

The Barcelona Process

A Euro-Mediterranean North-South Partnership

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The terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 profoundly changed the geopolitical context in the Mediterranean region, thus posing a challenge to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership set up in 1995. This new context calls for a renewed partnership to respond to shifting geopolitical realities by focusing on two key issues: formulating a systemic, preventive, and multilateral security strategy; and deepening relations between the EU and its southern Mediterranean neighbors.

Spain was a driving force behind the creation and development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, a program started within the framework of the Barcelona Process. As a representative of Spain in the European Parliament at this time, I participated in the evolution of this initiative. In the most recent Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Valencia in 2002, Spain highlighted two priorities: promoting investment in the private sector and supporting intercultural dialogue. We proposed the creation of a Euromed Bank, a Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures, and a Parliamentary Assembly. I believe it critical that these proposals be developed further and finalized at the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Naples in December 2003.

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The Barcelona Process and Its Origins.

The Barcelona Process represents an ongoing dialogue between the EU and twelve Mediterranean countries. It is within this framework that the EU conducts much of its political, economic, social, and cultural relations with Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia, Turkey, and Syria—the signatories of the Barcelona Declaration that marked the beginning of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995. With the forthcoming enlargement of the EU in 2004, this area will include over six hundred and fifty million people in thirty-five countries.

The Partnership arose from the EU's need to strengthen relations with its Mediterranean neighbors in light of the geopolitical changes of the early nineties. The basic idea underlying the Barcelona Declaration is a shared wish to eliminate

ward. Prior to Barcelona, Europe had initiated a Mediterranean development cooperation policy defined by financial assistance and preferential trade agreements. In the mid-nineties, however, this approach was deemed inadequate. This prompted Europe's Mediterranean countries—Spain in particular—to spearhead diplomatic efforts to strengthen EU-Mediterranean relations, culminating in the Barcelona Conference under Spain's EU presidency.

Second, it was imperative that Europe address the difficult economic and demographic situation of the Southern Mediterranean: on northern shores, average per capita income exceeds \$20,000; along southern shores, however, it barely reaches \$2,000. In addition, the United Nations Population Fund predicts that, at current growth rates, the population of North African countries will surpass that of European Mediterranean countries by

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or reduce deeply-rooted causes of instability in the region. Another motivation is a desire for peace and prosperity within a context that promotes respect for human rights, democratic governance, and international law.

Three main factors led to the creation of the Partnership. First, the fall of the Berlin Wall opened the possibility of EU enlargement, sparking concern among Europe's southern neighbors that EU attention would be fully diverted east

2015. Without sustained economic development to mitigate the effects of these combined factors, the spillover effect of immigration could create tensions, generate instability, and usher unthinkable consequences into the EU's southern border.

Finally, positive developments in the Middle East peace process also lent momentum to the Partnership. The 1991 Madrid Conference and the subsequent Oslo Agreements raised hopes of a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This brought about the gathering of twenty-seven countries, including Israel, in Barcelona in 1995. Apart from the United Nations, the Barcelona Process remains the only forum for permanent and institutionalized dialogue where both Israel and most Arab states are present.

Barcelona: Goals and Results.

The Barcelona Declaration delineated the Partnership's two tracks: promoting bilateral ties between the EU and each of the Mediterranean partners through Association Agreements, and improving regional cooperation through multilateral mechanisms aimed at gradually boosting regional cohesion.

The Declaration is much more than a free trade agreement; it is an agreement that aims to address political and security issues, trade cooperation, and intercultural dialogue.

Regarding political and security issues, the Declaration stresses basic goals of promoting political and security cooperation and creating a common area of peace and stability. These objectives are embodied in the Charter for Peace and Stability, an agreement among Mediterranean countries that would establish basic rules for coexistence among the Partnership's Member States. The deterioration of the Arab-Israeli situation, however, has halted progress on this front.

The second issue, trade cooperation, sets out to achieve a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area by the year 2010. The EU and all its Mediterranean partners have signed numerous bilateral Association Agreements, with the exception of Syria, which is still in the process of negotiation. In addition to these bilateral agreements, the EU has offered a

series of financial tools such as the Mediterranean Aid Program grants and European Investment Bank loans to stimulate economic and legal transformation.

Regarding intercultural dialogue, the Declaration recognizes the fundamental role of civil society. It also encourages decentralized cooperation to promote direct exchanges between political representatives and cultural, religious, academic, business, and trade union figures, as well as civil society in general. Intercultural dialogue has taken on a special and urgent relevance following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, prompting the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue of Cultures that aims to promote greater mutual knowledge of the cultures residing along the Mediterranean. This instrument is expected to be adopted by the Naples Ministerial Conference in December 2003.

The record of the eight years since the Declaration was signed is somewhat mixed. A major disparity exists between the success of "micro" programs and the less successful materialization of "macro" objectives. In general, the ambitious aspirations that generated such collective enthusiasm in Barcelona have not yet been fulfilled. Yet, the new geopolitical context that we face today requires us to inject renewed energy and creativity into the Partnership.

The Mediterranean in Today's Global Strategic Context. The global strategic scenario that has recently emerged is bound to affect the future of the Barcelona Process. This new scenario is characterized by:

First, the emergence of the United States as the dominant military power

after the end of the Cold War, and its clear resolve to use this power in the wake of 9/11;

Second, the EU's transformation, with the introduction of the euro, the drafting of a European Foreign Security and Defense Policy, the forthcoming enlargement to twenty-five members, and the institutional reform to be introduced by the European Constitution;

Third, new threats to international security, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and organized crime;

Fourth, the persistence of traditional threats to stability, a result of growing gap between North and South in the political arena (human rights and democratic governance), socio-economic issues (asymmetric demographics, poverty, and migratory flows), and cultural elements (especially the social and political roles of religion);

Finally, worsened prospects for Middle East peace, which have heightened tensions between members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and now pose a serious challenge to the implementation of the Barcelona Process.

The current geopolitical and strategic context is profoundly different than that of 1995, and the changes above have profoundly altered the regional context. Since many of the circumstances that led to the Barcelona Process have changed, we must redefine the Process to help it move forward.

Barcelona and Mediterranean Stability. One may ask if Europe is sufficiently equipped to confront these new challenges. The United States has reacted by adopting a strategy of preemptive defense aimed at preventing terrorist attacks. Nonetheless, it seems

this hard-power strategy will be pursued alongside a more widely-accepted strategy to prevent the rise of terrorism by promoting democracy and free markets. As U.S. President George W. Bush noted on 6 November 2003 in a speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, the United States has taken on a solid, long-term commitment to promoting democracy in the Middle East. Firmly rejecting the idea of cultural relativism that has long served to justify support to authoritarian regimes, the president reaffirmed the compatibility of Islam and democracy, as half of the world's Muslims already live in democratic societies. Thus, signs of hope do exist. For example, Morocco has shown that strong political will can bring about reform and work against those groups most reluctant to modernize. Although the terrorist attacks in Morocco in May 2003 illustrate that those groups will remain an obstacle to the modernization and democratization of the country, Morocco has nevertheless persevered on the path to democracy.

On another level, the war in Iraq galvanized the EU to start thinking in more strategic terms. In Spain, we purport a vision for security based on two main principles: a systemic, preventive, and multilateral security strategy that combines hard and soft power and seeks renewal of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership and the deepening of neighborly relations from an inclusive perspective. In both cases, a renewed and revitalized Euro-Mediterranean Partnership can act as a catalyst for dialogue and action aimed at building broad multilateral consensus.

Given that the Middle East occupies a strategic position with regard to the new global security environment, Europe and the United States must work together to bring about peace, stability, and pros

perity to the Mediterranean region on the basis of shared values and interests.

Europe's New Security Strategy.

Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy, Security, and Defense, has offered a framework for Europe's new security strategy in a recent document entitled "A Secure Europe in a Better World." This document, submitted at the European Council in Thessaloniki in June 2003, highlights the need for the EU to assume a firm commitment to conflict prevention.

In line with what the Australian scholar and diplomat John Burton called "conflict prevention," Solana asserted that the EU must take a proactive approach based on a continuous appraisal of the dynamics underlying conflict and its component parts and players. Solana stressed that although the EU's arsenal of "soft power" instruments such as political dialogue, trade and financial relations,

and cultural aspects, as well as dynamic interconnections between all of these elements. In addressing the challenge posed by this new geo-strategic scenario, responses must neither rely solely on a traditional hard-power security approach nor completely exclude the military or defensive approach. Rather, we need a combination of both. This can be achieved through a two-pronged strategy that uses soft power without ruling out the use of force.

The Barcelona Process is a multilateral mechanism that could successfully address Euro-Mediterranean security issues from a preventive standpoint. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership does not seek to replace the important role played by other fora, such as the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue that has brought together members of the alliance with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. Instead, the Partnership could serve as a

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and international development co-operation is impressive, military tools should not always be automatically discounted.

The core concept of the security strategy, as well as conflict prevention, is to use soft power to eradicate or reduce the many factors leading to instability. This proposal emanates from a systemic, comprehensive, and more human concept of security that emphasizes the importance of political, socio-economic,

meeting place for facilitating dialogue on security among the different countries, thereby laying the groundwork for reaching consensus in military-strategic fora.

In this regard, active dialogue with the United States is vital. The disagreements that have arisen between Europe and the United States on security matters, especially in connection with the war in Iraq, cannot jeopardize five decades of understanding and transatlantic partnership.

Only a full commitment from the EU, in partnership with the United States, can prevent serious security problems from spreading throughout Europe's immediate neighborhood.

New challenges to global security demand a revived Euro-Atlantic partnership. The effectiveness of EU-U.S. cooperation, however, will hinge on willingness to unite efforts on both sides of the Atlantic. As demonstrated by UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1511 on Iraq, the United States is willing to conduct its foreign policy in a multilateral setting. The EU, meanwhile, should be creative in its efforts to develop a common foreign, security, and defense policy. The EU proved its ability to find creative solutions when it built its unique legal and institutional architecture; it should tap into this same creative ability to forge a security policy that will complement its Euro-Atlantic commitments.

Deepening Neighborly Ties. There is still a long way to go before EU-Mediterranean ties are strong enough to support strategic security goals. The EU has therefore set more ambitious goals for its Partnership with the south, introducing the New Neighborhood Initiative. This proposal renews and broadens the EU's commitment to extending wellbeing and prosperity to neighbors both in the east and south. As the European Commission (EC) stated in a recently-released document, "Wider Europe—New Neighborhood: Proposed New Framework for Relations with the EU's Eastern and Southern Neighbors," this initiative offers an intense level of part-

nership to its Mediterranean neighbors.

This initiative broadens the objectives of the Barcelona Process and includes a number of incentives that aim to extend EU freedoms such as free movement of workers, goods, and services, and freedom to establish and conduct business to the Southern Mediterranean neighbors. In exchange, each Mediterranean country will fulfill certain criteria established according to principles of differentiation and conditionality.

Differentiated treatment will enable interested countries to negotiate with the EC action plans based on the unique conditions of each partner. This approach will encourage countries willing to intensify political and economic reforms to make more rapid progress, thus speeding up access to the benefits the EU offers. Three countries have shown interest in this initiative: Morocco, Jordan, and Israel.

Benefits from the New Neighborhood initiative are conditional upon reform. This conditionality has given rise to criticism and caused some southern Mediterranean partners to view the initiative with reticence. The EU is offering its neighbors specific benefits conditional upon achievement of a series of reforms. The most sensitive issues, and those to which the EU attaches great importance, are those related to human rights and democratic governance. Again, through political dialogue, the Barcelona Process

can contribute to consensus-building on these matters.

Likewise, this initiative employs the concept of neighborhood in its broadest sense, adopting a flexible geographical approach. Thus, if Turkey were eventually to join the EU, Iraq would become a new neighbor. This highlights the urgent need to support and facilitate political transition in this country, as well as its reintegration into the international community and the region. The international community has signaled a strong commitment to building a new Iraq. The unanimous approval of UNSC Resolution 1511 and the success of the October 2003 Donors' Conference in Madrid are a firm step in this direction; there is no doubt that the stability of Iraq is critical to the stability of all neighboring countries.

Conclusions. I am convinced that the EU's greatest challenge in the coming years lies in its relations with its neighbors. Its own future hinges on that of its neighbors—our fates are closely linked, for better or for worse. For worse because destructive forces threaten our neighbors' security as much as our own; for better because interdependence fosters the recognition of the many interests we share.

Relations with our neighbors are simultaneously defined in terms of challenges and opportunities. It is only with a full commitment from the EU, in partnership with the United States, that we can prevent serious security problems

from spreading throughout our immediate neighborhood.

For many reasons—geographical, historical, and political—Mediterranean countries in southern Europe have a special responsibility in this undertaking. Our nations must use their political wisdom to promote and support changes that would further the social, economic, and political development of our neighbors without triggering adverse reactions. Spain has sought to revitalize the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, even during the most sensitive moments of the Middle East conflict, to help further that goal. The dramatic events of the past two years have not undermined this process; they have, instead, convinced us more than ever that the response to the increasingly complex challenges in the region must be found by promoting a more partnership-oriented approach.

In short, Spain is fully committed to the Barcelona Process, and we are optimistic. We need a Europe firmly anchored in the Mediterranean—a region whose history and civilizations are among the richest in the world. The Mediterranean—the cradle of civilizations and three great religions, a crossroads shaped by dozens of centuries of globalization—represents one of the most productive, brilliant, and modern social, cultural, and spiritual spaces of the globe. We must do our best to keep it that way.

Author's Note: This article is a translation from Spanish.