SECURITY PERCEPTIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN :
WHICH FACTORS FOR CHANGE ? [*]

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Attempting to **master change** and collectively drawing lessons from current international relations in order to define the targets and face in common challenges of security in the mediterranean may, inherently, steam up from opportune and reliable but highly ambitious, conception.

Opportune conception, in fact, given the transformations the world has witnessed since the post cold war era which have drawn the interest of international community as a whole on the acuity of existing solidarity networks and security doctrines behind which states stand to ensure their survival or defend their own interests.

Surely ambitious also, is this conception with regard to the implicated adaptations in a context deeply marked by a variety of insecurity sources, at a time when discrepancies between states tend to increase.

To these assumptions, however, must be added other aspects more directly linked to the controversy on the security in the Mediterranean along a brief presentation of the current situation which will permit us-**firstly-** to apprehend with more accuracy the main cleavages determining the differences in perceptions and in this vein to foresee- **secondly-**the eventual actions left to the borderer states and their partners alike, to pave the way for future evolution.

Current situation: sensibly divergent security approaches

A melting pot of civilisations, the Mediterranean is with no doubt one of the world's regions where the intermixing of races has been the most intense but where human history would have had in contrast, least achieved its rapprochement duty.

Despite centuries of cohabitation through which the mediterranean peoples had often faced invasion wars, the sentiment of belonging to the mediterranean was never used to forge a basis for a policy of a concerted union between borderer states. Thus, to the large solidarity streams promoted by entire continents such as pan americanism, panasiatism, panafricanism which helped the emergence of common regrouping structures, **" mediterraneism**" did have only a limited impact on the collective awareness of the Mediterranean peoples.

Such a basic pattern underlining the **specificity of the mediterranean** world, may at the time, not only explain the resurgence of some atavisms-for example in the Balkans where a shared life would have diluted the most acerb particularities-but also determine the current geopolitics of the Mediterranean .

Accordingly, no grievance could be made either to geographers for distinguishing between **Western** Mediterranean from **Oriental M**editerranean, nor to ordinary observers for matching on the Mediterranean the Italian **mezzogiorno** syndrome and consequently, for opposing **southern** to **northern** border because of the deep disparities characterizing each of them.

If it is true that the end of the cold war has led the way to a general process of restructuring international relations by favouring notably in Europe, a dynamic toward convergence between the formerly protagonists of the **East-West** rivalry, the Mediterranean, in contrast, had much more stood as a centre of new **threats** for the western world security rather than one of the really prosperous zones able to become an effective vehicle for the world's economic growth.

The revaluation of challenges in the Mediterranean, highly sustained by **risk factors** or **instability sources** leads to think that cooperation policies among borderer countries seem to be more sensitive to political cleavages and cultural particularities susceptible to provide the mediterranean peoples with prospects for building up destinities crucially based on solidarity.

Pragmatism on the basis "of assemble rather than divide rule", requires objectively an effort on prospecting security problematic in the Mediterranean and in this respect, three appraisal paradigms have to be taken into account in any study on development prospects of security cooperation in the Mediterranean. They are linked to the identification of threat

factors, to the defining of priority scale and to the choice of the cooperation instruments eventually needed.

A. Non-consensual perceptions of threats factors

If it is well admitted that the Mediterranean constitutes a real receptacle for international tensions , it remains however , doubtful that the borderer states and their partners share the same vision towards the nature of the factors that threaten peace and stability in the region.

In fact, against the multiplicity of risks factors to security in the Mediterranean, neither Nato nor the European Community and the south mediterranean countries to a lesser extent, seem to confer to these factors, the same importance.

Whereas, the lack of common identification of the threat factors is not neglectable because it determines, as such , an appraisal much differentiated from eventual ripostes.

B. A differentiated assessment of priorities order

Without underestimating the impact of one of many insecurity factors in the mediterranean the borderer states and their partners do not seem to adhere to the same set of intervention fields on the basis of priority as implicated by the implementation of the concept of cooperative security .

It is clear that between the protection of naval routes, the management and prevention of crises, non proliferation of massive destruction arms, control of migrations, the fight against terrorism and organised criminality, protection of environment and economic growth, the agenda of needs is relatively wide and arbitrages are not always best indicated, given the imbrication of threats risks, a fact that presents the real problem of coherence among cooperation initiatives which emerged from various but somehow competitive forums.

C. Erratic multiplicity of dialogue forums

Initial efforts to institutionalise mediterranean dialogue were surely hampered by two major hindrances: reactivity to specific events and fragmentation of exiting processes.

Whether it is related to the euro arab dialogue initiated under the pressure of oil boycott decided by the arab countries in the vein of the fourth armed conflict with Israel or to the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe** aimed to implement the Mediterranean dimension of the pan european security system by granting the status of observer to the countries of the southern border, or to finally, the group of 5+5 and the **mediterranean forum**, the objectives set out could have produced sound results if hindrances evoked earlier did not persist in sensibly reducing the effect and efficiency of cooperation mechanisms which they intended to promote .

In this respect, the prospects established by the **Barcelona process** and by the **mediterranean dialogue** set up by Nato seemed promising, but it remains to see to what extent dynamics engaged separately would not risk, at the end, to smash up.

Potential factors of change

The more and more marked trans-nationalisation of security menaces in the Mediterranean could neither adapt to fragmentary policies of regulation nor to hostile approaches, though generous in their essence but heavily biased when confronted to reality.

In this prospect, any attempt based on a consensus could not overlook the security dimension in the Mediterranean in its dual globality and diversity and thus, equally minimising the handling of legitimate preoccupations and interests of the borderer states and their partners.

Accordingly, four orientation axes are susceptible to constitute the basic elements of convergent approach to security in the Mediterranean. They concern namely:

1- Promotion of stability in the mediterranean through the settlement of pending conflicts in the respect of international legality.

2 -Impulse of political dialogue and the fulfilment of cooperation instruments in domains commonly regarded as a priority .

3-   Sustained cultures and civilisations dialogue.

4- Achievement of political transitions and economic reforms in the south of the Mediterranean.

A. The promotion of stability in the Mediterranean through the settlement of pending conflicts in the respect of international legality

Despite promising initiatives agreed upon in the aftermath of sounding events ending the division of Europe, the West Mediterranean is still facing sovereignty conflicts whose persistence constitutes not only a serious obstacle to the setting up of a true partnership between borderer states but also a potential source of destabilisation and confrontation in the region.

Whether it concerns the conflict in the Middle East, the saharawi problem, the Cyprus question, Gibraltar, Spanish possessions of Ceuta and Mellila, Perjil- Leila rock, or the Greco-Turkish conflict, geography and history have respectively marked the mediterranean space and it is not certain that geopolitics would not bring about its array of complications to this area .

In these conditions, peaceful settlement of pending conflicts on just and equitable basis, constitutes a preliminary condition for any attempt to promote security in the region, a matter that demands an active contribution from all actors in order to positively adjust to the pace of events and particularly from the European Union with regard to its increasing political influence and credibility.

On the other hand, given the diverse challenges it has to face, the Mediterranean would not ignore the necessity of promoting active solidarities so as to avoid new upheavals .

B. Strengthening of political dialogue and the setting up of cooperation instruments in privileged domains

The entanglement of the Mediterranean in many instability generating factors pleads for upholding current mutations by integrating, in addition to legitimate defence predicaments of borderer states, the aspirations of these states to guarantee their global security be it, economic, environmental or human. In this sense, the elaboration of peace and stability charter in the Mediterranean aiming to favour the implementation of a durable peace order in

the region remains indeed of a great importance. This document will complete and reinforce instruments with which the euro mediterranean framework was endowed in order to ensure a global coherence to the Barcelona process, which was launched in **November 1995.** But, beyond the interest of such a charter, concrete engagement is utterly needed **to eradicate terrorism** plea in order to really appreciate the determination of mediterranean countries and their partners in wiping out any idea of a separate security.

In this respect, if there is any legitimate reason to value the mobilisation efforts made after the terrorist attacks of **September 11-2001**, it remains, however, essential to conclude appropriate security arrangements in order to prevent and eliminate terrorism, notably by strengthening police and judicial cooperation through a better control over supportive activities to terrorist networks (propaganda, finance, logistics, etc…) as well as through reinforcing cooperation on the operational level with the states which have been the victims of terrorism.

But given on the other hand, serious discrepancies tearing up communities which may implicate confusion voluntarily fuelled between terrorism and cultural paradigms, dialogue among cultures and civilisations remains of a crucial importance.

C- Sustained strengthening of cultural and civilisations dialogue

Without fuelling the psychosis of civilisation conflicts predicted by **Samuel Huntington**, peaceful cohabitation among cultures and civilisations may be significantly affected by potential crises situation whether incited by states policies or caused by groups.

In these conditions, the rapprochement between peoples through development and mutual understanding constitutes the best treatment for suspicion and exclusion sentiments, which may nourish public opinion streams.

However, the social, cultural and human partnership supposed to represent an essential vehicle for rapprochement between the two borders of the Mediterranean, is currently doubly hampered.

On the one hand, the over estimation of migration pressures coming from the South and the correlated phobia of "boat people" have pushed the northern border countries to reinforce considerably visa conditions to Shengen space and thus, drastically restrict peoples' circulation.

On the other hand, the enactment of timid integration policies by host states, marginalizes immigrant communities and amplifies social, economic, political and cultural distortions which may exist between various components of european societies, a matter that naturally leads to fuel the discourse of public authorities on preoccupations related to domestic security and to contribute, by the same token, to encourage objectively the emergence of extremist and xenophobia trends.

The reactivation of cultures and civilisations dialogue between peoples of the two sides of the Mediterranean, supposes therefore, that an effort of bypassing security logics has to be made in order to make peoples' circulation more linked to opportunities of cultural progress than to turbulences generated by conflict factors.

In this respect, the pragmatic evaluation of social cultural and human transmediterraneism suggests evidently, a more resolute implication from civilian societies. These societies, could in fact, make profit from their concrete activities in order to be able to substitute or reinforce governments' actions in sectors as diverse as education, sports and leisure, cultural and artistic involvements and could also, enable themselves through their own initiatives to stimulate rapprochement by sustaining notably the transformations which occur in the southern border countries.

D. Achievement of political transitions and economic reforms in South Mediterranean

The impulse of "convergence poles" in the euro mediterranean space is only possible through the adhesion to some common values, respect of fundamental principles as well as through the adoption of economic policies based on reference criteria widely shared.

However, despite development gaps which tend to widen between the two sides , the euro mediterranean space may witness the evolution of the southern states to social, economic

and political schemes whose spirit derived from democratic liberal european models will reinforce convergence dynamics and thus, the rapprochement process.

Consequently, the northern border states which should avoid interfering directly on the politics of the southern mediterranean states, have **to keep encouraging democratic efforts** made in these states as well as favouring the engagement of their civil societies in stimulating and shaping public life, in particular.

On the other hand, and in order to avoid that reforms may bring about frustrations and increase socio political imbalances of already economically fragilized states, the northern countries should try to establish more cooperative relations with their southern neighbours.

In this vein, it is highly required that the specificities proper to the states of this region should be duly taken into account and that the efforts tending to promote structural reforms in these states have to obey to a gradual and sustained vision.

In this framework, the extension of the European Union to East and South East parts, should not then result in an increased marginalisation of the southern mediterranean states, but should rather, constitute an impetus for a more balanced policy in their favour.

As underlined, the European Union, beyond a contribution to attenuate clashes induced by the current economic reforms, is foreseen for playing the role of a **real engineer** for the southern region and as an evidence for its good will, it has to set up the Euro Mediterranean Development Bank whose birth was announced but its realisation is still to come.

Conclusion

The Mediterranean was known through its history for civilisations clashes whose violence and duration have drawn the two borders in the culture of resentment and confrontation.

Crossed by depth waves which have, since ancient Roma and its punic wars, led the way to successively Byzantine, vandal, muslim conquests then to crusades and lately to colonial expeditions, the Mediterranean would constitute, therefore, the place for different hegemonies before the borderer states could have imagined to make of it a lake of peace.

On the eve of the third millennium, the destiny of the Mediterranean however is far from being clear because the entire region is situated at the crossroads of interactive trends whose future is hard to predict.

Thus, to the persistence of sovergnty conflicts and explosion of hidden crises due either to culture clashes, for a long time kept at bay, or to the aggravation of socio economic imbalances in several borderer states, the Mediterranean is not for the time being well endowed with concerted management or crises prevention mechanisms let alone with real economic cooperation instruments.

It remains, beyond suspicions that have to be wiped away and hesitations to overcome, the transnationalisation of security challenges in the Mediterranean made unavoidable from now on, the idea that there will not be a better fortress without a shared security.

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