context of its new work programme.

## Bilateralism as a Powerful Instrument of Multilateralism

There should be no single framework for euromediterranean cooperation. The latter has evolved as a result of various multilateral and multi-bilateral initiatives –such as the Neighbourhood Policy, sub-regional association agreements like the 5+5 or the Forum– as well as through bilateral cooperation between the Member States of the Union and the southern partners. The role of the Barcelona Process should be to make coherent this complex network of initiatives. This is particularly important in the case of the Neighbourhood Policy as underlined in the EuroMeSCo report. EMP should make the aims of that policy its own: “if it does not work towards the constitution of a Euromediterranean Community of Democratic States, the bilateral nature of the Neighbourhood Policy will gradually destroy the regional focus of the EMP.” At the same time, the Neighbourhood Policy is a powerful instrument that allows the most willing to cooperate in all domains, notably defence and security.

Bilateral initiatives are generally excluded from the assessment of euromediterranean relations, but this is where the largest number of defence initiatives is found. The interesting question is what the euromediterranean dimension of that cooperation is, and equally important, the way in which bilateral cooperation can serve established common goals. There is a lot of information on bilateral cooperation and it should be a focus of study within the Partnership. Making euromediterranean bilateral cooperation coherent is a significant challenge, particularly in the area of defence, but at the very least bilateral cooperation must be guided by the same norms and rules that govern the Barcelona Process *acquis*. Bilateral cooperation can play a particularly important role in supporting processes of democratisation, especially since various states –notably Southern and Eastern European countries– have significant experience in that domain.

### First and Foremost, Concrete Initiatives

The attempt to design a grand Euromediterranean Security Charter failed. But its success was not essential because the Barcelona Declaration provides solid guidelines for cooperation in this domain. Security and defence cooperation should be launched anyway, around very concrete initiatives. The Valencia Action Plan points in that direction. It emphasises issues such as de-mining and civil protection, which are eminently practical areas for cooperation. Civil protection against natural and man-made disasters could allow the Partnership to make a qualitative leap. There is already a pilot project to create a euromediterranean system to prevent and manage natural disasters, which was launched in 1998 under the leadership of Italy and Egypt. This demonstrated the willingness of some partners to engage in projects to address common problems. There is a building project currently being implemented that could give rise to more long-term cooperation in this domain. The devastating effect of the tsunami in Southeast Asia contributed to raising awareness about the necessity of preventing similar tragedies in the Mediterranean. This led to a ministerial debate about a possible early warning system for tidal waves. Maritime security is another domain for cooperation, as noted by Secretary General of the Council Javier Solana. Such cooperation could include the prevention of ecological disasters, proliferation and even terrorism.<sup>6</sup> As advocated by EuroMeSCo for many years<sup>7</sup>, the possibility of establishing a de-mining cooperation programme for the Mediterranean is finally being debated. It should be remembered that there are millions of mines in various Partnership countries, including Algeria (with three million) and Egypt (with 23 million).

Another potentially fruitful domain for cooperation is peacekeeping missions beyond the borders of the Mediterranean. Over the last few years, EMP states have collaborated in various such operations. The fact that these countries are part of Euro-African cooperation initiatives also

6. Speech at the Euromediterranean Ministerial meeting in Luxemburg, 31.05.05

7. Said Mohamed Kadri, *Impact of Landmines on Security and Development in Egypt: The International and Euromediterranean Dimension*, unpublished paper.

means that Sub-Saharan Africa –assailed as it is by grave humanitarian problems– could be a focus of such cooperation. This kind of collaboration, namely under UN auspices, can contribute powerfully to establishing closer ties between the countries of the Partnership, with potentially strong repercussions on public opinion in those countries. It can also contribute to “externalising” the role of armed forces (away from ‘internal security’), and thereby to support political reforms.

### **Security as a Pillar of the Euromediterranean Community**

To sum up, security and defence cooperation must be a pillar of a Euromediterranean Community of Democratic States. Surprisingly, this project has great potential in the current context. It is one that calls on states to abandon the early view that political islam is a common enemy and that stability at any cost has to be the fundamental aim of political cooperation. Political reform, and the universal participation of all political actors that explicitly reject violence in the political arena, whether islamist or not, must be accepted. It is equally necessary to create monitoring mechanisms and clear indicators and benchmarks to assess progress with implementation of agreed goals. A revitalised Barcelona Process can make a unique contribution to the security of a region that is now at the centre of global concerns. Such a Partnership can help to demonstrate that effective multilateralism is a real possibility.

