

A Strategy for Conflict Prevention and Management in the Mediterranean

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The Mediterranean is a border between a wealthy, developed, and stable Europe on one side and a fragmented North Africa and Middle East on the other side. Today, in the region there is no major military threat as was the case in Europe during the Cold War. However, the region is destabilized by a combination of wide-ranging inter-state and intra-state conflicts, socioeconomic risks and low-intensity violence. Most of these conflicts and risks have their sources along the south shore and at the sub-regional levels. The first category of conflicts is constituted by territorial and border disputes such as those between Israel and Palestine; Israel and Syria; Israel and Lebanon; Greece and Turkey; Turkey and Syria; Egypt and Sudan; Spain and Morocco; and those in the Western Sahara¹. The second category is represented by ethno-cultural rivalry as in the former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, and that which is part of the Kurdish question. To this list we add the low-intensity violence of terrorism in Algeria and Egypt. However, we should also not overlook the future importance of potential conflicts over water supply, particularly in the Middle East among Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Israel and its neighbors, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia where in some cases the situation is complicated by the fact that there are connections between the territorial and ethno-cultural sources of conflicts, for example, the Greek-Turk rivalry and the Arab-Israeli dispute, whose cases belong to the category of “intractable conflicts”². The geopolitical environment described above illustrates the specificity of the security

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issues in the Mediterranean and the difficulty in duplicating the East-West model of conflict prevention and management.

How to prevent conflicts in the Mediterranean? Are there any models of conflict prevention suitable for the Euro-Mediterranean Region (EMR)? With this prospect in mind, there is a need for innovative thinking which would not only take into account conflict prevention experiments elsewhere, particularly within the CSCE / OSCE framework, but also keep in mind the specificity of the Mediterranean.

Firstly, this paper attempts an evaluation of the cooperative security policies put forth in the region since the Euro-Arab Dialogue began. From this historical perspective, it then proposes ways and means for common actions to prevent and manage conflicts in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

THE SEARCH FOR COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

One should first of all take note of the fragmentation of the trans-Mediterranean cooperation which has involved the following institutional frameworks: the CSCE, the Euro-Arab Dialogue, the *Five + Five*, the CSCM, the ACFIS, and the Mediterranean Forum. In one way or another, most of these initiatives have failed in establishing mechanisms for conflict prevention and management.

Discussions about “the Mediterranean Dimension of the European Security” within the CSCE were very limited despite efforts made by some non-aligned countries³, namely Malta and Yugoslavia. While the issue was included in the Helsinki Final Act, one does notice that the Mediterranean was not perceived as a region by itself but as the “Southern Flank” of the European continent.

The first significant attempt to build a trans-Mediterranean model for cooperation was made through what was called the *Euro-Arab Dialogue*. Launched in the mid-seventies between the Arab League and the European Community, this Dialogue failed despite several meetings which identified some commonalities of purpose. The failure was mainly due to a deep misunderstanding between the two partners; whereas the Arab countries emphasized the political dimension of the Dialogue, the Europeans preferred to focus on economic issues. In 1983, President Mitterand proposed the development of a trans-Mediterranean cooperation in the *Western Mediterranean Basin*. The proposition was defined as *realistic* because it avoided discussions on sensitive issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Greece-Turkey dispute. These initiative lead

to the *Five + Five*⁴ and later to the *Twelve + Five* negotiations, which placed strong emphasis on trans-institutional cooperation between the AMU and the then denominated European Community. However, the question of whether to include Libya in the process and the freezing of AMU activities might help explain why the project was delayed. In 1994, a proposal made by Egypt for a *Mediterranean Forum* met with limited success. The objective was to establish a framework for *political and economic dialogue* between both shores and seemed to be an updated version of the Euro-Arab Dialogue⁵. Despite the Egyptian's efforts, the issue of security was not put forward during the Forum's meetings.

The most ambitious proposal was the Spanish-Italian initiative for a *Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM)*⁶. For the first time since the Helsinki Document, this project established a link between the Mediterranean region and the CSCE Process. The proposal to construct a global institutional framework for the Mediterranean equivalent to that of Europe within the CSCE seemed very attractive but came to be difficult to implement. The specificity of the Mediterranean (as previously mentioned) and the existence of a strong process of fragmentation at the sub-regional level (in the Balkans, South-East Mediterranean and Maghreb) make hypothetical the success of such a model. As a result, the CSCM is today a deadlocked project, despite the efforts by the Inter-Parliamentary Union which organized a series of non-governmental meetings on CSCM⁷.

After the Gulf War, the United States took the initiative in a series of meetings under the framework of the Madrid Conference for Peace in the Middle East (1991), Conference followed by the Economic Summits in Madrid (1993), Casablanca (1994), Amman (1995) and Cairo (1996). The objective was to create a Middle East and North African Economic Community (MENA) that would help Israel to become integrated in the region. It is significant to note that the first meetings dealing with security issues in the region, namely the *Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS)*, were made possible because of the American pressure on both Arabs and Israelis. Yet, in spite of the progress in identifying certain confidence-building and arms control measures, the ACRS has produced limited results in large part due to the boycott by Syria and the continuing great suspicions that exist between the partners of the Peace process.

Security was also a central issue of concern for the WEU, NATO and OSCE. Stemming from the Declaration of Petersburg (1992), the WEU proposed a comprehensive dialogue on security issues that would include the following Mediterranean partners: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and Mauritania. Preliminary discussions among the members of the *WEU Mediterranean Group* did not, however, produce any significant interest among the dialogue partners, and Egypt and Turkey, in particular, expressed their reluctance to continue the discussions⁸. A similar evolution took place when, on one hand, NATO decided that same year to start

a dialogue with six selected southern states -Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia - with the objective of building a *Partnership for Peace in the Mediterranean*, and on the other hand, the OSCE Committee of High Officials decided to invite South Mediterranean countries to its meetings in 1994⁹. The security dialogue frameworks proposed by the WEU, NATO and OSCE have a limited chance of success not only due to the discriminatory selection of partners to be included in the dialogue, but most of all because of the absence of clearly identified common principles and rules for such a security dialogue to proceed¹⁰. The competition among northern institutions seems to be the rule since the beginning of the 1990's, and so the question of coordination between WEU, NATO and OSCE was raised recently at the WEU Birmingham meeting (1996), though discussions didn't lead to any results. From a conflict prevention and management perspective, the Security Dialogues mentioned here did not produce any concrete measures since, apparently, the partners themselves did not really seem to be convinced by any of the proposals.

The most recent and serious initiative to build a regional framework for cooperative security in the Mediterranean was launched at the Barcelona Conference (November 1995). Based on the idea that the EMR needs a comprehensive security and cooperation approach, the initiative resulted in the twenty seven participants¹¹ at the meeting adopting a Declaration which defined three *baskets* for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership covering issues of security, economy and society. With respect to the security *basket*, the partners expressed their conviction that the objective is to build an "area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean including the long term possibility of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean pact to that end". From the Barcelona Declaration perspective, what kind of measures for conflict prevention and management are needed and feasible?

BUILDING SECURITY PARTNERSHIP THROUGH CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Conflict prevention and management (CPM) has become an important issue in the discussion of the post- Cold War security framework. While a wide range of CPM measures have been experimented within Europe (e.g.: the former Yugoslavia and Caucasus) with more or less success¹², there is a need for a joint study on the lessons that can be drawn from the European experience (CSCE / OSCE). CPM measures should not only be adapted to the nature of the conflict (intra-state versus inter-state conflict) but also analyze the roots of the conflict. In addition, they should take into

account the life span or stages of the conflict: a pre-conflict situation calls for preventive action; an in-conflict scenario requires actions towards crisis management and resolution; and a post-conflict situation needs peace-enforcement actions.

The Barcelona Document emphasizes the need for common action regarding conflict prevention. The participants undertook to:

- *“consider any confidence and security-building measures that could be taken between the Parties”;*

- *“refrain from developing military capacity beyond their legitimate defense requirements “including “practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive accumulation of conventional arms “.*

The first point deals with the concept of transparency while the second treats the concept of sufficiency.

Transparency

The East-West model for Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) was based on the definition of principles and rules which could lead to better transparency and predictability. From a conflict prevention and management prospect, three issues seem of particular interest: the institutionalization of a dialogue on security issues, cooperation towards early-warning, and peacekeeping.

Comprehensive Security Dialogue

The issue of security perceptions between the north and the south shores of the Mediterranean should be raised. In the North, there is a wide-spread feeling that Western civilization is threatened by “multidimensional” and “multidirectional” phenomena emanating from the South, such as the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and ballistic weapons, immigration pressures¹³, terrorism, and Islamic fundamentalism. The ‘enemy’ is still present but now he is wearing a *green coat*. From the southern viewpoint the North is seen as being responsible for the instability in the price of energy and raw materials, debt pressures, cultural intrusion, racism, and xenophobia. These types of ‘distortions’ of each other’s perceptions should be examined, beginning with the idea that faulty perceptions are partly due to the lack of information about each other’s intentions.

When talking about security issues in the Mediterranean one notices that a major handicap is the lack of any common definition of ‘security’. Response to a security threat should not be based on an imposed formula that carries with it the risk of being perceived as intrusive in the eyes of the southern countries: Rather such a response should be based on a co-operative approach that parts from a common definition of risks and responses. In the first place, there are needed mechanisms for political consultation on security issues so that partners might exchange views about conflicts which take place in the region. In this sense, the possibility of establishing a “well-structured, gradually evolving

political consultation process”¹⁴ proposed by WEU should be explored further. The priority here is to put to rest the perceptions of the ‘enemy image’ that runs along the North-South axis, while also defining “rules of behavior to steer good-neighborly relations among States and groups of States”¹⁵. Such measures as planning for mutual participation in meetings and seminars about the conceptual and practical aspects of conflict management would appear to be necessary at the first stage. The Security Dialogue should likewise lead to joint studies that look at the new risks and threats to regional peace and security plus view the responses to such challenges, thus helping to define a common approach towards dealing with sources of insecurity in the region.

In order to help identify CBM measures that could contribute to better transparency and predictability in the EMR, the Dialogue’s priority should be given to the first and second generations of CBMs (Helsinki Final Document 1975 and Stockholm Document 1986) regarding the exchange of information concerning military missions, inspections and monitoring, and the discussion over national military doctrines and forces deployment. In this light, one notices that NATO’s new concepts of “multidimensional” and “multidirectional” risks - arguments for the restructuring of the Alliance’s Southern Flank forces (AFSOUTH) - were perceived with great fear by most of the southern Mediterranean countries precisely because of the lack of communication between the Alliance and the south shore countries. There is also a need for transparency and openness on the objectives of military forces like EUROFORCE and EUROMARFOR¹⁶ which are being developed within the WEU Petersburg framework.

Other measures of transparency that could be adopted within the EMR are, in the first place, a common decision by all participants to report to the UN Register of Conventional Arms and to the UN Instrument on Military Budget and, in the second place, the adoption of a third generation of CBMs to deal with constraints on the provisions on military activities (i.e., non-provocative military postures) and the issue of using military force as an instrument to deal with “threats to peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” as stated in the United Nation’s Charter, Chapter VII, as well as measures to address demilitarized zones and zones of reduced military activities.

Early-warning

The need for a regional early-warning system that could be organized as a network and function as an interstate communication center should be examined. As a mechanism for gathering and analyzing information, this network would serve primarily to identify a potential crisis and to provide decision-makers with information that might help manage a conflict in development. Such a system could benefit from information transmitted via satellites; and, quite useful from a conflict prevention and management prospect, it may also be possible to reinforce this system by utilizing a satellite image interpretation agency for arms control monitoring. An efficient early-warning system

requires “intelligence sharing” and thus requires the development of a computerized data base. Prior to that action would be the establishment of an *ad hoc* working group responsible for research and analysis to be used for diplomatic decision-making. An early-warning system might then work as an instrument for analysis and advice, helping governments in their decisions with respect to the taking of a wide range of measures such as fact-finding missions, deployment of peacekeeping forces (including preventive deployment), and the monitoring of CBMs and arms control agreements to deal with emerging threats to regional peace and security. Such a body could also serve as an early-warning system to prevent and/or manage humanitarian crisis (famines, diseases and population movements), ecological disasters (nuclear and chemical accidents), in addition to predicting and analyzing macro-economic factors like inflation, unemployment, access to raw materials, water, energy, markets and other factors that have an impact on stability and security in the EMR.

Peacekeeping

An important aspect of CBM - peacekeeping operations - as well as the question of the feasibility and desirability of common Peace Forces should both be discussed within the EMR Security Partnership. Though it may be necessary at first to exchange experiences on peacekeeping, the next step would consist of determining the rules of engagement for common peacekeeping operations ‘in’ or ‘out-of-area’, probably in sub-Saharan Africa. It is widely acknowledged that peacekeeping forces can be used for different missions - to carry out humanitarian functions, to patrol borders and other sensitive areas, to establish a buffer zone between adversarial military forces, and to protect enclaves of ethnic minorities. Arab countries can benefit from the experience and expertise of Europeans concerning peacekeeping while NATO and WEU might make their resources available (logistical and technical assistance) in support of those carrying out common peacekeeping activities. The participation of Egyptian and Jordanian units in the Peace Forces in the former Yugoslavia might well be seen as an interesting experiment of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in peacekeeping - participation which also speaks amply to the potential for common conflict management actions in the future.

Sufficiency

Finally, cooperation for arms control is also an important aspect in conflict prevention and conflict avoidance. By reducing the military capabilities that go beyond legitimate national security needs, states can express their peaceful intentions. Accordingly, concepts such as “military sufficiency” should be defined and clarified for implementation within the EMR since, as was the case during the Cold War, arms control measures can and do offer great opportunities for military cooperation between states.

Horizontal Versus Vertical Non-Proliferation

Despite the great disproportion in the military capabilities between the north and south Mediterranean shores in terms of nuclear and conventional weapons, the northern discourses on arms control issues emphasize military threats from the southern shore. In fact, the European approach towards arms control and disarmament issues in the Mediterranean region focuses on non-proliferation and the need for control of transfers of military technologies. The Europeans have usually proposed that arms control measures for the Mediterranean consist in the prevention of uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by way of strengthening the NPT regime, pressuring the southern states to sign the chemical weapons convention, and improving the mechanisms for control of the MTCR regime¹⁷. It should be noted, however, that these measures are mainly based on a “horizontal non-proliferation” conception and limit themselves to a particular aspect of arms control which does not even mention disarmament. If it is commonly acknowledged that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to international security, the question of deployment of such arms in the North (the so-called ‘vertical proliferation’) should therefore also be raised. What’s more, non-proliferation policies ought not to be used as a means for restricting the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge needed by southern countries for these countries’ domestic development. The best way to promote non-proliferation is neither through technical measures nor via unilateral actions, rather it is through political channels that respond to the sources of insecurity in the south shore.

A Regional Program for Disarmament

What arms control and disarmament measures are suitable to the Mediterranean region? It is of particular interest for the region to adopt a realistic and pragmatic approach based on the concepts of “non- diminished security” and “equal security”. As part of such an approach, the same realism and pragmatism should be applied when discussing nuclear, chemical and biological arms control and disarmament measures, where in such cases it would also be necessary to agree upon specific measures to be implemented at both the regional (North-South context) and sub-regional levels (South-South context). Because of the sensitive nature of disarmament, we consider it appropriate to adopt a step by step policy with short, middle, and long-term programs. At the end of this approximately twenty year period, the Mediterranean region will then become a zone free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and will operate within a comprehensive regional security system.

During the first phase (about five years implementation time), each Euro-Mediterranean state would commit itself to subscribing to the instruments for non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons (NPT, CWC, BWC) and also to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Priority should also be given to

the full implementation of the African nuclear weapons-free zone (Pelindaba Treaty) and to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Undeniable is the fact that the creation of such zones would have a positive impact on the de-nuclearization of the Mediterranean region.

The second stage of the program (time of implementation - five years) would lead to the adoption of measures calling for major cuts in the number of long-range nuclear ballistic missiles. Any decision to resume production of nuclear materials for military purposes should be a prior issue of discussion at the regional and, also, global levels. Parallel in time, it would be necessary to draft agreements concerning naval arms control and disarmament.

The third phase (time of implementation - ten years) would consist of efforts towards implementing a regional peace and security system and completing the de-nuclearization of the Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean region. Agreements as to the instruments for carrying out the elimination or limitation of all destabilizing weapons systems would be a central issue for discussion. Finally, this would be the time to establish a regional security system that allows for efficient verification mechanisms to function. At the end of this twenty year process, each state will then (ideally) maintain only the military forces and arms it needs for self-defense and for fulfilling its obligations for peacekeeping operations under The UN Charter.

CLOSING REMARKS

Although we have focused here on the military dimension of security, nobody would deny the fact that political, economic and social factors are also relevant to security and may indeed constitute sources of instability.

Potential for conflict prevention and management does exist in the Mediterranean but, despite great hope and concern by most of the Mediterranean states, the Barcelona Process has its own limitations due, for instance, to the absence of institutional mechanisms for implementing the principles and rules contained in the Barcelona Declaration. This issue was raised during the second Euro-Mediterranean Conference that took place in Malta (April 1997); still, discussions didn't lead to any significant institutional progress. Today, the EMR partners are confronting major questions not the least of which is the following: Israel seems very reluctant towards participating in a process that would be incompatible in one way or another with its exclusive security ties with the United States, and inasmuch as the United States' security interests in the Middle East are based on overwhelming military capability, such capability gives to this country enough leverage for influencing any trans-Mediterranean security framework.

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Notes

1. James Baker was recently nominated as the UN envoy for the Western Sahara.
2. For this concept see Kriesberg, L.(1989) *Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation*, Syracuse University Press.
3. See Biad, A. "Les pays non-alignés et la sécurité en Méditerranée" in *Sécurité, désarmement et le flanc sud de l'Alliance atlantique, Observatoire stratégique méditerranéen*, Cahier, No. 1, Nice, pp.79-87.
4. France, Italy, Malta, Spain and Portugal on one side and Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia on the other side.
5. Algeria, Egypt, Spain, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia and Turkey.
6. Proposal put forward at the CSCE meeting in Palma de Mallorca, September 1990.
7. See Inter-Parliamentary Union, Final Document Valletta Conference, 1-4 November 1995.
8. See Western European Union, "Security in the Mediterranean Region", Report for the Assembly of the WEU, document 1548, 42nd session, November 1996, pp.7- 27.
9. Invitations for participation to the OSCE meetings were sent to Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia.
10. In the case of the NATO Partnership for Peace, Algeria, Libya and Syria were excluded from the Dialogue.
11. Libya and the States of the former Federation of Yugoslavia were not invited to the meeting. The United States was granted observer status.
12. From a conceptual perspective see Werner B. and Luc R.(1994) *The Art of Conflict Prevention*, London: Brassey's, p. 218. See also Michael S. L. (1996) *Preventing Violent Conflicts, A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington: US Institute for Peace Press, p 220.
13. The WEU Assembly in its Report on Parliamentary Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region consider this question as a " threat to regional security ", doc.1485, 6 November 1995.
14. See Action Plan of the Barcelona Process.
15. Ibid.
16. An Agreement on the constitutions of EUROFORCE and EUROMARFOR was signed by France, Italy and Spain on the 15th of May 1995 in Paris.
17. WE the Mediterranean, Roseta Report submitted on behalf of the Political Committee, Document 1371, 24 May 1993.