

**From the Mediterranean to a Greater Middle East -
Challenges for European Policy Formulation**

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**Euro-Mediterranean Co-operation;
Enlarging and Widening the Perspective**

The events of the 11th September, the second Intifada and the Iraq War have completely changed the conditions for co-operation in the Mediterranean. It is now not possible to pretend to consider these events as minor incidents which do not threaten the basis of this political project.

As quoted by Christoph Zöpel: “Because of their relations with the neighbouring region of the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean, the states of Europe are affected in a different and more immediate manner than the United States by both the Arab-Israeli conflict and the conflict with Iraq. They have a more pronounced interest than the United States in preventing escalation and promoting the resolution of these conflicts, and their actions are more strongly influenced by these motives.”¹ The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership must therefore be rethought from top to bottom, both in its content and in its area of application.

The Barcelona Partnership corresponded to a peace-oriented view of international relations. This view was in the context of a security dynamic associated with the end of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In many respects, the declaration which was signed in Barcelona in 1995 could no longer be signed today. However, the political, development and security stakes which engendered the declaration are higher than ever. The situation in the Middle East only increases in relevance. Nonetheless, it is necessary to see how the situation has developed after two years of tragic events and whether it is possible, in spite of everything, to find a new approach, a reopening which also includes the question of the Middle East.

¹ September 11 - Consequences for German Foreign Policy, in Carlo Masala (ed) September 11 and The Future of Euromediterranean Co-operation, *ZEI Discussion Paper C120 2003*, p.13.

Co-operation on a heap of rubble: an analysis of the effects of the crisis.

The consequences of 11th September.

In many respects, 11 September 2001 represents an earthquake in international relations. Wounded to the core by radical Islamic terrorists of Arab origin, the United States certainly committed itself to an all-out anti-terrorist campaign, but also combined this objective with a battle against proliferation which led less than a year later to the war in Iraq. The consequences of these political decisions weigh heavily on the Mediterranean and Middle East region.

The “terrorisation” of international relations by the United States: “war against terror”.

The struggle against Islamic terrorism as defined by the United States implies a world-wide organisation with which all the countries of the world must cooperate, either willingly or by force. The document published by the White House : “*The National Security of the United States*” in September 2002, is particularly explicit. Under a single heading of “war against terror” President George W. Bush combined terrorism and the risks of proliferation. This globalisation of the real and/or presumed threat enables global action to be justified anywhere in the world and, notably, pre-emptive war. In many respects the war in Iraq may be regarded as a direct manifestation of this doctrine. We wrote in 2002: “The war against Islamic terrorism is limited by the universality of its presence and the porosity of world society. (...) This struggle will be long and essentially shadowy. This is why the *re-territorialisation* of the threat (as has been done in Afghanistan and then extensively, Iraq) has become indispensable to respond to the shock of the “defeat” of 11 September.”²

Stefano Silvestri has summed up this problem in a very illuminating way, in three parts:

- Total pre-emption (or total intervention): when the United States intervenes or when it desires to do so.
- World-wide suppression: an integrated security system is constructed.

² This author, *Ordre et Désordre Après le 11 Septembre*, *Géoéconomie* No. 24 Winter 2002, p.50.

- Reinforced stabilisation mission: a combination of pre-emptive and defensive intervention.³

The states of the world, and notably the states of the Third World, have no other choice than to cooperate or suffer the consequences. The compensation is better economic co-operation and increased development from the benefits of the WTO and free trade. The democratisation of authoritarian states seems also to be one of the objectives, which the neo-conservatives (Kagan, Perle, Kristol etc.) hammered away at in the media at the time of the Iraqi conflict and which crops up again in the national security strategy already quoted. This trend carries with it its share of destabilisation, even if the disastrous post-war situation in Iraq does not bear out the fabulous hopes and dreams of the “neo-cons”.

Suspicion in the Muslim world and the risk of confusion.

The fact must be faced that the events of 11th September caused a change in the view of the Western world vis-à-vis the Arab one. The confusion between radical Islamic terrorism and Islam is a reality in some minds. Ahmed Driss thus remarked: “A certain phobia has seized the North Mediterranean; some consider that geographical proximity to North Africa and the Middle East, added to the fact that Europe harbours a large Muslim minority susceptible to the turmoil of this region, makes Europe more vulnerable to terrorist threats. It is in its own interest to affirm its solidarity with the anti-terrorist struggle of the United States.”⁴

But it is not sure that a pro-active position on solidarity would be sufficient enough to counter the anti-Muslim feeling in the North. In the United States, this phenomenon has taken an uncommon form with the almost direct accusation of Saudi Arabia or the systematic criticism of some pressure groups or individuals taking the debate into the university sphere.

The effects of the second Intifada.

As noted recently by Alvaro de Vasconcelos: “The deterioration of the current peace process, however, which in fact began with the assassination of Rabin by a Jewish extremist,

³ L’Union Européenne, les Etats-Unis et le Moyen Orient; Quelques Scenarios, in Martin Ortega (ed.), L’Union Européenne et la Crise du Moyen Orient, *Les Cahiers de Chaillot No.62* July 2003, p.52.

⁴ After September 11, is there a future for the Barcelona Process?, in Carlo Masala (ed.) September 11 and the future of Euromediterranean Co-operation, op. cit., p. 56.

and the advent of Netanyahu's government, increasingly contaminated the political and security dialogue within the EMP.”⁵

The ostracising of Israel is now an intrinsic reality. The spiral of violence/repression/terrorism has become a feature of daily life in Israel and Palestine. It has also become a feature of Arab public opinion bombarded with images of conflict but more broadly in Europe too.⁶ The (modest) relations entered into since the Oslo accords between the Arab states and Israel have, with the exception of Jordan, returned to their lowest level. It is therefore impossible at the moment to imagine any relaunching of the political dialogue of the Barcelona process. This state of affairs paralysed the Marseilles conference of November 2000 and still blocks the process.

In addition, the systematisation of the suicide attacks contributes to the deterioration of the Palestinian image in international public opinion. The risk that this strategy poses to the Palestinian cause is very serious. In fact, however one views the brutal Israeli military actions in Palestine, nothing can justify murderous suicide attacks aimed at the civilian population. The employment of identical methods is progressively degrading the perception of Palestinian claims and identifying them with those of Al Qaida. We therefore find ourselves facing a double breakdown: a political one on the one hand and a breakdown in the respective imaginations of the Moslem and Western worlds on the other

This crisis is now accompanied by the emotional shock of the Iraq War.

The effects of the Iraq War

The destabilisation of the Middle East.

Bruno Tertrais has noted that “at the same time, this new defeat of an Arab army confronted by a Western one is likely to feed the military inferiority complex long felt by many of the elites of the region. It also risks provoking a new “Gulf War effect”, that is, contributing to

⁵ The Future of EMP Security Co-operation, in Carlo Masala (ed.) September 11 and the Future of Euromediterranean Co-operation, op. cit., p.45.

⁶ A good exemple of this media pressure is the incredible result of the European Commission poll on the most dangerous countries for the World peace where 57% of people designed Israël as first cause of risk. See, Le Monde November 11 2003, Un sondage européen désigne Israël comme une « menace pour la paix ».

reinforcing the idea in the minds of the leaders of the regional powers that only so-called asymmetrical or non-conventional means, such as proliferation or terrorism, can enable them to take on the American military hyperpower. Paradoxically, this war could therefore increase the threats which justified its prosecution...”.⁷

The pressure on Syria, Lebanon and Iran.

The Iraqi question is only one facet of the new strategic situation in the Middle East. Its development should depend on two factors. Either the United States wins its bet in Iraq and the idea of a “forced” remodelling of the Middle East becomes a reality, or the situation continues to deteriorate and the local opposition forces profit from the vacuum left by America to spread their influence into other structurally weak countries; which is to say almost all of them.

Bruno Tertrais has also remarked: “Obliged whether they like it or not to assume the task of nation-building in Iraq, as in Afghanistan, the United States intends next to take on the remodelling of the region, with the first priority as the Israel-Lebanon-Syria zone, probably followed by the Gulf region, with Saudi Arabia in mind but also Iran, a future nuclear power.”⁸ But this is only one scenario. The other could be an acceleration of the destabilisation of the region, which seems to be the aim of the terrorist forces in Iraq, and it is not certain that these are exclusively local. The Al Qaida dynamic seeks to base itself on a rejection of the United States in a troubled and unclear situation in order to gain ground by promoting degeneration and a war of attrition.

A new economy in the Gulf in gestation?

Will the arrival (and the continued presence?) of the Americans in Iraq profoundly change the economic relationships of the Middle-Eastern region and, in so doing, world trade? It seems likely that taking control, at least indirectly, of Iraqi oil was not completely absent from the minds of the conquerors of Baghdad, although it was not necessarily determinant in

⁷ La chute de Babylone, in Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, *Annuaire Stratégique et Militaire 2003*, Odile Jacob, Paris, p.55.

⁸ idem.

taking the final decision.⁹ Nowadays, Iraqi oil, with its abundant reserves, is an important element in the oil scene. It is not one of the key elements, even if the future needs of Asia, and above all, a China in headlong growth, will increase its importance.¹⁰ The explanation must be sought much more in the diversification of sources (notably in respect of Saudi Arabia).

However, the intention to apply the recipes of American liberalism to the Middle-Eastern region and elsewhere can be discerned in the minds of neo-conservative analysts and think-tanks, as well as in the White House document of September 2002. To create a large open market in the Middle East starting from Iraq (once re-built) thus appears to be a medium-term objective.

This approach is not the European one. The last ten years have shown that pure liberalism applied without safeguards can wreak havoc including in allegedly stable economies (Argentina for example). The European approach, as developed first in the Partnership for Peace with Central and Eastern Europe, then in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, could find an application here; a politically credible alternative for the reconstruction of Iraq followed by the whole region.

Is the EMP threatened?

In view of this relatively bleak and generally pessimistic picture, can a relevant logic for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership still be defended?

The temptation to withdraw does exist. It is pervading Europe at a time when economic difficulties are pressing countries to take refuge in their national sanctuary. Fortunately or unfortunately, such a solution is untenable. The Mediterranean and the Middle East influence our societies by their geographical proximity and by the effects of all manner of phenomena which they export as far as Europe (presence of a considerable Muslim community, the “Al Qaida effect”, the role of oil, the repercussions of the Arab-Israeli (non) peace process, etc.).

⁹ See Clémentine Lemaître, *La Conflictualité du Pétrole au Moyen-Orient*, in Jean-François Daguzan & Pascal Lorot (ed.), *Guerre et Économie*, Ellipses, Paris, 2003, p.185-201.

¹⁰ Martin Ortega, *Iraq: a European Point of View*. European Union *Institute for Security Studies, Occasional Papers* No.40, December 2002, p.17.

From this point of view one can share in the analysis of Ambassador Amre Moussa, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, supporting increased investment by Europe in the Near East: “The European role in peace is not that of the generous onlooker, but that of one involved and threatened by the consequences of the deterioration of the situation in this region”.¹¹ The expectations of the Arab countries, and also of Turkey in respect of a European initiative in the Middle East are a reality which must imperatively be taken into account. To a certain extent, these countries do not wish to remain in a strategic embrace with the United States, with which they can only have an unequal and disproportionate relationship in all respects.

It is therefore indispensable to make sure that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership survives and, furthermore, to give it new vigour and a new reach, but how?

Point No.1: the EMP must survive but its rules must evolve.

A political re-launch of the EMP cannot be envisaged while the Israeli-Palestinian crisis remains at this level of violence and paralysis. The “political co-operation” part can only remain at the minimal level at which it has been since the Marseilles Conference of October 2000.

However, it would be disastrous to halt the Barcelona Process but it is imperative to make it evolve in order to preserve it. As Antonio Missiroli said, EMP has to be revised on “a more realistic but also more tangible prospect of structured partnership.”¹² Given the obstructions of all kinds which bedevil it today, the following alternatives and solutions can be proposed. Rather than adopting a defensive frame of mind a dynamic approach is suggested.

Preserve and reinforce technical co-operation.

The true strength of the EMP resides in the formidable network of solidarity which has been established around the Mediterranean. Thousands of programmes are in place which

¹¹ Les Relations Euro-Arabs, *Défense Nationale* August-September 2002, p.50.

¹² The EU and its changing neighbourhoods: stabilization, integration and partnership, in Batt, Lynch, Missiroli, Ortega and Triantaphyllou, ‘Partnership and neighbours: a CFSP for a wider Europe’, *Chaillot Papers* n°64 september 2003, p. 30.

structure a field of co-operation which touch on social and economic levels: from major infrastructure projects to micro-projects.¹³ The emphasis must therefore continue to be placed on lateral co-operation involving areas of major common interest (environment, sea, energy infrastructure, telecommunications). This approach must be coupled with the development of micro-projects which provide links between the societies of the two shores of the Mediterranean (women's rights, human rights, urbanisation, media etc.). The modest successes of the EMP are due to these small programmes. The EMP is above all a collection of networks bringing together men, countries and the shores of the Mediterranean. For several years now, the tendency of the Commission has been to favour large projects for administrative management facilities. The two poles of the Partnership must be re-balanced and the links reinforced, at a time when mutual suspicion is tending to grow.

In this setting, the MEDA programme plays an invaluable role. It certainly helps the partner states to get their economies to conform with free-trade rules, but it is also an underpinning for investment, and demonstrates the Union's practical determination to reinforce the insertion of the Mediterranean region into the European economic system. Co-operation in development and solidarity therefore go hand-in-hand with the adjustment to world standards of competition. This is a political approach, but the political dimension of the EMP is paralysed by the problems mentioned above.

Political co-operation: an "à la carte" approach.

The EMP in its indivisible form is no longer viable. If its principles are to survive, a way must be found to surmount the obstacles using an appropriate policy.

The creation of reinforced co-operation with the Maghreb.

Not all the players in the Mediterranean are in as difficult a situation as the Near East. Even though most of the countries are affected by the problems described above, it is possible to suggest increased co-operation to a group of states desiring to go further together in a defined area, whether political or technical. On what can be termed the "oil stain" principle, other

¹³ See Martin Ortega, A new policy for the Mediterranean?, in in Batt, Lynch, Missiroli, Ortega and Triantaphyllou, 'Partnership and neighbours: a CFSP for a wider Europe', op. cit., p. 93.

countries can be brought into this initial co-operation.¹⁴ The Maghreb seems today to be the part of the Mediterranean with which it would be possible to begin co-operation in the fields of security, anti-terrorist action, and also social or environmental protection projects. A re-centring might be envisaged around a new 5+5, as in the Sainte Maxime meeting of 9 and 10 April, which was merely a simple renewal of contacts.

But to concentrate on the Maghreb seems insufficient in every respect in view of the new strategic situation in the Middle East. The relaunching of the EMP also involves the creation of a European initiative in the Middle East.

Point No.2: The Middle East must be the object of a specific common initiative.

The overall destabilisation of the Middle East caused by the Iraq War could turn out to be totally detrimental to Europe. The countries of the Arabian/Persian Gulf cannot be left in a bilateral situation with the United States when the conquest of Iraq has been experienced as an aggression and an occupation.

Without exaggerating the future of the American presence in the country, the EU must be capable of suggesting political overtures which support that which must be considered clearly as a “fait accompli”. In this respect, the thoughts formulated by Martin Ortega in respect of Iraq alone can be applied to a European initiative concerning the Middle East: “The question now is: *should* there be a common European policy on Iraq? This question must be answered in the affirmative for two reasons. Firstly, the aforementioned principles - and the values and principles contained in the Treaty on European Union (which basically coincide with the values and principles enshrined in national constitutions) - cannot be defended by the member states alone. Defining a common policy and endorsing it through specific action is the only way the Europeans can be consistent with their own convictions. Secondly, European citizens require that both their national states and the European Union define foreign policies that take into account common values and principles and contribute to their wider application.”¹⁵ In addition, much as creating a common policy on the principle of

¹⁴ Martin Ortega speaks about: “Sub-regional Units” (construction régionale) and “Diverse relationship” (relations différenciées), A new policy for the Mediterranean?, in in Batt, Lynch, Missiroli, Ortega and Triantaphyllou, ‘Partnership and neighbours: a CFSP for a wider Europe’, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁵ Martin Ortega, Iraq: a European Point of View, *European Union Institute for Security Studies, Occasional Papers* No.40 December 2002, p.27-28.

cohesion is indispensable, putting the policy into action is equally necessary as far as influence and, simply, security is concerned. Europe must ensure that the shock wave of American action in Iraq does not produce negative effects on its own stability.

One can therefore suggest the creation of a common strategy for the Middle East and connect it with the common strategy for the Mediterranean of 19 June 2000. Their overall objectives are the same. It must involve Iraq and its Western neighbours (Syria, Jordan and Turkey), the Gulf states and Iran. Its content should touch on questions of security, non-proliferation, economic co-operation, and also the issues of democracy, basic rights and human rights. This initiative cannot be launched without associating the United States with its implementation, but it could be set in motion by the Union alone. It could also allow, as suggested by Ortega, the European national foreign policies to be brought together. France, Belgium and Germany could reconnect their approaches without too much difficulty with those of Italy, Spain and Great Britain. The cohesion lost in the crisis could then be restored. Some conclusions of the European Council of Thessalonica (June 19-20 2003) stressed on the reinforcement of relations with the Arab World. It's a good idea but too close to the defunct and historically¹⁶ dated "Dialogue euro-arabe". The critical point is the security of Arab-Persian Gulf and the dialogue has to include Iran. On the other the Maghreb is far from the same difficulties and risks than the other region, despite serious problems (economy and Islamist terrorism).

That being so, there is no question of absorbing the Middle East in the EMP. We would then face the prospect of a widened co-operation which would end up losing its direction and impact. As Eric Philippart has noted, "On the other hand, including Iraq in the EMP would necessitate some Euromed rethinking. Keeping the Mediterranean as the main geographical reference would become much more difficult after the inclusion of Iraq."¹⁷ This is why specific action is required in respect of the Middle East which would be connected to a common Mediterranean strategy and, if necessary, to action developed in the framework of the EMP, but it would retain its independent logic. Such a strategy would no longer be deleted. Some U.S. Think Tanks now proposed a specific action toward Middle East led by United States. For instance, the Nation Defense University preached for a Nato initiative to

¹⁶ Conclusion of the Presidency, annex 1 SN 200 2003, p. 19.

¹⁷ The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Unique Features, First Results and Future Challenges, *CEPS*, Working Paper No.10 April 2003, p.14.

“create a Partnership for Cooperation (PfC) with Greater Middle East.”¹⁸ EU must take the initiative immediately.

In the same way, a common Near-Eastern strategy should be created and implemented, in the setting of a new “road map” project, which would enable the political dialogue to be advanced in a way which is not possible in the present framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

In this way, projects would move forward in parallel at various speeds, which would enable the whole to progress much more rapidly than at present or, at least, not to hold up developments in particular sectors or places.

In conclusion, in spite of the very serious current difficulties, it is possible to conceive of a relaunch of the processes of co-operation. The European Union in development cannot remain a passive observer of a strategy which passes it by. It must constitute its own periphery, which in the hypothesis of Turkey joining will certainly reach as far as the Gulf. But it must also cope with the security logic which is now becoming apparent to return to the idea of co-development and shared stability which inspired the founders of Barcelona.

From this point of view one agrees with Ambassador Ounaïs who affirmed: “The concept of a partnership based on the acceptance of parity, forms a part of and surpasses our common history, while bearing an immense promise of understanding and solidarity. It is this promise which shapes our common horizon”.¹⁹

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¹⁸ Hans Binnendjik and Richard Kugler, *The Next Phase of transformation: A New Dual-Track Agenda for Nato*, The National Defense University, Washington, October 2003, slide n°3.

¹⁹ Les Enjeux de l’Euro-Maghreb, *Défense Nationale*, idem p.56.

