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The EuroMed Partnership:
The Stepchild of the Neighborhood
or the "It-Kid" on the block? Post-Cold War
Mediterranean Regional Security
and the EuroMed Partnership

Astrid B. Boening





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Miami - Florida European Union Center

University of Miami 1000 Memorial Drive 101 Ferré Building

Coral Gables, FL 33124-2231

Phone: 305-284-3266 Fax: (305) 284 4406 E-Mail: <u>jroy@miami.edu</u>

Web: www.miami.edu/eucenter

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Miami-Florida European Union Center

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TheEuroMed Partnership: The Stepchild of the Neighborhood or the "It-Kid" on the block? Post-Cold War Mediterranean Regional Security and the EuroMed *

Astrid B. Boening *

Introduction

In this paper I seek to explore a region of the world, the Mediterranean, which has through the millennia been significant as a passageway for peoples and their trade and cultures. S. Victor Papacosma (2004, 15/6) writes, particularly concerning the Eastern Mediterranean, that

despite their proximity, the diversity of the indigenous groups contributed little to harmony and much more to clashes among them ... [and this region was characterized by] fragmented distributions of power and security systems that posed obstacles for this major avenue of economic and naval traffic.

Today, progress has certainly been made – but much obviously needs to be done in the regions bordering the Mediterranean to remove obstacles not only to economic traffic but to build bridges to traverse the cultural and political diversity between the East and the West and the North and the South of the Mediterranean, and to substitute military clashes with peaceful socioeconomic and cultural interactions. Previous experiences of regional Mediterranean integration, such as the Roman Empire or the spread of Christianity in the East and West Roman Empires were certainly not always peaceful. Hence I would like to examine here a modus operandi which is intended to serve as a peaceful "bridge" not between "Them" and "Us", or "the West" and "the Rest", but which utilizes approaches, such as functionalism and institutionalism, which have been historically successful in integrating neighboring countries that had an extensive history of "unneighborly" relations, such as France and Germany, into a system which has brought not only prosperity but also peace to them, i.e. the European Union (EU), and applied it to the Mediterranean regions in the Euro-Med Partnership (EMP), also known as the Barcelona Process.

Structures for Peace, Stability and Prosperity

Emanating from meetings and negotiations started on October 30, 1991 at the Peace Conference in Madrid the structure of the Madrid Framework for a *bilateral* and a *multilateral* negotiating track was developed which enabled the first-ever direct talks between Israel and her immediate Arab neighbors on November 3, 1991. These negotiations focused on key issues of concern to the entire Middle East: *water*, *environment*, *arms control*, *refugees and economic development*. These negotiations led to the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers of the future EMP states in Barcelona in November 1995 and marked the official starting point of the EuroMed Partnership. Its three main objectives are:

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[•] MA International Studies, Florida International University, Miami/FL (2006); PhD candidate University of Miami, Coral Gables/FL. Astrid Boening has studied international economics at the Rome campus of Georgetown University and Latin American economics and marketing in Costa Rica, Chile and Brazil through George Washington University. She carried out the field work for her Master's thesis in Trieste, Italy, at the Central European Initiative. Her dissertation focuses on the EuroMed Partnership. She has published previously on Multilateralism in the Mediterranean as well as an article in the Journal of Behavioral Genetics on her research as an undergraduate.

- 1. the definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of a *political and security* dialogue;
- 2. the construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an *economic and financial* partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area;
- 3. and the rapprochement between peoples through a *social*, *cultural* and *human* partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil society (Horizon 2020 Bulletin 2005, 2).

The EMP constitutes the EUs main multilateral foreign policy instrument in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Currently, the EMP comprises the twenty-seven EU member states, and ten Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey, which is also an EU candidate country) and Libya (as observer since 1999). Malta and Cyprus, who were also original EuroMed Partners, are now EU member states. The EMP is the Mediterranean region-specific program of the broader (and more recently established) European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The ENP per se was developed in 2004 to address the strategic objectives set out in the EUs December 2003 European Security Strategy. These objectives include the avoidance of emerging new dividing lines, be they economic, political or social, between the enlarged EU and its neighbors by extending to the countries neighboring the EU measures aimed at institutional and economic strengthening similar as those extended to EU members internally. The ENP offers its neighbors a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values (e.g. democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). The ENP overall goes beyond existing diplomatic and institutional relationships to offer a deeper political association and economic integration and to extend the zone of prosperity, security and peace to them (EU Commission website: ENP).

The EMPs specific mandate is based on the political, economic and culturally strategic significance of the Mediterranean region to the European Union (EU) and seeks to develop a relationship between its partners based on "comprehensive cooperation and solidarity, in keeping with the privileged nature of the links forged by neighbourhood and history" (EU Commission website 2006: Barcelona Declaration). The "three pillars" of the EMP consist of the following in greater detail and follow the dual regional (multilateral) and bilateral tracks established in the Madrid Peace Conference for the international relations among EMP members:

The political and security partnership with the aim of strengthening the political dialogue is based on "observance of essential principles of international law, and to reaffirm common objectives in matters of internal and external stability" (Ibid.). EMP partners agreed to act in accordance with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (such as guaranteeing "the effective legitimate exercise of such rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of association for peaceful purposes and freedom of thought, conscience and religion, both individually and together with other member of the same group, without any discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, language, religion or sex" (Ibid.) as well as other obligations under international law, including their regional and international agreements. Furthermore, they agreed to

develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems, while recognizing in this framework the right of each of them to choose and freely develop its own political, socio-cultural, economic and judicial system, ... respect for diversity and pluralism in their societies [both with MENA AND the EU], promote tolerance between different groups in society and combat manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia. ... to respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN ... including those relating to territorial integrity of states (Ibid., emphasis mine).

In the **Economic and financial partnership** aspect of the EMP the participants emphasize the importance of sustainable and balanced economic and social development with a view toward achieving their objective of creating an area of *shared* prosperity and recognizing the impediment debt represents to development (e.g. by promoting an environment conducive to both internal savings as the basis for investment, and by direct foreign investment), the need to dialogue and regionally cooperate for an acceleration of socio-economic development (e.g. through the promotion and development of the private sector, upgrading the productive sector, establishing appropriate institutional and regulatory frameworks for a market economy, such as those protecting intellectual and industrial property rights and competition, those promoting mechanisms for technology transfer), the progressive establishment of a free-trade area and a substantial increase in the European Union's financial assistance to its partners (Ibid.).

This aspect of the EMP also emphasizes the interdependence with regard to the environment which requires increased regional cooperation and coordination between existing multilateral programs. Furthermore it stresses the importance of the conservation and rational management of fish stocks in the Mediterranean Sea, including improved research into stocks, including aquaculture to re-stock the Mediterranean Sea and inland lakes. Additionally it acknowledges the pivotal role of the energy sector in the economies of EMP partners and the need to strengthen cooperation and intensify dialogue in the field of energy policies, including the appropriate framework conditions for investments in, and the activities of, energy companies (Ibid.). The supply, management and development of water resources, the modernization of agriculture and the development and improvement of infrastructure, especially in rural areas, including efficient transport systems and information technologies, were also declared priorities (Ibid.). We notice that some of the original concerns addressed in the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991 are specifically adopted by the EMP.

The participants at the Barcelona Conference acknowledged that the creation of a free-trade area and the success of the EMP require substantially increased financial assistance through the EU and the European Investment Bank (EIB), necessitating the sound macro-economic management in terms of promoting dialogue and optimized financial cooperation among their respective economic policies (Ibid.).

Social, cultural and human affairs are addressed within the EMP with the aim to develop human resources and to promote understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies (Ibid.). The EMP participants recognize that the traditions of culture and civilization throughout the Mediterranean region, the dialogue between these cultures and exchanges at the human, scientific and technological levels are essential factors in bringing their peoples closer by promoting understanding between them and improving their perception of each other, including the importance of the role which mass media can play in the reciprocal recognition and understanding of cultures as a source of mutual enrichment (Ibid.).

Additionally, the importance of civil society specifically, and the development of human resources overall, such as social development and education and training for young people, e.g. the familiarization with the cultural identity of each partner country, by facilitating active exchange programs between partnership states, are set goals of the EMP. The importance of these programs, beyond enabling the EUs southern neighbors to develop a workforce with skills (i.e. increase their human capital) improving their economic situation, is to also develop civil society as a significant component of functioning democratic institutions and strengthened rule of law.

By addressing socio-economic needs, the EMP seeks to alleviate consequences of poverty, such as higher crime and violence rates and poor health and nutrition, which can then become factors contributing to illegal migration (compare White 2006) to the northern Mediterranean countries. Beyond these socio-economic approaches, EMP states also address mechanisms for the rule of (international) law by agreeing to cooperate in the repatriation of illegal immigrants as

well as cooperating in the joint fight against drug trafficking, international crime and corruption, racism, xenophobia and intolerance (Ibid.).

Goals of the EMP

Overcoming not a clash of civilizations but of mutual suspicions

Huntington's (1996, 32) ominous words regarding common divisions between countries, such as between modern, developed countries and poor, developing countries, or the Muslim distinction between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, the abode of peace and the abode of War respectively, are the type of divisions the EU seeks to ameliorate and bridge through the programs of the EMP. We note that the Dar al-Islam has been undergoing what some scholars have described as more serious internal divisions than schisms within the Dar al-Harb (i.e. between Muslim and non-Muslin regions). The EMP, by definition, not only encompasses both Shia and Sunni populations, but of course also Jewish and Christian member states. Beyond the religious diversity, there is also a significant gradient between economically richer and poorer regions in the EMP. Nevertheless, I would disagree with Huntington that the West is moving towards a phase of a "universal state" (Ibid. 53), at least with respect to the northern Mediterranean states versus the Southern and Eastern states. While the goals of the EMP are, i.a. trade harmonization and coordination, its purpose, with its emphasis on diversity, is rather the maximization between cultural parameters of member countries than a homogenization among the regions encompassing the EMP.

Development as Freedom

Amartya Sen (1999, 11) distinguishes "five distinct types of freedom, seen in an 'instrumental' perspective... 1. political freedoms, 2. economic facilities, 3. social opportunities, 4. transparency guarantees, and 5. protective security", which are not only ends of development but also principal means (Ibid.) which he views as empirically linked and strengthening each other reciprocally (Ibid., 12). Importantly, Amartya Sen points to free and sustainable individual agency, whereby "individuals can effectively shape their own destiny" (Ibid.), rather than simply being "passive recipients of the benefits of cunning development programs" (Ibid.).

Financial Times columnist Martin Wolf (2007) pointed out in response to a speech by Ben Bernancke (2007), chairman of the US Federal Reserve, in view of the effects of globalization, that to guard against resulting polarizations in personal income, skill-based technological changes need to be addressed. As the previous outline of the overall subject areas addressed in the EMP shows, we note that these are exactly some of the issues which the EMPs addresses as part of the social-cultural "basket".

The EMP and collective security

Carlos Echeverria wrote in 1999 (preface) that when the Berlin wall crumbled, the fear was expressed that the security of Europe might occur at the expense of Mediterranean security requirements. The EMP was founded partially to address this concern as the Western European Union became more and more integrated into the EU. Echeverria (1999) already suggested eight years ago, with the post-World War II history of political instability in the Middle East already well-known, but the current Iraqi regional destabilization then unimaginable, to utilize the regional experience and confidence of the armed forces of non-European Mediterranean nations in peacekeeping operations to make the EUs approach in the Mediterranean demand-driven and proactive. While military aspects are not explicit items on the agenda of the EMP, they certainly fall into the "political first basket" of the EMP and certainly cannot be ignored in the role of the

EMP as contributing to the Mediterranean security complex, not only from a socio-economic development standpoint, but also an active political one.

Challenges to progress in the EMP

Ulla Holm (2004, 1) views the dialectic faced by the EU in the Mediterranean in terms of the tension in the conceptualization of the Mediterranean as a cultural cradle of great civilizations versus as a conflict laden zone, interlinked with the discourses of the EU as an exporter of democracy through a model to copy rather than an empire-builder through respect for cultural diversity and Arab sovereignty while exporting political shared European values.

The Eastern Mediterranean in particular is poised today more than ever before to become the epicenter of global strategic concern writes S. Victor Papacosma (2004, 19) due to the much greater number of variables involved than existed during the Cold War. This leads to much greater difficulty in determining common policy among traditional allies and neighbors. The continuing security dilemmas facing the states in this region validate in my opinion Adler's (1998, 120, quoted in Attina 2000, 5) belief that multilateral institutions and the community-building practices and the "institutions they activate produce the necessary conditions for peaceful change, i.e. cognitive and material structures, transactions between states and societies and collective identity or 'we-feeling'". Today, twelve years after the inauguration of the Barcelona Process, the need for these multilateral institutions and community-building practices are more needed than ever while the political hurdles loom larger than over. I would agree with Rosa Balfour (2004, 1) who writes that

the EU, by nature and because of its history, is ill-suited to embracing paradigms such as the clash of civilizations. Limited by its capabilities as a 'civilian power', it has sought to develop relations based on dialogue, on economic integration as a means of building secure and stable environments, and on diffusing its norms through persuasion rather than coercion.

Rather, her observation (Ibid.) that the Wider Europe strategy, published by the Commission in March 2003, and the new European Security Strategy, prepared by the High Representative for CFSP the same year, "propose major conceptual changes in the EUs relations with the rest of the world which, if implemented, could transform the EUs still hesitant status as an international actor" is not *optional* in my opinion today, 2007, but *imperative* in light of the geopolitical "reconfigurations" taking place in the region. The risks and challenges make not only strategic *thinking* but an enhanced focus on *action* vis-a-vis the EUs southern neighbors a priority – not on the basis of a looming "clash", but an approachement of neighbors, alienated too long.

Recommendations/outlook for the EMP

Bettina Huber (2005, 3) writes that cooperation in the EMP is based on the assumption that the deepening of neighborhood relations cannot be achieved through governmental agreements alone, but that essential participation and contribution by civil society is urgently needed to bring the partnership to life and to create the greater understanding and closeness between the peoples envisioned by the Barcelona Declaration in 1995. The EU posits the security environment of the EMP in the human dimension of good governance, human rights and the rule of law (Balfour 2004, 3). While the intentions of the EMP are not only laudable but address many of the criteria which scholars and political leaders (e.g. note the criteria for the Madrid Peace Conference) have identified as contributing to economic growth and development in general, hereby enhancing regional stability, we need to remember that the EMP is not legally binding, i.e. participation is not uniformly strong. Instead it applies concepts of "benchmarking" and "differentiation" on an individual country/case basis, "allowing countries to make progress without jeopardizing the entire regional approach" (Ibid., 4). Hence this "common model of relationship does not exclude

a certain degree of differentiation among the states which are part of this model" (Flaesch-Mougin in Thiele and Kostelnik 2005, 63). This approach by the EMP varies from a purely realist one which might suggest that the overall wealthier North might keep its distance and rather remain vigilant toward the Southern and Eastern regions of the Mediterranean. In fact, the EMP seeks to counteract the risks and threats from the Other, and to increase understanding between the cultures (Ortega in Batt et al. 2003, 5) in Constructivist fashion. This is to the credit of the EMP as a specialized regional exception of the ENP, the latter having been accused of "one size fits all" (Aldis 2005, 5) programs and approaches.

Some scholars have suspected the EMP of being an imperialist tool of the EU for an extension of territory and herewith, power. I would view the EMP rather as a model for assisting MENA to develop politically, economically and socially, not only to make the southern neighbors of the EU less likely to emigrate illegally in droves to the EU north of the Mediterranean, but also to offer the political/security, economic/financial and socio-cultural options and tools, such as through a harmonization of practices, norms and institutions for the integration into some areas of the "Four Freedoms" (goods, people, services and capital), for a peaceful coexistence in the culturally, politically and economically diverse North African and Middle Eastern "neighborhood" of the EU. This "process" of the EMP is multilateral not only due to the character of its membership, but also because it is based on several international conventions, such as UN declarations, or the parallel "three baskets" of the Helsinki Declaration of 1975. This application of EU soft power in countries to the south and east of the Mediterranean is more than just cultural power in Joseph Nye's (2002, 11) terminology, but is being applied by the EU in its foreign policy in the EMP to promote peace and human rights through the reciprocity between economic and education, identified by e.g. A. Sen as essential for development to translate into individual freedom.

Gonzalo Escribano (2005) points out that the ENP's economic prescriptions overall are perceived as merely cosmetic. The EMP per se needs to continue to focus on the increased participation of its members in the Single European Market, involving these Four Freedoms (of the movement of goods, services, capital, and workforce). It is about inclusion rather than exclusion. Euro-Mediterranean is not a zero-sum game but needs to be recognized and supported as an endeavor for cumulative growth on all shores of the Mediterranean to achieve peace and stability within and among all its members.

As we know, peace processes in the Middle East are still more hope than reality at the moment, with the extent of spillover from possible greater regional fragmentation post-Iraq yet unknown. In this institutional vacuum of other regional security cooperative institutions, such as the Arab Maghreb Union or the Arab League (Vasconcelos 1999, 30), the realization of the EMPs intent to extend beyond the EU a zone of "peace, prosperity and stability" as a tool of EU soft power, utilizing proven approaches to address regional (in-) security in the Mediterranean through step-by-step processes of harmonization are more urgent than ever.

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