

5th International Seminar on Security and Defence in the Mediterranean

Multi-Dimensional Security

Balance

The alliance of civilisations.
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I do not believe I would be mistaken, from the point of view that corresponds to me in this intervention, namely that of the Alliance of Civilisations, if I stated that this Fifth Seminar on Security and Defence in the Mediterranean is taking place at the right time. The people in charge of the CIDOB Foundation, therefore, must be congratulated today for the opportunity that they have granted us. They could hardly have chosen a more propitious set of circumstances in which to bring us together in Barcelona, at the mid-point between the 13th of November, when formal delivery of the document of recommendations on this initiative was made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the 18th of December, when Kofi Annan will present his Action Plan to the international community in New York. All of this coincides with the elections in the United States, the surprising statements by the British Prime Minister on the development of the war in Iraq and the tactical movements by different neighbouring countries. Added to this is the proposal on the Middle East presented by the President of the Government on 16th October 2006 in Girona, which was immediately endorsed by France and Italy.

This chain of events is projected onto the invariable background of deterioration in the Iraqi situation and the open wounds in Lebanon and Gaza, Israel's entrenchment and the growing influence of Iran. And, naturally, onto the entrenched Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a decisive destabilising factor that transcends the limits of this hard-hit region, which demands the urgent renewal of the Peace Process, although this may not please Prime Minister Olmert. This is a proposal which the High-level Group also includes among its policy recommendations, the most important one of all, without any doubt. This conflict is the only one that, in their opinion, constitutes a real threat to peace and security in the world.

In addition to having a clear dimension of security – of a “soft” concept of security – and a determined vocation for universality, the Alliance of Civilisations is, above all, a political initiative. It is of a political and security nature because it arose, a little over two years ago now, from the political recognition of the need to stand up to the danger of an irreparable fracture between societies, particularly between the Muslim and Western worlds, which, if not corrected, calls international peace and stability into question. Independently of other considerations, the

confrontation that pits these two worlds against each other is not religious or cultural, as some would have it, but radically political, as the High-level Group also sustains in its document of recommendations. Moreover, the core of this problem lies in the unresolved issue of the Middle East, which symbolises, like no other, the increasingly deep breach between the West and Islam and is the main cause of the growing rift between the two societies, so much so that the Group affirms outright that if this situation is not channelled properly, the objectives of moderation, tolerance, mutual respect, appreciation of diversity, coexistence and, above all, peace which the Alliance of Civilisations pursues will not be reached.

The threat that we are trying to fight is also of a political nature. Or is the oft-repeated desire to impose a global caliphate not political? The principles that inspire the Alliance are political as well: commitment to multilateralism; resolved support for the organisation in service to which it is dedicated, the United Nations, in the person of its Secretary-General; strict observance of international legality and respect for human rights, the primacy of human dignity.

It is, in the end, a global initiative, since the danger that it is trying to avert (terrorism in particular), the call to all of us to take a stand against extremisms, and the universal sphere par excellence in which it aims to act, the United Nations, are all global.

These three distinctive characteristics appear repeatedly within the conceptual framework that shapes this proposal, in the mandate received by the High-level Group and, of course, throughout the final document made public in Istanbul. In addition to its universal vocation, and without leaving aside the dual political and security dimension inherent in it, the Alliance of Civilisations can, and must, also be contemplated from a regional and, why not, a national perspective. Therefore, I will now talk about the regional perspective, the Mediterranean one in this case.

In the first place, the political guidelines that this proposal proclaims are not reduced to a handful of well-meaning ethical invocations, of international morality and a global scope, destined to be ignored or deliberately violated. They oblige us all, governments, international organisations, civil society, and nobody escapes their demands. As we are seeing, without the application of this ethical framework in international practice, coexistence among nations will become more and more difficult, and, over time, the international tension will become unbearable. It is precisely for this reason that it is also in the national sphere that we must begin to make those principles a reality, so that our outward discourse, always so easy to be lavish with, will not be belied by the facts. This is so that the oft-repeated reproach of a double morality, of double standards, cannot be thrown back in our faces, especially when it comes to promoting democracy and applying international law.

No one will have failed to notice that both co-sponsors of this proposal are Prime Ministers of two Mediterranean countries, Turkey and Spain, both situated within the confines of this sea and to which, in accordance with their own peculiarities, a fundamental role and responsibility in the task of preserving our security and defence befalls. The Alliance of

Civilisations must contribute decisively to this end, which has regional importance, if, indeed, we all set ourselves to executing the concrete measures that the plan proposed by Kofi Annan contains in the fields of education, youth, mass media and migratory movements. However, this will not suffice. It will also be necessary for us to scrupulously adhere to the moral considerations contained in the first part of the document of recommendations of the High-level Group, which, undoubtedly, the still-Secretary-General of the United Nations will make his own.

The Spanish Government, as is well known, supports Turkey's accession into the European Union. It is a political option that is fully coherent with the philosophy of the Alliance, independently of conditions established by the European Commission to this end, provided they do not become a kind of rising filibuster destined to make the Turkish accession impossible. As long as this difficult process moves forward, regardless of the ups and downs it may suffer, this positive dynamic will give credibility to the Spanish-Turkish co-sponsorship and to the initiative itself, and it will strengthen the position of the women and of the men in Turkey who are struggling for the modernisation of their country. It will simultaneously weaken the position of all those who advocate an exacerbated anti-European nationalism and a fundamentalist vision of Islam there. This process will also comfort all those who in the Arab world are following the vicissitudes of the Turkish demand for accession and are promoting the evolution of their own respective societies towards modernity, respect for human rights and democratic progress. It will also improve the perception that the Arab and Muslim world have of Europe, which, if it fails in this endeavour, will be viewed as a Christian bastion sealed off to the outside.

Finally, the Turkish accession will give the European Union a decisive projection in a key strategic region of Eurasia and, if Brussels does not abdicate this ambition, it will allow Turkey to become a main actor in the approaching multipolar world and to bring the values and principles that constitute its moral heritage to that scene. In any case, from the vision of the Alliance, the Turkish sponsorship is already contributing an element of symmetry to the original Spanish initiative at the same time as it strengthens the discourse and principles that inspired it.

For Spain, the commitment is not minor. It also befalls us to play an exemplary role, both within and outside of our borders. Domestically, by constructing, among us all, that State of Autonomous Regions that demands, precisely, sowing the fields of own coexistence with a good dose of the principles that the Alliance of Civilisations promotes: moderation, mutual respect and appreciation of diversity. Will we be capable, for example, of bringing this imperative of civil ethics into our school books? Also within the domestic sphere, by promoting an immigration policy in accordance with the measures contained in the Action Plan in order to prevent xenophobia, discrimination, rejection of the "other" and at the same time incorporating the "other" into the values and principles of our society.

Outwardly, we will contribute to the objectives of the Alliance by decidedly helping in the construction of a united, prosperous, stable Maghreb, a factor of peace in this part of the Mediterranean. If we want to be

coherent with our paradigm, Morocco is our foreign priority. For this reason, it is necessary to courageously assail our legacy and our history with this neighbour and friend. If we do not, the wounds still open there will not heal. Let us jointly review our common history and draw the pertinent conclusions together. Let us support, by all means, a privileged status for the neighbouring kingdom in its relationship with the European Union. And let us assume, wherever possible, a principal role within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Process, a fundamental piece in the plans of the Alliance of Civilisations for reaching the so necessary goals of peace and security in this troubled part of the world.

A good proof of the credibility and potentiality of this initiative, this time applied to the broader European frame, is the constant interest that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has shown in it. In 2007, Spain will assume the presidency of the OSCE. This is another opportunity we must not fail to take advantage of in order to combine their efforts and the objectives they have in common, the Mediterranean repercussions of which must not be underestimated at all.

Recently, in Riga, NATO also expressed its recognition of the role of the Alliance of Civilisations in promoting common values, reform and dialogue between peoples and cultures, all of it within the framework of the fight against terrorism.