

ALGIERS REPORT

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**“From Barcelona to the European Neighbourhood Policy:
Which North-South Mediterranean Dialogue Do We Need?”**

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A few months ago, a very high-ranking official from a large Arab state, whom I was speaking to about the European Neighbourhood Policy, said to me: there are too many European projects, they are too unilateral, when you propose them to us they are too vague and we have to accept them without having any input into them. Now the Americans have launched their own projects and we don't even know if they were coordinated with you.

What confusion already among experts! But not only they, the general public also need an explanation.

An Arabic Professor in a Belgian university made a list of the concepts for me: "Near East, Levant, Middle East, South East Mediterranean, West Asia, North Africa, Western Mediterranean, as well as names created during the last two centuries, often by the Western diplomatic services in order to create the 'Arab world' now reduced to one of its constituent areas (North Africa, Levant, Near East, West Asia etc.) and now extended to non-Arabic areas (e.g. the Southern Mediterranean in the framework of the Barcelona Process including 8 Arabic countries and Israel, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta), Western Mediterranean 5 + 5 (5 European countries and 5 North African countries), or MENA (Middle East and North Africa including Turkey, Israel and Iran).

After all, all of this is to hide the Arab dimension from the relations which Europe or 'the West' is searching for".

The Barcelona Declaration

The Euro-Mediterranean Conference which took place in Barcelona on 27-28 November 1995, formed the basis for a process which permitted the development of a multilateral framework for dialogue and cooperation between, what was at that time the European Union composed of 15 member states and 12 Mediterranean partners.

At this meeting, a political Declaration was adopted by the twenty seven participants.

This Euro-Mediterranean Declaration, completed by a work programme, was inspired by the final Helsinki Act of 1975 in so far as it deals with a multilateral framework which connected both the political and economic aspects and which also includes a social, cultural and human dimension.

The main idea involved revealing the “common challenges” generated by the new political, economic and social issues (rampant demographics, immigration, and emphasis on the development gaps, increased power of Islamic fundamentalism...) but also armed forces linked to the proliferation and dissemination of weapons of mass destruction.

In terms of the Declaration, these common challenges call for a “comprehensive and coordinated approach”.

In its preamble, the Barcelona Declaration emphasises the “*privileged nature of the links forged by neighbourhood and history*”, being agreed that this “*multilateral and lasting*” framework is founded on the “*spirit of partnership respecting the characteristics, values and specificities of each of the participants*”. In addition, this multilateral framework is “*complementary to a reinforcement of bilateral relations*”.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership is comprised of three sections:

- The “*political and security*” section aims to define a “common area for peace and security”.
- The “*economic and financial*” section would allow the construction of an “area of shared prosperity”.
- The “*social, cultural and human*” section aims to “develop human resources and favours understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies”.

I will not expand on the process which originated from the Barcelona Declaration, because this year (2005) we will celebrate its tenth anniversary and already there has been, and will be, much analysis, both individual and coordinated, on this subject. I will later return to the analysis carried out by a network of university research centres called EUROMESCO, which the European Commission asked to submit a report on the issue.

ASSOCIATION AGREEMENTS

There have already been individual association agreements between Europe and each of the “associate” countries, the Maghreb countries being the oldest in the Mediterranean area. However, the bilateral section of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership wanted to re-launch the association agreements with the objective of gradually creating a network of new Euro-Mediterranean association agreements (Algeria, Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia), anticipating the creation of a free trade zone.

All of these agreements were concluded. Those concluded with the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia were implemented while the others are still being ratified.

The preambles define the nature of bilateral Euro-Mediterranean relations which are based on “*proximity and interdependence*”, “*historical links*”, “*common values*” as well as on “*reciprocity, solidarity, partnership and co-development*”.

As the principal objectives, we will espouse the “*the stability, security and the prosperity of the entire Euro-Mediterranean area*” and the integration of the partners’ economies into the world economy, as well as their participation in the community of democratic states.

Regarding the blueprint for the agreements, we find the following principal objectives :

- The establishment of an appropriate framework for bilateral political dialogue.
- The implementation of conditions for the gradual liberalisation of the exchange of goods, services and capital.
- The development of trade and the expansion of balanced social and economic relations.
- The promotion of (sub-)regional integration
- The promotion of cooperation in the economic, social, cultural and financial realms.

To conclude our recapitulation of the objectives and results of the Barcelona Process let us now discuss the EUROMESCO report, which was compiled in February 2005 and will be discussed in the EUROMESCO general assembly at the end of April. It aims to evaluate the achievements and deficiencies of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

THE EUROMESCO REPORT, APRIL 2005

This report is organised in eleven points, of which the first five concern the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and the remainder contemplate the future. We will deal with the last six points after we discuss the neighbourhood policy.

- Concerning the Barcelona Process, the report highlights the fact that the Barcelona Declaration remains a very good document, based on four key ideas:

The primacy of fundamental values

The rejection of power politics between states

The desire to build a common economic area in the form of a free trade area

The need to integrate civil society in the whole process.

This commitment of the 27 governments is an achievement as it involves all of the governments and, according to the EUROMESCO report, it generates a shared responsibility for each government to implement it in all its different facets.

- The second point in the report highlights the failure of the link which implied that economic reform was going to lead to political liberalisation, and it also noted the failure of commercial cooperation between the countries in the Southern Mediterranean area, in spite of the enthusiasm expressed in Agadir. The very fact that Algeria is not taking part in this process implies that this free trade area is not consistent and therefore we should anticipate that achieving total success by 2010 is not realistic. On the other hand, and perhaps for obvious reasons, there was a failure in sub-regional relations within the Mediterranean area. This leads to think yet again of the Maghreb countries.
- The third point in the report highlights good practice in the process: it organised regular collaboration between the ministers but also between the administrations. A common awareness and a common work method were gradually developed. However, the report highlights the fact that civil society must participate in the process at a much more significant level if we are to move towards a Euro-Mediterranean community.
- The fourth point in the report will be well understood on the side of the Mediterranean: it notes that in all the partner countries, the 15 and the 12, there is a desire for reform, but if there is a desire for reform in the countries South of the Mediterranean, there is a resistance to this reform being imposed from outside. We will come back to this point later.
- The fifth point of this report insists that it is necessary to work on the potential of the achievements attained and to continue working to create “a Euro-Mediterranean community of democratic states”; this is the new name for the objective, placing great emphasis on the word “democratic”.

THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (ENP)

The European Neighbourhood policy, mentioned for the first time in a EU Commission document in March 2003 in an effort to establish a new global strategic framework, has an outward characteristic which makes it different from previous policies in the sense that it may take on a constitutional character if the constitution prepared by the European Convention comes into force.

In effect, this project will also include an article which says:

“The Union together with its neighbouring states is developing a special relationship with a view to establishing an area of prosperity and good neighbour relations, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation...”

For this purpose, the Union can conclude and implement the specific agreements with the countries concerned.

As the Constitution has not yet been adopted, this European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) still remains based on a communication from the Commission of March 2003 entitled “The Enlarged Europe – neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern neighbours”.

At first, the launch of this neighbourhood policy created some ambiguities concerning the wording of the phrase “La nouvelle politique de voisinage ou la politique du nouveau voisinage de l’Union Européenne “ and the English translation “New neighbourhood policy”.

It is clear that in the framework of enlargement which was taking place May 2004, this policy was devised in order to say to Europe’s new neighbours: here is the new policy which has been created for Europe’s new neighbours in the East.

Of course, for the Mediterranean, the term “new neighbourhood” does not apply because we have always been neighbours, and the EU membership of Malta and Cyprus does not change the geographic perspective of our neighbourhood. We therefore need to use a more global term.

The goal is clearly to tell the neighbouring countries that Europe wants them to participate in the prosperity which the EU brings to its members; but without becoming a member of this Union.

This neighbourhood policy guarantees the prospect of participation in the European market and therefore the possibility of having access to the 4 freedoms: free movement of goods, services and capital, but also of people — even if there is a certain anxiety concerning the free movement of people.

The objective is therefore clearly to evolve towards a framework similar to that of the European Economic Area, which often goes unnoticed because it only concerns some European countries which are not members of the EU: Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

It has been proposed to the neighbouring countries to get involved in economic reform (opening up of markets, integration in transport networks, energy, telecommunications, research, protection of investments, integration in the global commercial system, etc.) but also to join together in developing political cooperation: on legal migration, on the fight against security threats, the respect for human rights, etc.

This neighbourhood policy is global but it will be applied bilaterally with each country on the basis of an action plan whereby each country will explain what sort of progress it wishes to make towards the EU. Depending on whether the country wants to advance at a slower or a quicker pace, the EU will, for its part, get involved in certain activities all of which have the same objectives.

According to an orientation document of May 2004, certain changes will be made:

- The eventual inclusion of three countries in the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia).
- The “involvement of the partner countries is also requested” for “certain essential aspects” of the external action of the EU and in particular “the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the respect for international law and efforts in the area of conflict resolution”.
- The ENP “will contribute to the realisation of fixed objectives in the framework of a strategic partnership for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the implementation of which should be modelled on that of the ENP. According to the ENP, it will be implemented in the framework of the Barcelona Process and the association agreements will be concluded with each partner country”.

However, before speaking about this new concept of the framework of the strategic partnership for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, I would like to say how delighted I was when I saw the European Commission's document on the neighbourhood policy.

This was at the moment when we were talking a lot about the conflict of civilisations and when some people were trying to set the Christian European civilisation in opposition to the Islam Arabic civilisation. I thought that the new neighbourhood policy, including all at once the countries from the East and the South, from Russia to Morocco, aimed to display the objective nature of the quest for good relations between Europe and its neighbours.

I thought that it was also a message addressed particularly to the countries in the East which had not joined the Union, to make them aware that there were other options apart from joining the Union and that they could achieve the same results in another way — even if these countries are in Europe.

My third thought was that on the basis of the individual conventions which would take place between the EU and each country concerned, one arrived back at a certain bilateralism, and one saved those who were more determined to move closer to Europe from having to wait for those whose willingness to move closer or to reform was more uncertain.

It is a means of recognising in each neighbouring state, a specific willingness to get closer to Europe or to benefit from being its neighbour, and to prevent penalising those who were the most involved and making them wait for those who were more hesitant.

I also thought that if a group of neighbouring countries between them wanted to be more active in moving forward, they could, on the basis of 2 or 3 bilateral action plans, coordinate and establish a sub-regional union between them; I was clearly thinking of the Maghreb countries.

However this was obviously not considered as such. The countries in the South thought it was a new method of making them wait, having already spent 8 years in the Mediterranean partnership.

Russia did not want to take part in this group because it thinks it is a world power which deals with the EU in a different way.

You can find a conclusion in the 6th point of the EUROMESCO report, which recommends that the Mediterranean partners aim at integrating the goals and resources of the neighbourhood policy into a remodelled Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

This same report highlights that for such a renewed Euro-Mediterranean partnership, it is necessary to build 5 pillars (point 7), i.e.:

- Democracy
- Diversity...there is no need for dialogue on global civilisation
- Migrants must be at the centre of plans because they are a link between their country of origin and their adopted country.
- Citizens' security
- Social solidarity and cohesion: this last principle reflects within Mediterranean relations an idea which has existed in the EU for 50 years, since the foundation of the ECSC: it is necessary to favour rationalisation on an economic level, which implies restructuring and closing down enterprises. However, this necessary task should be accompanied by social efforts to make these reforms possible: social programmes for the concerned people, regional programmes for the regions affected. Here we are talking about funds to be created for education to assure that the countries in the South can catch up.

It concerns ensuring the realisation of the free trade area by 2015 instead of 2010.

It is also necessary to ensure, not just in theory but in practice, co-responsibility for the programmes and "ownership".

In point 10, it is highlighted that it will be necessary to conquer the foremost opinion makers by a policy of visibility, which has never been the case before.

The last point (11) states that it is necessary to reaffirm the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration in order to know how to build a Euro-Mediterranean community without one country exerting its power over another.

THE STRATEGIC MEDITERRANEAN-MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP

The “reinforcement of the partnership between the EU and the Arab world”

At the request of the member states, an initial communication entitled “Reinforcement of the EU-Arab world partnership” was submitted to the Presidency of the EU by Javier Solana, Chris Patten and Romano Prodi. This document concluded that it was necessary to develop a policy on the Middle East which complemented the Mediterranean as well as the neighbourhood policy.

This reinforcement of relations between the EU and the Arab world implies the possibility of a regional strategy for the greater Middle East in the long term, i. e. the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), Yemen, Iraq and Iran (the only non-Arabic country mentioned).

The document anticipates two principal courses of action for the EU in its relations with the Arabic countries: “the Mediterranean line and the Wider Middle East”, specifying that the Barcelona Process will be reinforced by the “Enlarged Europe - neighbourhood” initiative.

The global idea is largely inspired by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, namely the promotion of prosperity, peace and stability. As for security, we not surprisingly come up against the questions of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, but it is clearly specified that the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a “strategic priority for the EU”.

Excluding this last point, which is nevertheless important, it is clearly the Barcelona model which is retained together with the political and economic solutions, cultural dialogue and social reform.

The general impression given by the document is the search for consistency between the different European initiatives and the desire to capitalise on the achievements of Barcelona in relation to the emergence of new strategies.

THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

In order to have a complete overview of the partners and the dialogue which has been put in place, we must mention the most recently created body i.e. the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, which also made itself heard on the 15th March 2005 in Cairo, concerning the evaluation of the Barcelona Process on the eve of its 10th anniversary.

I will not go through the 14 pages of the resolution adopted by the Assembly, but it is clear that in its 54 points it addresses everything that we have just discussed, giving it a political perspective.

WHAT SORT OF NORTH-SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE DOES THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL PROPOSE?

Allow me to depart from the description of the others' positions to describe the project which brings me to Algeria today in the company of the Secretary General of the European Movement International.

May I remind you that the European Movement International has national councils in 41 European countries. It therefore goes far beyond the limits of the EU of 25 member states.

It is therefore a continental movement, accessible to all countries which are members of the Council of Europe, which, as you know, go as far as the Caucasus and include Turkey and the Balkans.

The European Movement has a special role in the history of European unification, and it can be said that the 1948 Congress of the Hague, where the great ideas of European cooperation and peace in Europe were launched just three years after the end of a bloody war in which the European nations did each other much damage.

This founding Congress was attended by many great men of the day, and great men of the future, including Churchill, Adenauer and Schuman. The spirit which is at the basis of the short but memorable declaration launched at the occasion was the origin of both the Council of Europe — which is an intergovernmental cooperation organisation but with a parliamentary assembly and a court of human rights — and of the European Movement which virtually became the booster and the conscience of European unification, constantly recalling the importance of this major objective which ought to transcend national interest.

But what has all this to do with the Mediterranean, you might ask?

It is because in 2003-2004, following a period of reflection on the matter, the European Movement International considered that it should stop limiting its activities and its reflections to intra-European problems and depart from euro-centricism by devoting itself

to one of the biggest tasks and responsibilities of Europe, i.e. its place and the role which it plays in the organisation of the world — starting with the improvement of relations with its neighbours.

Therefore, when the European Commission launched its neighbourhood policy, the European Movement said “we will make the Mediterranean a priority and after that we will work on our relations with other parts of the world”.

In that context the European Movement had an important political reaction — in spite of the fact that many of its members belong to the Mediterranean area and that the EU practically covers the northern shore of the Mediterranean — namely that it would not make any statements on its idea of the future of the Mediterranean.

Indeed we will not say anything as long as we have not discussed our ideas on an equal footing with our neighbours in the Southern Mediterranean.

That is why we have searched and still are searching for partners for the European Movement and its National Councils in the South. These partners should be of a pluralist nature, include different political parties, social partners and free associations such as the European Teachers Association.

We hope to find such partners in the South in order to have a fruitful dialogue, and we would like to organise what we believe will be a historic congress in September of this year, perhaps in Algeria. We chose the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as a partner, (there is no movement similar to ours south of the Mediterranean) The Arab League or ISESCO was also proposed as a partner, but these are intergovernmental organisations. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina has an important independent status and an international patronage. In February 2004 it organised a forum concerning reforms in the Arab world, which brought together intellectuals from all countries in the Southern Mediterranean and which produced a remarkable document entitled “The Alexandria Statement, March 2004”. This statement is an exceptional document which should inspire us — together with documents expressing in our own way our willingness to reform in our part of the world — to work out a common declaration which would allow us to push our governments towards cooperation, to support and encourage them when there are difficulties, and to promote the reforms which are indispensable for establishing peace and cooperation at the level we consider necessary.

We have already dealt with this at our preparatory conference in Malta in November 2004 and produced two reports — by an Arabic Professor, Mr. Hadhri from the University of Tunis, and a European Professor, Mr. Lannon from the University of Ghent. These documents contain the discussion held in Malta and are currently being circulated to establish a basic common document for our deliberation in the autumn. I encourage you, as an organisation or as an individual, to get involved in the debate on this subject. We need informed partners with broad opinions and perspectives to do work efficiently together.

To finish, I cannot help but quote with interest an article by Mr. Halim Benattallah, the Algerian Ambassador to Brussels, which appeared in the daily paper, the Doran, on 17 February 2005, in which he commented on the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process.

He recalls that, since its inception, this process had the fundamental flaw of being based on the perspective of peace in Palestine, which was not realised.

He furthermore points out that, on the one hand, there was a tendency to avoid obstacles by resorting to a bilateral approach and that, on the other, due to the impassivity of the national governments it has been the European Commission which developed all the action and thus established a *de facto* unilateralism which eroded the process at an early stage.

He also highlights the hope that the Maghreb countries will lead the way because of the headstart they had since the 1976 agreements.

Benattallah further acknowledges that there are also original difficulties, such as the Western Sahara, but notes that the split between the two communities in Cyprus should not hinder the unification process.

Moreover, he regrets that the Agadir process took place in Algeria and acknowledges that cooperation has been greatly hindered by the emergence of “religious armies” in the form of terrorism, and the invasion of Iraq. .

He highlights that in Europe, stronger cooperation is the driving force behind wider and more far-reaching cooperation, and that achieving progress should no longer depend on total unanimity.

Finally, in the relations with the EU he advocates an advanced sub-regional status because Europe has evolved, but he highlights that the initiative for a sub-regional project must be taken by the Maghreb people themselves.

Coming from a small country in the heart of Europe which participated in the Community of 6 — which has now become a community of 25 — and having greatly profited from this, I wish the same for the Algerian elite gathered here today, whom I would like to thank for listening.

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