

The changing international context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: The impact of the twin enlargement processes of the EU and NATO on the Mediterranean region

Rina Weltner-Puig

The preparations for the dual enlargement of the EU¹ and NATO² are reshaping European political, economic and security structures. Each organisation being of its own kind, the impact of the two expansion processes will be different not only for the future member states but also for those left outside the EU, NATO, or both. The internal decision-making procedures for selecting these countries to be incorporated into the EU and NATO unavoidably cast their shadow over those who are not included, and this is likely to shape their perceptions of themselves as well as the international environment around them. The Mediterranean region is the one area where an excluding frontier already exists and where co-operation processes have been developed to bridge the gap between the EU, NATO and the non-EU-countries of the southern Mediterranean. With the forthcoming enlargements, this regional forum will be confronted with important changes.

For obvious reasons, the debate on the enlargement of the EU and NATO revolves around Central and Eastern Europe, where the majority of the countries directly involved are situated. However, the perception of "being left out" among states outside the range of the two organisations echoes from the eastern edge of the continent to North Africa and the Middle East. Even if the latter areas are formally outside the European continent, geographic proximity to the EU and close historic, cultural, political and economic ties to Europe make North Africa, in particular, sensitive to any changes in its northern neighbourhood³. The gradually developing European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) also arouses interest, if not concern, in

the south. In addition, the profound changes within NATO and its relationship to Russia are of significance to all of its neighbours, including those in the south. Finally, developments within the Arab/Islamic world also are impacting regional relationships in the Mediterranean.

To gain perspective on how the enlargement processes are likely to affect the Mediterranean region, I shall first try to shed light on the major developments that are reshaping Europe's economic, political and security structures, as well as those that are transforming the Arab/Islamic societies in North Africa. Then, I shall investigate the challenges in the relationship between an enlarged EU/NATO and their Mediterranean partners. Finally, I shall briefly assess future prospects of EU policies in the Mediterranean and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Initiative (EMPI), as a whole.

Western European political, economic and security structures become continental

As previous approvals of new members show, the EU has never been an exclusive club of its constituent states. On the contrary, it has been an organisation open to all European states that fulfil certain criteria. This alleged welcoming openness has permitted the Union to exercise leverage on applicant countries on issues such as constitutional order, human rights, minority protection and economy. In addition, civilian security concerns (international criminality; smuggling; illegal immigration) - all related to the deep welfare gap across the old continent and along its frontiers - have convinced the Union to create strict external border controls and, thus, impose new dividing lines. With the next wave of the enlargement, the Schengen agreement will move eastwards with the consequence that common border protocol standards will unite some of the former socialist countries with the EU while detaching them from the rest.

NATO has had a more restricted character, as strict political, strategic and military criteria shaped the organisation during the Cold War. With the U.S.- Soviet

confrontation gone and no well-defined or comprehensively threatening enemy arising, a new NATO is emerging from its old shell. The former external definition lines began to dilute when Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO, and the forthcoming enlargement will bring more countries from the vicinity of Russia into the Atlantic community. Also, the former archenemies, NATO and Russia, have now initiated an unparalleled process of convergence in security concerns under the banner of the war against international terrorism. As a result, a functional metamorphosis is underway in NATO, although formally it remains an organisation for collective defence. In addition, concern about internal cohesion within the organisation have surfaced in an unusual manner now that national security perceptions, interests and policies have regained prominence in today's globalised world where transnational networks of like-minded people with technology have the power to impact modern societies through terrorist activities.

In the present circumstances, the eastern expansions of the EU and NATO are most often viewed as positive contributions to the overall stability of the continent, though NATO's advance to the proximity of Russian hard lands, such as the Saint Petersburg region, had previously provoked a more negative reaction. The often-repeated argument maintains that European integration once secured democracy in countries emerging from dictatorship - Greece, Spain and Portugal - and that now the EU faces the same responsibility in Central and Eastern Europe. Through enlargement, an increasing number of countries participate in a Union that enhances democratic principles, good governance and the rule of law, together with respect for human and minority rights. The promotion and acceptance of these values, in turn, will make Europe more stable and secure (Lindh, 2001). This logic has been accepted in Russia, where the EU is no longer perceived as a rival, now that it is free from the taint of the Cold War and lacks both the military muscle and the political leverage of the U.S.⁴ For many Central and Eastern states, however, shared values and complex political and economic interdependence within the EU still offer an incomplete assurance of security, unless they also benefit from NATO's military guarantees. With it, however, all ambiguity that might derive from their location

between two European power centres - the EU/NATO and Russia - would definitively vanish⁵.

Regardless of how inclusive the two enlargement processes prove to be, they will still exclude some eastern European states whose economic, social, political conditions still are too different from those of the EU and that provide NATO with few strategic benefits. As for the EU, the sharp edge of visa and border policies at its external border is certain to disrupt bilateral relationships and regional economic integration in Central and Eastern Europe. There, the new 'ins' will be detached from their neighbouring 'outs' (Grabbe, 2000: 528). Some of the "outs" will remain candidates for a future round of enlargement and others - Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, Macedonia or Albania - still have to formulate their relationship to the EU. Further, a difference in status and leverage between governments within the Union and those outside is likely to appear and influence cross-border relations in Central and Eastern Europe (Wallace, 2000: 488).

One sensitive issue illustrates the potential for sharpened discord between neighbours on both sides of EU's external border: the dispersion of minorities across the region. The recent initiative of the Hungarian government offering belated home-coming to 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, under a special "status law", was welcomed by the members of the Hungarian diaspora, but rejected as discriminatory by Romania and Slovakia (Time, 25 February, 2002). The eastward shift of the perimeter of the Union will open other closed borders, with the same potential to become equally tricky from an ethnic and national point of view. Here, the former Czechoslovakia comes quickly to mind, where almost three million ethnic Germans were expelled after the II WW. The membership prospects of the Czech Republic, in particular, give rise to the question whether the old decrees that gave legality to such loss of citizenship and expropriation of property, among other things, should finally be repealed. If they are, the Czech government might be overwhelmed by demands for restitution.

Not surprisingly, it has been suggested that the EU enlargement process represents such a profound and extraordinary internal and external transformation of

the continent that its consolidation and further expansion will be the foremost concern of European governments for the present decade (Daalder, 2001: 557). Indisputably, the adaptation of the EU machinery - institutions, instruments and policies - to an increased number of member states is already a huge challenge, as are the acclimatisation of the newcomers to the working procedures of the Union and making the new EU a unitary actor beyond its external frontier. Closely related to these transformations, the rather somnolent discussions on the nature and destination of the Union are expected to pick up. Finally, the attention of the EU is likely to remain on the European continent, as the newly incorporated states gradually bring their own foreign political interest and speciality areas to the Common Foreign Policy. With the forthcoming expansion, the current Northern Dimension and the Mediterranean Partnership might get a sister policy, perhaps called the Eastern Partnership.

Besides expanding eastward, the EU has undertaken policies to qualitatively improve co-operation among its member states and, hence, deepen the integration process. One such area is security and defence policy, in which important breakthroughs have taken place since late 1990's. Today, the ESDP does not exclude any area of security or defence and might, one day, lead to common defence policy. At present, however, the focus is on EU's assumption of new responsibilities and developing the capabilities to deal with full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks. As agreed in the 1999 Helsinki Council, by the year 2003 the EU should have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by a credible rapid reaction military force of 60 000 ready to respond to international crises in which NATO, as a whole, is not engaged. Even if co-operation with NATO, which remains the mainstay of European defence structure, is not put into question, the planned machinery for the EU to conduct its own military operations not only transforms the nature of the Union but also brings a new element into the overall European security environment.

Another policy area that is gradually becoming "common" and that is likely to affect the external image of the EU and its relations to third countries is an EU-wide policy on asylum, prompted by the need to tackle immigration abuse. Until recently,

each member state has had its own regulations to deal with this issue but, now, "asylum shopping" - the practise by immigrants to choose the EU countries that offer most attractive benefits - has led several European governments to devise tougher policies on asylum and immigration. In mid-May 2002, a British "action plan" to "deliver a radical reduction in the number of unfounded asylum applications", involving the use of Royal Navy warships to intercept people traffickers in the Mediterranean and carry out bulk deportations among other measures, made headlines in European newspapers (The Guardian, 23 May, 2002).

Growing immigration from third countries, however, is by no means merely a British problem. It affects most EU countries in the form of asylum seekers, illegal immigration or both. Further, the rise of extreme right parties in France, the Netherlands, Denmark and Austria seems to be putting pressure on centre-left governments to adopt more restrictive policies. The first step by the EU governments to establish common standards for the facilities provided for refugee families while their asylum applications are being vetted, taken in Luxembourg on April 25, was followed by more commitments in the Seville European Council (The Guardian, 26 April, 2002). The hard-line ambitions of the Great Britain and Spain to impose penalties on countries that refuse to co-operate with the EU on asylum and immigration, however, were vetoed by France, Luxembourg, Sweden and Finland.

NATO in transition

Compared to the accession strategy of the EU, with its stated economic and political criteria for candidate states, the NATO enlargement remains more implied for several reasons. To begin with, proposals for new partners stretch from none to one or two members, in one extreme, to an all-inclusive "big bang" of nine newcomers in the other. In addition, certain old European members hold a preference for particular candidates. This internal dissension indicates an absence of clearly identifiable and qualified candidates despite the formal requirements of democratic regimes, Western economic practices and human rights standards. It is aggravated by a lack of

consensus on the expansion rationale, as a whole. What remains a pivotal and complex task is to gauge how each applicant country could strengthen the cohesion and military effectiveness of the Alliance. It is not surprising that the timetable for the admission of new partners has been unsettled (Groft; Howorth; Terriff and Webber, 2000: 501-502; and Rusi, 2002: 43-52).

Before the 11 September events, the main external obstacle of the NATO enlargement was the objection of Russia; the concern that an unwelcome expansion could alienate the former superpower and deteriorate the NATO/West-Russia relationship. Here, the setbacks experienced during NATO's air strikes against Serbia provided an indication of the potential repercussions to eastern European security if a similar deterioration was repeated. President Putin's swift alignment with the U.S. in the "war against terrorism", however, has brought Russia and the U.S. closer together, and Russian objections to the enlargement have recently diminished (Colton and McFaul, 2001: 48). In addition, the creation of the NATO-Russia Council elevated the relationship between the two to an unprecedented equality (NATO, 14 May, 2002) in some areas⁶. The fight against new security threats is giving Russia an increasingly influential position in the core of the Atlantic community, one that is based on a good Russian-U.S. bilateral relationship.

The political and strategic disarray that has characterised NATO expansion, however, is a symptom of a more profound internal transformation within the Alliance as NATO attempts to adapt itself to the disappearance of its principal external enemy and the new challenges of the post-Cold War world. Once the antagonism with the Soviet Union came to an end and NATO had survived as an organisation for the collective defence of its territory, a profound remodelling of its functions got under way to provide the Alliance with a new *raison d'être*. The engagement in the co-operative security of Europe, the creation of a working relationship with Russia, extensive Partnership for Peace (PfP) programmes and a focus on crisis management and peacekeeping gave NATO a respectable solution. The Balkan crises, that served as rehearsal ground for the new role of NATO in

Europe, nevertheless, also revealed serious internal procedural problems and rifts within the Alliance.

As for the EU, the experiences in Bosnia made the member states painfully aware of the divisions among them as well as the EU's dependence on NATO and the U.S. An attempt to upgrade European capabilities to act in international conflicts and improve parity in the U.S.-Europe relationship was undertaken when the EU began to strengthen the European pillar within NATO. The Kosovo crisis a few years later, however, reaffirmed that European dependence on the U.S. in military operations was still total and, therefore, any European say in them was cramped. As a response, the 1999 Helsinki agreement initiated the preparation of a European rapid-reaction capability. For the U.S., in turn, the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo and the subsequent military campaigns showed that joint NATO actions were extremely bureaucratic, slowly and politically complicated (Gordon, 2000: 14-15).

Despite the many academic and political articles that had offered insights into the structural changes within NATO and the palpable drifting apart between the U.S. and its European members in security matters⁷, the events following the 11 September terrorist attacks made these developments more obvious. On the one hand, the U.S. undoubtedly appreciated and found useful the political, diplomatic and moral support of European NATO countries, as well as that of most other states. On the other hand, the U.S. choice not to make full use of the activated Article 5 but, rather, to act swiftly and unilaterally, left a bad feeling among several NATO countries. For some observers, the marginalisation of NATO by the U.S. was an indication that Washington did not take NATO seriously or that NATO's traditional role as a collective defence organisation was coming to an end (Financial Times, 10 April, 2002). Consequently, NATO appeared to continue its frenetic search for a place in the post Cold War world or face a closure. The enlargement process just seemed to add more fuel to this strategic disarray.

The uncertain prospects of NATO began to fade away in mid-May 2002 when NATO and Russia reached an agreement of a new NATO-Russian Council that would provide them with an improved co-operation forum. This partnership

instrument pretends to bury what might be left from the Cold War rancour between the former adversaries and, hence, contribute to peaceful and undivided Europe. With this development, the likelihood of a wide eastern expansion has grown, as the political function of consensus in security related issues within NATO seems to have strengthened. It may be too early to assess, but an extended Euro-Atlantic-Russian community may be under way, now that the traditional menaces to territorial security of European countries have given way to new international threats.

Notwithstanding the favourable future expectations in NATO, several internal rifts endure. It now seems that the terrorist threat and the international co-operation needed to fight against it have not been enough to diminish U.S. unilateralism in the international arena⁸. Quite the opposite, the new situation seems to have increased the different perceptions of security on the two shores of the Atlantic. The U.S. proclivity to act on its own, or in coalitions of convenience when military intervention is needed, is likely to continue, as NATO and most EU countries have little to offer to the U.S. apart from moral, political and intelligence support and the important right of passage across their territories. Finally, the distress in Europe over the harsh language of President Bush's "Axis of the Evil" speech, along with divergent approaches to the Middle East crises and the best way to deal with Saddam Hussein, indicate serious disagreement on some very key international issues.

The Arab/Muslim world in transformation

Partly outside and partly within the Western world, the Arab and Islamic worlds - together and separately - are enmeshed in a vehement search for a satisfactory way to combine tradition and modernity without jeopardising Muslim identity. The return of Islam in Muslim societies and their politics had become an undeniable and challenging fact in the late 1970's when the Islamic Revolution toppled the pro-Western government in Iran and converted the country into a potential exporter of radical Islamism. A few years later, the murder of Anwar al-Sadat in Egypt proved that the Islamic Revolution was not only a matter of the Shia-minority but had swept across

the Sunni world, as well. In the early 1990's, the vicious circle of religiously motivated violence and state repression in Egypt, together with the interruption of the electoral process in Algeria and the subsequent merciless war, pictured the Arab-Islamic world as increasingly subversive and angry. At the same time, growing immigration from North Africa and the Middle East gradually made Islam an inseparable part of Western societies.

As the momentum of Islamic insurrection in those Muslim countries that had suffered from violence seemed to wither away, a parallel moderate Islamic movement continued to proceed. In its quest for the role of Islam in Arab societies, it asked whether or not and to what degree the Islamic Law should be implemented in Muslim states. In this ideological battle with reformist, nationalist and Arab-socialist forces, Egypt again, has in many ways been the spiritual heartland of the Islamist tendency, the laboratory of Political Islam and the origin of different movements in the Arab world⁹. Later, Egyptian doctrines and teachings have spread to North African from Morocco and Algeria to Syria and southwards to Sudan in harmony and, at times, contest for intellectual influence with Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Just as Islamism can be understood as a cyclical return to the sacred texts and the original sources of Islam that stems from the need to reinterpret reality according to the Islamic law, multiple ways to accomplish this have emerged. This submission to God should, thus, be understood as a manifold social, cultural and political movement. According to Burhan Ghalioun (1997: 59-60), the return of Islamism today is neither a natural evolution of a refractory faith that has been confronted with secularisation and modernity, nor a sign of the recuperation of an identity until recently hampered by the experience of colonisation. Rather, it would be an expression of willingness to inscribe to a new identity in front of the vacuum to which mismanaged, stratifying and devastating modernity conducts.

Though each Islamic movement has its own driving forces, François Burgat (1996: 41) has pointed out the Arab population's loss of social position as a consequence of the profound crisis in the Arab states as the factor that spurs the quest for new identity. Indeed, since 1986, the per capita income in Middle East and

North African countries has fallen by 2% annually, while the population growth has been 2.5% per year (Lord Robertson, 2002). As a result, unlike the heyday of Arab nationalism, today it is difficult to pinpoint even a self-confident "Arab way" of handling markets, domestic politics and international relations. Instead, autocratic leadership, spreading class differences, unmatched population growth and welfare network, unemployment and poverty together with growing Islamic opposition - often excluded from the mainstream - still portray many Arab countries. In these circumstances, the illusion of new social belonging within *Umma* has emerged as a viable option.

In a tragic manner, the 11 September terrorist attacks in the U.S. unveiled the profound turmoil under way in the Arab countries with respect to the quest for alternative identity, the role of Islam in modern societies and the future of the Islamic world, as a whole. What is more, the Fundamentalists intended to engage the West in this intra-Muslim contest so as to polarise the *Umma*. Finally, the attacks momentarily highlighted the conflict or Jihadist world view¹⁰ in the Islamic world vis-à-vis other discourses, as the culmination of developments that had got under way a decade ago when the U.S. became the dominant military force in the Gulf region and the sole global power.

Two crucial failures and an equal number of controversial triumphs have prepared the ground for such situation. To begin with, the Arab states, in general, and Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in particular, have failed to open up their political systems and introduce democratic principles of participation and good governance. The desire for regional stability and status quo in the U.S and the West, in general, has discouraged them from pushing forward among Arabs the parliamentary standards both the Americans and the Europeans cherish at home. Further, the inability of the West as well as the Arab/Islamic world to bring the Middle East conflict to a durable and just end and to bring down the sanctions on Iraq have generated frustration and bitterness. The continued Arab-Israeli violence, widespread economic penury in the Arab world, and continuing Western support for undemocratic Arab regimes have

fuelled both anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism among Islamist as well as Arab-nationalist forces.

The exasperation, anger and hatred in some parts of the Arab/Islam world have provided a fruitful intellectual ground for antagonistic rather than dialogue oriented positions to grow and spread vis-à-vis the U.S. and Israel, in particular, and the West, in general. To this must be added the disputable success of the Saudi policy to export the strictly orthodox and intolerant Wahhabi version of Islam and provide its mosques, schools and charitable organisations with economic resources. In addition, the effective suppression of Islamist opposition has forced many extremists into exile from where, instead of renouncing politics, they have launched their strategy of terrorism and revolution¹¹.

Indeed, the idea that Islamic insurrectionary momentum belonged to the past received a blow with the 11 September attacks. Though many governments have the upper hand over their national fundamentalist groups, the intra-Muslim ideological battle over ideals, sympathies and convictions received new encouragement from the event. Nevertheless, even if the fanatical message of attacking the U.S. echoed beyond the minority of radicals in the large masses of dissatisfied Arabs, it would be unfortunate to focus on these groups as the essence of the vast, complex and diverse Muslim world¹². Instead, what seems to best describe the current Arab/Muslim world is an uncertain and complex social change within undemocratic political regimes, linked to the globalisation process through modern communication channels and computer technology available to an increasing number of individuals at low cost.

Challenges in the Mediterranean

Turning back to the Mediterranean region, the EMPI has never developed in isolation from events and evolution in its wider surroundings, be it the European integration process, the Middle East conflict or other structural changes in the international scene. In reality, the terrorist attacks of 11 September, with their repercussions in both the West and the Arab/Islamic worlds, constitute a distinctive component of the changing

context of the Mediterranean co-operation. On the basis of the framework outlined above, the Mediterranean region is likely to face new challenges and, perhaps, opportunities from three independent but interconnected sources. First, the enlargement and deepening of the European integration process; second, NATO expansion and transformation and, finally, developments in the Arab world.

The impact of the European enlargement process

To begin with the European enlargement process, the integration of five or six eastern and central European countries, will convert the EU into a more substantial economic and political entity in its regional context as well as global relations. This may make it even harder for non-members states to influence EU policies and negotiate trading conditions. Alfred Toviás (2001: 375-394) has pointed out, for instance, that the inclusion of Cyprus within the EU could have a considerable effect on southern Mediterranean countries as negotiations on fishing rights within the Cypriot exclusive economic zone would be conducted with Brussels, not with Nicosia. The enlargement will also initiate change in the energy dependency of the enlarged EU, as the candidate states rely largely on imports from Russia. European reliance on Arab energy resources could diminish in the long run.

As for agricultural trade, Toviás claims that the liberalisation of the Common Agricultural Policy that is likely to follow the enlargement could benefit the southern Mediterranean countries, too. As a whole, however, he estimates that the economic repercussions of the adding of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus are likely to remain small due to weak trade relations between the candidate states and the southern partners. Poland and the Czech Republic, who have export ties to some Arab countries and Turkey, could be an exception. On the political level, bilateral relations between the EU21 and individual Mediterranean non-members will not be the focus of the EU, apart from relations with Turkey and Israel (Toviás, *op. cit.*).

In spite of the incorporation of Mediterranean Cyprus and Malta into the EU, the eastern focus of the EU will accelerate, as the new members bring their national foreign political interest areas into the Union. This will indirectly affect the Mediterranean region, as the already perceivable arm wrestling between countries around Germany and the French-led "Latin group" for the political and economic commitment of the EU is likely to increase. For sheer mathematical reasons, this rivalry could swing to the favour of the north and east over south. Therefore, without clear and strong leadership, the Barcelona Process is likely to lose momentum and awareness within an EU whose attention is fixed on the consolidation of the politico-economic transition in eastern and central Europe and the peaceful settlement of any eventual tensions there. Unavoidably, the bulk of this consolidation and stabilisation consists of economic aid and private sector investments that might be away from the south.

Nevertheless, if Cyprus, despite its political division, and Malta become new Mediterranean members of the EU they should be removed from the external dimension of the Barcelona process. Their removal, however, would leave the remaining partners dangerously exposed to Arab-Israeli divisions. The adoption of special arrangements for Turkey and Israel to enhance co-operation between them and the EU would then turn the EMPI into a kind of Euro-Arab dialogue in which the common linking factor between the non-European states would be their indefinite exclusion from a larger EU (Spencer, 2001: 86).

As a whole, the gradual enlargement of the EU and the incorporation of both Malta and Cyprus would hint to a progressive move eastward in the political focus of the EU, even if the economic centre of the Union still remains in the west. In the Mediterranean, a parallel shift of attention towards the eastern basin of the Sea may follow, as well. Closer relations between the EU, Bulgaria, Rumania and Turkey in the future might advocate the formulation of a European policy on a larger Mediterranean - Black Sea region. Finally, any acceleration of the north-south or Arab-European split in the region would cause a major change in the nature of the EPMI.

Europe becomes a security actor

The enlargement process of the EU, however, proceeds hand in hand with a deepening of inter-governmental co-operation and the expansion of community decision-making policies. The development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and its extension, the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP), are prominent policy areas that arouse interest and concern in EU's neighbouring states. What is more, since only Malta, Cyprus and Turkey¹³ have claims to be European and, thus, claim a place in European security structures (Spencer, 1999: 208), the Arab Mediterranean Partners are left outside EU's security fabric, as well as other European security institutions. Security dialogue in the EMPI is also an area in which little progress has been made, as the difficulties related to the drafting of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability and the postponement of its adoption in Marseilles 2000 showed. Even though the Mediterranean area, as a whole, and its southern and eastern shores, in particular, are deeply fragmented in security matters and the Middle East conflict seriously hampers integration in this field, the development of EU's own military capacity will significantly impact the EMPI.

In the past, the weakness, not the power, of the CFSP prevented the EU from acting cohesively and decisively in security matters within the EMPI and the Middle East Peace Process. Therefore, NATO appeared a more credible security partner than the EU for Arab Mediterranean countries, despite their mistrust of the Atlantic Alliance. Nor was the Western European Union (WEU) capable of creating an active and constructive Mediterranean Dialogue (Aliboni and Said Aly, 2000: 210). At the end of 1999, when reforms in the Common Foreign Policy finally provided coherence and efficiency -creating instruments, the ability of the EU to act in unison and with more determination on the international arena was expected to improve EU's image, authority and influence in the EMPI (Spencer, *op.cit.*: 214). The relationship between increased European efficacy in foreign policy and a favourable EU image, however, is not necessarily automatic. European planning for emergencies in the Mediterranean and the use of the EUROFOR and the EUROMAFOR forces

did not inspire confidence among the Mediterranean Partners. In fact, European defence planning might undermine any co-operative security initiatives in the region (Spencer, 1999: 208-209). On the other hand, the split among EU members with regard to economic sanctions against Israel during March and April 2002 suggests that institutional improvements can accomplish little without unanimous political will within the Union.

Security co-operation and integration within the EU, however, has advanced beyond mere co-ordination as the member states recognise their need to assume more responsibility in maintaining regional stability in adjacent areas, including conflict prevention and crisis management missions. It is not inconceivable that the EU could resort to its rapid reaction force for actions in the Mediterranean region, but there has been little linkage between the Helsinki and the Barcelona Processes until recently (Spencer, 2001: 85). Now that the EU states co-operate in hard security issues, linking these processes would seem essential to avoid the impression that the new international engagement of the EU is intrusive rather than co-operative, as the spirit of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration intends. If maintained, this contradiction is likely to further erode the confidence of the Mediterranean Partners in the EU and European security structures.

Finally, the Mediterranean region faces a challenge emerging from the paradox that security can be an extremely wide concept as well as a narrow and subjective one. This ambiguity has clearly been present in security related dialogue concerning the Mediterranean. Northern, southern and eastern concepts considerably differ from one another¹⁴. The difficult task will be to bring within a common framework the predominantly internal security concerns in the south and northern anxieties that stretch from uncontrolled flows of immigrants to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The fact that both hard and soft security issues have become entangled in the Mediterranean region has induced NATO, the OSCE and the WEU, in its time, to initiate north-south security related dialogues with North African countries, apart from the initiatives of the EU.

Until now, the contribution of the EU to security building in the Mediterranean region has been mainly political and economic; focused on improving the economic and social underpinnings of stability in North Africa. In hard security matters, NATO and the WEU to a lesser extent have stood for the territorial defence of their member states. The eventual adoption of a more salient role in regional security problems presents a double challenge for the EU in the Mediterranean area. First, it should strive for a genuinely co-operative security arrangement within the EMPI in order not to accentuate the differentiated security regimes on the two shores. This would also help to avoid the marginalisation of any Mediterranean Partners. Second, the EU should improve policy co-ordination with NATO and the U.S. on issues related to the Mediterranean region. Incoherent security policies and strategies of the part of the EU and NATO/the U.S. are likely to further fragment the region and boost insecurity rather than stability.

NATO expansion

The eastern expansion of NATO is not likely to radically alter the relationship between the Atlantic security organisation and the Mediterranean region as outlined in 1994 when NATO launched its Mediterranean Dialogue and reaffirmed in the 1999 Strategic Concept of the Alliance. Both assess the Mediterranean as an area of special interest to the Alliance, as "security in Europe is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean" (The Alliance's Strategic Concept, 1999 and Lesser, Green, Larrabee and Zanini, 2000: 1-2). Even if the Dialogue initiative forms part of NATO's co-operative approach to security, it reveals the Alliance's principal focus on Europe and the concern that security there might be threatened by developments in the south, including the proliferation of WMD and missile systems, the interruption of energy supplies, uncontrolled and massive refugee flows and the spill over of terrorism. In the background, the rolling crisis with Iraq and the Middle East conflict influence the transatlantic security environment, as a whole¹⁵. At present, the centrality of the fight

against international terrorism might sharpen NATO's focus on the Mediterranean, should a terrorist menace emerge from the area.

The expansion of NATO to the three Baltic republics, Slovakia and Slovenia, however, reshapes the general European security architecture by extending the Euro-Atlantic network towards east. If the forthcoming expansion eventually involves Romania and Bulgaria, the indirect impact on the Mediterranean region could be even greater. What is likely to occur is that the influence of south-eastern Europe and, thus, the eastern part of the Mediterranean, will gradually increase within the Alliance, just as it will within the EU. It is not inconceivable that the Black Sea area as well as regions in and around the Caspian Sea and Central Asia will soon become more important to NATO. This will emphasise the strategic position of Turkey at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and the "new" east. Finally, the incorporation of eastern European countries into the Alliance will diminish the proportional presentation of European Mediterranean members.

Transition in NATO

Apart from the expansion process, the gradual transformation of the Atlantic organisation poses a question as to the new role of NATO, not just in the Mediterranean but in the world, as a whole. Although it is still early to judge, it seems that NATO is becoming an increasingly close political partnership on security matters that stretch from traditional guarantees of territorial defence to ad hoc coalitions prepared to take action against new security threats wherever they emerge. If so, then policy co-ordination between the EU and NATO might become even more difficult than the transatlantic work within the Alliance at present, and differences in the perception and handling of international security challenges could increase. The management of immigration is one issue in which the interventionist approach of NATO and the incipiently co-operative approach of the EU might find themselves at odds¹⁶. A combined effort between the EU and NATO with regard to the

Mediterranean area seems crucial, as neither the EU nor the EMPI include all countries that shape Mediterranean security; most notably, the U.S.

Related to the internal transformation of NATO, the inclination of the U.S. to adopt unilateral policies and form coalitions of convenience when it decides a military action necessary creates a factor of uncertainty in its relationships within NATO and the Arab/Islamic world, the Mediterranean region included. This is not an entirely new development as, for some time, the differences over "Western" strategy have been most complex in the Middle East. European governments have become increasingly uneasy about American policies (Wallace, 2001: 23). Recently, the U.S. plans to extend the military operation against terrorism from Afghanistan to Iraq and topple its leader, Saddam Hussein, were not well received in Europe and met full opposition from the Arab states and their public opinion. If this continues, U.S.-EU policy differences may force the EU to choose whether it sides with U.S.-led strategies or preserves its own co-operative approach to the Arab/Mediterranean world. On the other hand, since NATO and the U.S. remain the mainstays of the European security architecture, a clear break in the Alliance along the Atlantic does not seem probable. Discord within the EU and a prolongation of its political weakness in the international arena, including the EMPI, could be a more likely outcome.

The transformation of NATO also involves the new relationship to Russia. Although its direct repercussions on the Mediterranean are small given the diminished influence of Russia in the region after the end of the Cold War, the strategic alignment of the two former rivals represents a major structural change in the international scene. It may, thus, indirectly extend its influence also on the Mediterranean area. Only a few years ago, several potential sources of friction existed in the Russian-West relationship with regard to the larger Mediterranean area: Russian economic interests in shipping routes through the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and Suez; political and security concerns in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Levant; Moscow's arms and technology transfers to Iran, Syria and Libya (Lesser, 1999: 221). While none of these issues is out of the agenda today, the resolution of potential policy conflicts become more co-operative than confrontational. Finally, the new friendship makes whatever

expectations there might have been that Russia could one day develop into a political and/or military counterbalance to the U.S. vanish into the air.

The Arab/Islamic world

Euro-Mediterranean co-operation also faces a challenge posed by the change in Arab/Muslim societies. European and Western policies that polarise the West-Islam imaginary dichotomy are only likely to benefit radical Islamist groups, increasing instability in the region. On the other hand, Western policies that turn a blind eye to the harsh repression of internal dissident groups, be they Islamic or other, by pro-Western Arab governments is likely to undermine the image of the West and its credibility as the promoter of Human Rights and democratic values. It seems, therefore, that an intercultural dialogue and an emphasis on the culture of tolerance should be encouraged, simultaneously, in societies on both shores of the Mediterranean, as well as across it.

One of the most serious direct challenges to the Mediterranean co-operation is the Middle East conflict. Apart from its potential to escalate into an open regional war, the recurrent tensions have blocked multilateral co-operation on political and security issues in the EMPI, as well as exposing internal dissent within the EU. This split and the Israeli opposition to the political participation of the EU in the peace process have assigned to the EU merely an economic role in the area. It remains to be seen if the recent formation of the so called "Quartet", that involves the U.S., the EU the UN and Russia in an attempt to break the circle of violence in the Middle East and revive the political track, reinforces the role of the EU. A more united and influential EU, tangible advances in the resolution of the Middle-East conflict and steady democratisation of the Arab states would considerably improve the prospects of the Mediterranean region's ability to adapt to the changing international context of globalisation.

The Mediterranean region after 11 September

It seems early to gauge if the 11 September terrorist attacks initiated any clear or definitive changes in the Mediterranean region. Rather, they seemed to underline the urgency to strengthen the policies previously outlined in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership initiative to avoid the Mediterranean becoming a new fault-line. In this sense, the fact that the popular support for the authors of the terrorist actions among North African populations has not developed into further confrontations with the West is worth a remark. Obviously, the maintenance of social stability in North Africa and the stability of the Arab regimes is in the interest of the EU as much as it is of the Arab elites themselves. Therefore, the reinforcement of dialogue and co-operation in the fight against international terrorism, agreed in the Valencia Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial conference, is just a coherent adjustment of national security policies into the new international situation.

All countries in the Mediterranean also have to adapt themselves to the new situation in which the assertive American-led fight against terrorism increasingly determines the acceptability of each regime and organisation. To a certain degree, the U.S. policy is blurring the old divisions between the U.S. "allies" and "enemies". Instead, the positioning of all international actors vis-à-vis the "Bush doctrine" on the fight against terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the "axis of the evil" now would seem to determine the nature of relationship between the U.S. and the other countries.

In a world political situation that highlights bilateral ties between a "hegemonic power" and the rest of the states, collective efforts may stagnate or even retract. It remains to be seen if the pursuit of good bilateral relations to the U.S. by Spain and Italy and the more cautious position of France is reflected in the Euro-Mediterranean forum. The Mediterranean Arab countries, on the other hand, were all quick to condemn the suicide attacks on New York and Washington, but the conflation of yet new "targets" of the war on terrorism has put many of them in an increasingly uneasy situation. While states such as Syrian and Libya have reason to fear

they might be among the U.S. objectives in the war against terror, Algeria - to combat its own militants - has been anxious to show it doing everything to counter terrorism.

Finally, the predominant role of the U.S. in issues that require military intervention might accentuate the role of the U.S. in security arrangements in the Mediterranean. This may discourage security co-operation between the North Africa Arab states and the EU, now that Europe unquestionably is a secondary military power. Nevertheless, not everything is about hard politics and the successful promotion of dialogue between cultures and civilisations, promoted in the Barcelona Process, may come out as an essential complement to the battle against religious-inspired intolerance and totalitarianism.

Concluding remarks

Even if the Mediterranean region is not at the centre of the EU and NATO enlargement processes, the structural changes in Europe and the international arena play an important role in this area. In the coming years, more eastern and central European countries will be involved in the EMPI, and the challenge will be not only how to maintain the current state of affairs, but also how to improve the dynamism of the region and obtain "tangible" results from co-operation. The problem of invisibility that today describes the EMPI is partly linked to its difficulty in offering any tangible results. Two main alternatives to improve this situation from the European side seem to emerge. First, the EU should understand that the challenges presented by the Mediterranean region to the EU affect all member states equally and that they should be addressed on a unified basis. Given the eventual difficulties in achieving this, a second mechanism might become a necessity. This could be a more flexible orientation in EU's external relations; one that implies more leadership and responsibility for like-minded southern European states in Mediterranean co-operation (Ojanen, 2000: 376).

In the Mediterranean area, however, the issue of leadership has not been straightforward, even if several EU member states perceive national interests in the

region. In the first half of 2002, the Spanish presidency of the EU made an important attempt to give the EMPI the impetus it needs not to lose momentum once the EU enlargement takes place (La Vanguardia, 6 June, 2002). The nascent reopening of political and security dialogue with the prospect of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and increased political contact as well as co-operation in the fight against terrorism are necessary steps forward that take in consideration the new security concerns and their centrality in today's political inter-state relations. Also the conclusion of most Association Agreements between the EU and Mediterranean Partners - only talks with Syria are still under way - and the incipient south-south integration within the Agadir process indicate that the free trade initiative is steadily moving ahead. The creation of a reinforced financial facility within the EIB hopes to signal that the EU is still committed to the economic development of southern Mediterranean countries. At the same time, the initiatives on social, cultural and human dialogue demonstrate that the states around the Mediterranean give prominence to better intercultural understanding and tolerance.

The real challenge in converting the Mediterranean into an area of stability, prosperity and mutual understanding, however, lies in achieving dynamic and constructive dialogue between the different states, regions and cultures in the region, one that is based on mutual respect and shared positive neighbourhood values. Therefore, how the progress made in Valencia will work in that direction depends on the abilities of European countries to co-ordinate their policies and pull together, as well as on efforts made in the south to speed up political and economic reforms.

A different challenge is whether it is realistic to expect that, one day, economic and security integration in the Mediterranean region will advance, hand in hand, as they do in Central and Eastern Europe. At present, the existence of an increasingly unified security structure in the north, while the south remains obsessed with domestic security concerns and is fragmented by inter-state rivalry, represent a considerable hurdle for deeper security integration in the region. In these circumstances, the strong interests of the EU, as well as NATO, to enhance security dialogue with southern Mediterranean governments may appear to be a determined

commitment to the security of Europe and the transatlantic Alliance, rather than to the regional security of the Mediterranean. How to move from this situation towards a genuinely co-operative security approach between states and security organisations present on the two shores of the Sea is the key issue in determining how the EMPI develops within the enlarged EU and the new international security political policies. To put it in other words, what is at stake is whether the Mediterranean endures as a sharp edge of the EU and other European security organisations or becomes an integrated part of the European "near abroad" with a strong and self-confident regional character and identity.

Notes

1 At the moment, there are 13 candidate countries: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuanian, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey.

2 Unlike the EU, NATO does not have clearly identifiable qualified candidates though it is committed to further enlargement. At the moment, there are nine applicant countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

3 The requirement of being situated in the European continent has not always been an intransigent criterion. For example, it did not hinder the Algerian territory to be included in the EC when it belonged to France. Also two Spanish towns in North Africa - Ceuta and Melilla form part of the EU.

4 For Russia's perceptions see e.g. Mahncke, 2001.

5 Max Jakobson motivated the full membership of Central and Eastern European states in the EU by arguing that an EFA kind of arrangement would create a new "grey zone" between the Union and Russia. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 22 September, 2000.

6 Security issues of common interest with Russia are so far the struggle against terrorism; crisis management; non-proliferation; arms control and confidence-building measures; theatre missile defence; search and rescue at sea; military-to-military co-operation and defence reform; civilian emergencies and New threats and challenges. (NATO, 28 May, 2002.) Thus, they do not encompass any traditional matters related to the territorial defence of NATO member states.

7 For some recent articles see, for example, Daalder, 2001; Wallace, 2001; Nye 2000 and Blinken, 2001.

8 The list of the issues that have arisen European complaints on U.S. unilateralism is long and contain the following topics, for instance: the extraterritorial economic sanction in the Helms-Burton legislation and the ban to commerce with Iran and Libya, the refusal to sign the land mine ban, the negation to participate in the International Criminal Court, the rejection of the nuclear test ban treaty, the abandon of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, the pursuit of

missile defence deployments, the refusal to implement the Kyoto agreement on climate change and the adoption of discriminatory steel and agricultural subsidies.

9 For an overview on the intellectual role Egypt in the Arab world see e.g. Joffé, 1996 and Ibrahim, 1996.

10 John L. Esposito and John O. Voll have distinguished between two perspectives for viewing international relations among Islamically-oriented intellectuals and politicians: one that can be defined as the conflict (Jihadist) vision of global relations and the other a more complex vision of "dialogue". (Esposito and Voll, 2000: 514)

11 For background of the Arab/Islamic-West relationship see e.g. Indyk, 2002; Fuller 2002; Doran, 2002 and Ajami, 1997.

12 Francis Fukuyama, for instance, has pictured an opposite view. He does not understand the current conflict as a war against terrorists but, rather, a broader contention that, apart from a small group of terrorists, embraces a larger group of radical Islamists and other Muslims for whom religious identity overrides all other political values. (Newsweek, Special Edition, Issues 2002, December 2001-February 2002.).

13 Turkey is a member of NATO but it has not been accepted as an equal member to the security structure of the EU due to opposition from Greece, for instance.

14 On Mediterranean security perceptions see e.g. Faria and Vasconcelos, 1996, and Ortega, 2000.

15 For NATO's security concerns in the Mediterranean see. e.g. Lesser, Green, Larrabee and Zanini, 2000: 5-13; and Lord Robertson, 2002.

16 In the 1999 Strategic Concept of NATO, immigration is mentioned among challenges and risks that can pose problems for security and stability of the Alliance and, thus, may lead to intervention. In the V Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers in Valencia, 22-23 April 2002, the participants signed a Framework document on regional co-operation in the field of Justice that includes among other issues the social integration of immigrants, migration and movements of persons.

Bibliography

- Ajami, F. (1997) "The Arab Inheritance", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No.5, 133-148.
- Aliboni, R. and Said Aly, A. M. (2000) "Challenges and Prospects" in (eds.) Á. Vasconcelos and G. Joffé: *The Barcelona Process. Building a Euro-Mediterranean Regional Community*. Frank Cass, Great Britain, 209-224.
- Blinken, A. J. (2001) "The False Crisis Over the Atlantic", in *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 35-48.
- Burgat, F. (1996) "El Islamismo cara a cara". Edicions Bellaterra, Barcelona.
- Colton, T. J. and McFaul, M (2001) "America's Real Russian Allies", in *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 46-58.
- Daalder, I. H. (2001) " Are the United States and Europe heading for divorce?", in *International Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 3, 553-567.
- Doran, M. S. (2002) "Somebody Else's Civil War", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No.1, 22-42.
- Esposito, J. L. and Voll, J. O. (2000) "Islam and the West: Muslim Voices of Dialogue", in *Millennium*, Vol. 29, No.3, 613-639.
- Faria, F. and Vasconcelos, A. (1996) "Security in Northern Africa: Ambiguity and reality". *Chaillot Paper 25*, Institute for Security Studies, WEU, Paris.
- Financial Times*, (2002) "An alliance in search of a role", 10 April.

- Fukuyama, Francis: "Their Target: The Modern World", in Newsweek, Special Edition, Issues 2002, December 2001-February 2002, 58-63.
- Fuller, G. E. (2002) "The Future of Political Islam", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No.2, 48-60.
- Ghalioun, B. "El islamismo como identidad política o la relación del mundo musulmán con la modernidad", in *Afers Internacionals*, núm. 36, 59-76.
- Gordon, P. H. (2000) "Their Own Army? Making European Defence Work", in *Foreign Affairs*, July/August: 12-17.
- Grabbe, H. (2000) "The sharp edges of Europe: extending Schengen eastwards", in *International Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 3: 519-536.
- Groft, S.; Howorth, J.; Terriff, T. and Webber, M. (2000) "Nato's triple challenge", in *International Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 3: 495-518.
- The Guardian* (2002) "Blair's secret plan to crack down on asylum seekers", 23 May,
- The Guardian*, (2002) "EU states agree common policy for treating asylum seekers", 26 April.
- Helsingin Sanomat*, (2000) "Laaja Unioni on Suomen etu", 22 September.
- Ibrahim, S. E. (1996) "*The Changing Face of Egypt's Islamic Activism*", in (eds.) R. Aliboni, G. Joffé and in T. Niblock: *Security Challenges in the Mediterranean Region*. Frank Cass, London: 27- 40.
- Indyk, M. (2002) "Back to the Bazaar", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No 1: 75-88.
- Joffé, G. (1996) "Islamist Protest in Egypt", in *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2: 141-168.
- Lesser, I. O.; Green, J. D.; Larrabee, S. F. and Zanini, M. (2000) (eds.) "The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative. Evolution and Next Steps". RAND, U.S.
- Lesser, I. O. (1999) "The Changing Mediterranean Security Environment: A Transatlantic Perspective", in (ed.) George J.: *Perspectives on Development. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, Frank Cass, Great Britain: 212-228.
- Lindh, A. (2001) "Enlargement: A priority for the European Union", March 7. <<http://www.csis.org/html/sp01307lindh.html>>
- Mahncke, D. (2001) "Russia's Attitude to the European Security and Defence Policy", in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 6: 427-436.
- NATO PJC Press Statement on the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council, Reykjavik, 14 May, 2002.
- NATO Update on "Rome Summit lays the foundations for a stronger NATO-Russian relationship", 28 May, 2002. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2002/0527/e0528a.htm>>
- NATO Strategic Concept. The Alliance's Strategic Concept, approved in Washington, 23 and 24 April, 1999.
- Nye, J. S. JR., "The US and Europe: continental drift?", in *International Affairs* 76, 1/2000, 51-59
- Ojanen, H. (2000) "The EU and Its Northern Dimension: An actor in Search of a Policy, or a Policy in Search of and Actor", in *European Foreign Affairs Review* , 5: 359-376.
- Ortega M. ((2000) (ed.) "The Future of the Euro-Mediterranean Security Dialogue". *Occasional Papers*, 14, Institute for Security Studies, WEU.
- Time*, (2002) "The Empire Strikes Back", 25 February.
- Lord Robertson (2002) "NATO and the Mediterranean - Moving from Dialogue Towards Partnership", <<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s020429a.htm>>

-
- Rusi, A. (2002) "Security Qua NATO and the EU - A Northern View", in Daniel N. Nelson & Ustina Markus (eds.) *Brassey's Central & East European Security Yearbook*, USA: 43-52.
- Spencer, C. (1999) "Security Implication of the EMPI for Europe", in (ed.) G. Joffé: *Perspectives on Development. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*, Frank Cass, Great Britain: 202-211.
- Spencer, C. (2001) "The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Changing Context in 2000", in *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.6, No. 1: 84-100.
- Tovias, A. (2001) "On the External Relation of the EU21: The case of the Mediterranean Periphery", in *European Foreign Affairs Review* 6: 375-394.
- La Vanguardia*, (2002) "Nuevo equilibrio mediterráneo", by J. Piqué and H. B. Yahia, 6 June.
- Wallace, W. (2000) "From the Atlantic to the Bug, from the Arctic to the Tigris? The transformation of the EU and NATO", in *International Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 3: 475-493.
- Wallace, W. (2001) "Europe, the Necessary Partner", in *Foreign Affairs*, May/June: 16-34.