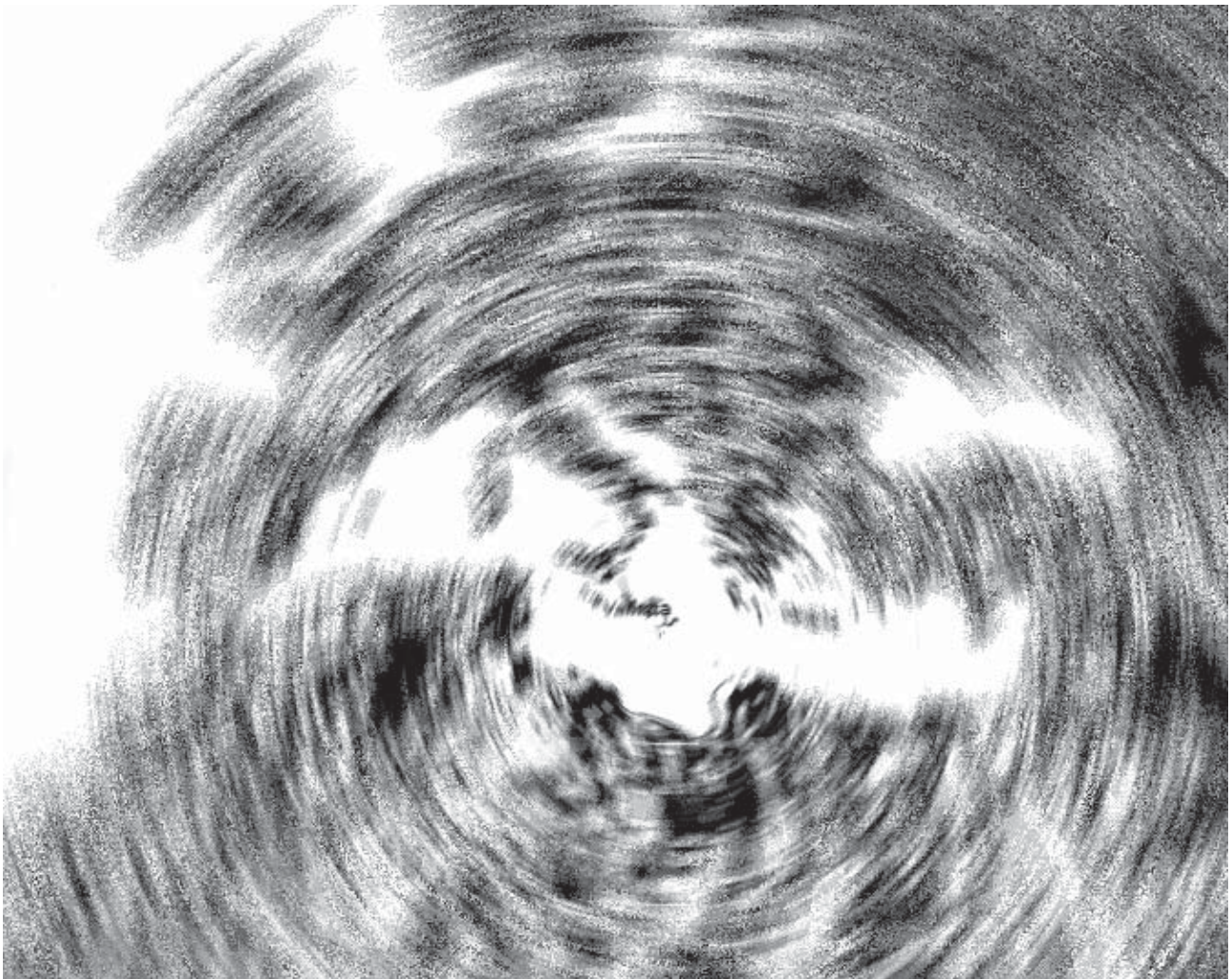# BRIEFS
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Southern Mediterranean Perceptions and Proposals for Mediterranean Security

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EuroMeSCo

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SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN PERCEPTIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY

Gamal A. G. Soltan

Introduction

The purpose of this text is to delineate the southern vision of Mediterranean security. Engaging with the southern vision(s) should help to identify and explain its nature and limits. The security of the Middle East and North Africa – the MENA region – has acquired greater salience since the 1990s. However, after a short period of improvement, which continued until the mid of the 1990s, the security structures and dynamics in the MENA region have undergone a period of deterioration. Central to this process is the failure of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). The renewal of violent confrontations in the occupied Palestinian territories unleashed a wave of negative attitudes and unrest all over the MENA region. The destabilising effect of this wave of violence and hatred can hardly be exaggerated. To a considerable extent, developments in the Palestinian territories are a key cause of the rising threat of terrorism in the past few years. Moreover, conditions in the Palestinian territories contribute to the tolerance that significant segments in MENA societies have shown toward terrorist activities.

Even before the eruption of violence in the occupied territories, nascent security measures in the MENA of the early 1990s were dealt serious blows. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the ascendance of the Israeli right wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu interrupted the then ongoing processes of multilateral talks on security, refugees, environment and development. The Middle East Peace Process created the conditions for the EMP to take off. Consequently, the slowing down of the peace process and its later collapse has deprived the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) of much of the needed wind to keep sailing.

Over the past eight years, security concerns in the MENA region have not only persisted but also been aggravated. Efforts to improve regional security have been unable to keep up with these developments. It is against this background that security perceptions and proposals from the Southern Mediterranean should be addressed. The aforementioned developments have implied a return to the cautious attitudes towards domestic and foreign policy among many Southern incumbent elites and intellectuals. The new policies and attitudes represented in the MEPP and EMP were too novel and immature to survive the political hardships of the past eight years.

Developments in the MENA region have put more constraints on governmental openness and regional cooperation. A radicalised public did not want to experiment with new policies while traditional concerns continued to impose a heavy burden. In these circumstances, the balance between reformists and conservatives tipped back to the advantage of the latter. By and large, the two sides reached a new compromise whereby new economic policies of reform are to be maintained while reviving traditional approaches to security and politics. The effects of inconsistent policies applied in different fields are largely cancelling each other out in the Southern Mediterranean. The resulting stagnation further worsens the security situation in the MENA region.

The Context

The concept of Mediterranean security is relatively new. Although Mediterranean security has been on the agenda for decades, it gained more salience only in the post-Cold War era. More importantly, the definition and connotation of Mediterranean security have experienced radical change recently. Two new elements are of particular note: first, the increasing focus on domestic security threats (i.e. economic development, good governance, human rights, terrorism and migration); second, the trans-regional nature of the Mediterranean is increasingly emphasized. For decades, Mediterranean security was about the security of the Mediterranean as a waterway that had to be kept open and safe. Mediterranean security has been transformed from the security of a strategic transit point to guarding against threats spilling over from certain countries or regions around the Mediterranean to others. Europe, the Middle East and North Africa have long been conceived as 'stand alone' security regions. The modern Mediterranean security concept brings the three regions together as interdependent security regions, and beyond, as one integrated security region.

Conceptually, Mediterranean security is fairly well developed. The fact that developments in any of the sub-regional components of the Mediterranean are impacting the other components is widely recognized. However, making Mediterranean security operational has proved much more difficult. Conceptual agreement among the Mediterranean countries is not matched by their capacity to develop the relevant common security policies. This failure can be attributed to the prevalent political and institutional cultures in the region. While the challenges are trans-regional in nature, the institutions in charge of addressing them are essentially designed to deal with straightforward national or regional issues. There are, nevertheless, important variations in that regard. The EU has a well-developed institutional structure with a higher capacity to deal with trans-regional challenges. The deficiencies that EU institutional structure may have in that regard are nothing compared with the almost non-existent institutional structures of the Southern Mediterranean.

Unlike the EU, the Southern Mediterranean countries do not share the same vision of the region. Southern views on the Mediterranean are the views of the different countries rather than the view of a homogeneous south. However, there are some shared characteristics. First, perceptions and proposals of Southern Mediterranean security should be studied against a background of limited interest in the subject among southern policy makers, scholars and intellectuals. Thus far, the Mediterranean does not score high among the priorities of Southern Mediterranean countries. A few examples help to explain this point. An enormous 34-chapter volume on Egyptian foreign policy does not include a single chapter about Mediterranean policy (Ahmad, 1990). In their landmark book on the foreign policy of Arab states, Korany and Dessouki do not include the Mediterranean among the priorities of any Arab state (Bahgat and Dessouki, 1991). A more recent book on a similar subject only slightly touches upon the Mediterranean (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, 2002). This is the negative side of the picture. On the positive side, interest in the Mediterranean rapidly increased in the 1990s. Regardless variations among the Southern Mediterranean countries in this regard, the focus is on the economic dimension of cooperation across the Mediterranean. Moreover, the southern countries tend to perceive economic cooperation in vertical rather than horizontal terms, where economic cooperation is perceived as equivalent to the economic relations with the EU. Introducing the Mediterranean to the political and developmental discourse of the southern countries means accentuating the increasing importance given to the relations with the EU, rather than integrating the Mediterranean as an organizing concept of foreign policy in the fields of economics and security. It has also allowed the southern countries' policies to fit better with the emerging process of regionalisation of the international political economy and with the new EU Mediterranean policy.

Although the southern countries' perception of the Mediterranean has changed, the original characteristics of their perceptions remain, by and large, unchanged. Lack of interest in Mediterranean security is among the characteristics that have persisted over time. The good news is that this negligence originates from a deep cultural tradition not to perceive the Mediterranean in security terms; on the contrary, the Mediterranean as a cultural identity, foreign policy orientation, and a venue for progress and modernization has been for long among the influential cultural and political alternatives in Southern Mediterranean politics, especially in Egypt and Lebanon (Abbas, 1986; Shehada, 1996). In a survey of threat and security perceptions among Egyptian political party officials and intellectuals, the Mediterranean was not mentioned at all as a source of security concerns or threats (Abdel Salam, 1999). Also, in the annual report *The State of the Arab World* produced by a number of distinguished pan-Arab intellectuals, the Mediterranean was not included among the security threats facing the Arab World (Hal Al-Umma, 1996; Hal Al-Umma, 1999; Hal Al-Umma, 2000).

In a survey of Jordanian intellectuals' attitudes towards security threats, the Mediterranean was not mentioned among the security threats by any of the 316 surveyed intellectuals (El-Twaisy, 1998). The closest to Mediterranean security in that regard is the 'foreign military presence in the Gulf and the Mediterranean', which was considered by 56% of the respondents as a principal security threat (El-Twaisy, 1998, p. 96). Considering the troubled security environment in the Gulf, it can be argued that the Mediterranean could have been defined as a security threat by even fewer people if it had been put in a separate category. Major economic regional blocks were perceived as a security threat for the Arab World by 49% of the respondents (El-Twaisy, 1998, p. 96). This is a kind of generic concern that applies to the increasing number of economic blocs mushrooming everywhere in a context where Arabs fail to build their own.

The Security Dimensions

The debate about Mediterranean security in the Southern Mediterranean is characterised by the following:
1. Mediterranean security is synonymous to relations with Europe. The literature about Mediterranean security in

the Southern Mediterranean tends to deal with the subject as another way of addressing relations with Europe. Mediterranean security in itself does not seem to have an autonomous *raison d'être*.

2. Mediterranean security is extension of the security of the Middle East and North Africa. The case for the independent nature and identity of Mediterranean security has not been made. Countries in the Southern Mediterranean use Mediterranean security to enhance their positions regarding their traditional security concerns.

3. Economic development, not security, is the main concern in the relations with Europe. It is not widely believed that the Mediterranean as a security concept can help enhance their security, particularly over the short- and medium-term. The contribution of the Mediterranean to security is mainly economic. But this is seen as development rather than security.

4. There is more focus on the political role of the EU, both globally and in the Middle East. A great deal of the political debate focuses on the impact of changing international system on the south. US global hegemony is a major concern. Scholars and intellectuals express disappointment with the unipolar international structure. The commons wisdom in the south is that a bipolar, or preferably multipolar international system, better serves the interests of the Southern Mediterranean countries (Ahmad, 1991, p. 197; Saif, 1998, p. 98). This is particularly the case with the security interest of the south, which revolves around the Arab-Israeli conflict and limiting the interference of external powers in domestic affairs. Arab scholars and intellectuals, hoping that this can help to limit the US hegemony, closely and passionately watch the increasing political role of the EU. Not infrequently, analysis is tainted by wishful thinking, and normal developments are interpreted as signs for the rise of European power at the expense of the US (Zaki, 1990; Abdel Ghani, 1990[1]; Umran, 1990).

The prevalent tendency in the Arab World is to confine the concept of security to issues of hard security. Consequently, it is more common in the Arab World to limit perceptions of threat and security to interstate relations, including those in the Mediterranean. But existing interstate disputes in the Mediterranean have long been classified either as Middle Eastern or inter-Arab conflicts. While European policy makers and scholars tend to classify these conflicts as Mediterranean, Arabs find no need to redefine as relating to the Mediterranean.

There are important variations among the Southern Mediterranean countries in that regard. By and large, the Maghreb countries' perceptions of Mediterranean security are less influenced by the Middle East conflict. On the other hand, the Mashreq countries' perceptions of the Mediterranean are highly influenced by their concerns with the Middle East. To a great extent the Mashreq countries' perceptions of Mediterranean security are an extension of their Middle East policies. However, there are still some important variations among them: as a rule of thumb, the higher the preoccupation of a Mashreq country with its immediate Middle Eastern concerns, the lower the level of interest has in Mediterranean security; conversely, the higher the tendency to open up the economy and society to the outside world, the higher the tendency to demonstrate interest in Mediterranean security. A third factor is the extent to which the respective country's security is provided for by the commitments of Western powers: the more a country's security is provided for by Western security assurances, the higher its tendency to actively engage with Mediterranean security.

Applying the three rules, a continuum could be drawn with Syria at the very far end with the least interest in Mediterranean security, and Jordan at the other end of the spectrum. The conflict in the Middle East is at the top of the political agenda of all Mashreq countries. However, the fact that Jordan and Egypt have signed peace treaties with Israel has ameliorated their Middle Eastern security concerns. Syria, on the other hand is still struggling to win back the territories occupied by Israel after the June 1967 war. Jordan and Egypt have been applying policies of economic openness for years. Syria, on the other hand, just began experimenting with economic openness. Jordan is a unique case among the Mashreq countries. For decades, its security has been provided for through different kinds of assurances from Western countries, particularly the US and the UK. This has helped Jordan to develop greater traditions of trust and security cooperation with Western countries, traditions that can be easily extended to security cooperation with the EU. The joint Jordanian-Italian project to establish a conflict prevention centre in Amman is indicative in that regard. However, there are few in the Southern Mediterranean who contemplate the possibility of Mediterranean cooperation regarding hard security issues. Habib (1993, p. 32) lists a number of actions Europe can undertake to help the Southern Mediterranean and the Arab World. Among them is the banning of arms transfer to the region. He suggests that Arabs, under the auspices of the Arab League, should launch a regional process of regional disarmament and arms limitation, both conventional and non-conventional. He argues that such a policy is good for inter-Arab relations and for the larger region. Cooperation with Europe could be instrumental in achieving this goal (Habib, 1993, p. 37). Others in the Southern Mediterranean believe that their countries can and should play a proactive role in Mediterranean security. Nafi' and Khallaf (1997, pp. 83-85) list a number of policies that might be pursued, including engaging Arab think tanks, including those affiliated with the Arab League, in developing Arab policy toward the Mediterranean; developing an inventory of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) already employed in the region and come up with common denominators that can be applied in the Mediterranean; contributing to the development of non-military CBMs; enhancing cooperation in response to natural disasters and civil protection; and intensifying the security dialogue with European partners to get assurances that military force in any reform will not be used to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Southern Mediterranean countries.

Hard security issues, however, are not the only cause of tension between the two sides of the Mediterranean. In reality, there is a much more tension between European and Mediterranean governments over soft security issues. The two sides perceive soft security issues differently. While

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[1] This view is expressed by Gamal Amin and Ahmed Sidqi Al-Dijani in Abdel Maguid, 1990.

the Southern Mediterranean partners tend to perceive them as developmental or police problems, European partners tend to think they are as important as the hard security issues as long as they put at risk their fundamental values and interests. By and large, differences in judgment stem from the transitional phase that soft security threats are undergoing. As explained by Hitti "the traditional demarcation line between hard and soft security issues has been blurred, because some of the soft issues, if not dealt with properly, could become hard issues. Others are extremely important in the shaping of certain hard issues, for example economic disparities, as they relate to ethnic or national-based conflicts" (1998, p. 37). Different attitudes towards 'transforming' soft security issues across the Mediterranean can be attributed to different levels of tolerance towards security risks characterizing the security cultures of the partners. Southern partners 'enjoy' higher level of tolerance toward potential security risks, while Europeans tend to deal with them as if they posed an immediate threat. Different levels of feelings of urgency can, if only partly, explain the differences between the partners regarding soft security issues.

Another reason for the partners' different attitudes toward soft security issues stems from the direction of Mediterranean soft security challenges, as threats originate in the south and spill over to the north. Variations in levels of urgency are not unusual in such a situation. More importantly, the dominant feeling in the south is that the south, both the countries and the region, is the subject of any common security policy designed to address such threats. The southern countries are asked to introduce major changes to guard against soft security threats. Change is always costly. While Europe is contributing financially to this process, it is the south that is going to incur the heavy political and social cost of change. The issue at stake here is the stability of the southern countries. The cost-sharing formula offered by Europe is not sufficient to encourage southern elites to risk change. The European vision of change in the Southern Mediterranean is depicted as simplistic due to the European economic bias in problem-solving (Hitti, 1998, p. 39). Ignoring the non-economic nature of many of the security challenges in the Mediterranean does not help EuroMed cooperation.

However, Arab policy-makers and scholars do not neglect intrastate threats and threats of soft security nature. Al-Aiari (1994) identifies three security threats haunting the Mediterranean: the gap in human and social development, the gap in levels of economic development, and the technological gap (Al-larry, 1994; Awad, 2000). Faragallah (2002, p. 139) recognizes the threat of poverty and economic hardship. However, southerners tend to suggest that the conventional development and economic cooperation are sufficient to deal with these problems and that putting unnecessary emphasis on their security nature is counterproductive. Many argue that Europeans unjustifiably exaggerate the importance of the security dimension of the EMP. They believe that abandoning such a skewed policy and adopting a more balanced and comprehensive approach should facilitate cooperation across the Mediterranean (Al-Fehry, 2000). The same view was expressed by Mohamed Bin Isa, Morocco's foreign minister during the ministerial meeting of the Mediterranean Forum in October 2001 in Aghader (Al-Shark Al-Awsat,

27 October 2001). Its is a considerable discomfort and even insult for many in the Arab World to see the EU dealing with development and democracy in their countries from the narrow angle of security (Shahin, 1998). A more subtle way of addressing this issue might help to win the cooperation of the southern countries.

The Cultural Dimension

There is increasing concern in the Southern Mediterranean regarding the cultural dimension of security, and concerns have been expressed regarding the impact of Mediterranean relations on the cultural identity of the Southern Mediterranean. Selim (2001) has developed a cultural approach to Mediterranean security. He emphasizes the influence of cultural characteristics on relations between countries, and argues that the future of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is highly dependent on the way in which cultural issues are addressed. He argues that the cultural dimensions of the EMP are the most problematic, and could obstruct the whole project. Selim emphasizes the importance of cultural dimensions as causes for conflict and cooperation between nations. He recognizes the cultural pluralism of the Mediterranean and argues that security and other dimensions of the EMP cannot move forward unless they are based on an appropriate handling of the cultural dimension. He also argues that cultural confidence building is the basis for confidence building on security issues (Selim, 2001, p. 6).

The problem of the cultural dimension is aggravated by the gap dividing ruling elites and masses in the southern countries (Selim, 2001, p. 8). Southern ruling elites are more influenced by European cultural norms, while the masses, which are also excluded from southern political communities, are more influenced by the authentic cultures of the south. A cultural dialogue, or any other instrument to bridge the cultural differences across the Mediterranean, cannot be effective if it does not include the masses. Selim thus suggests that intergovernmental relations that are instrumental in promoting north-south cooperation in the fields of economics and politics do not work in the cultural field, as in this area the general population must be involved.

The cultural argument has gained considerable validity after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. It is reasonable to argue about the ultimate social, economic and political causes of terrorism. However, it is equally reasonable to argue about culture as the immediate cause and instrument that has legitimised terrorism. If the challenge of terrorism is to be addressed in security cooperation, culture as a dimension of security must be included. Consequently, cultural relations between north and south of the Mediterranean should be upgraded from the typically neglected third basket.

While it is certainly helpful to pay more attention to the cultural dimensions of Mediterranean security (the cultural argument could serve the Mediterranean cause by accentuating its importance), the problem with the cultural approach is making it operational. By virtue of its nature, cultural changes cannot be achieved through intergovernmental agreements or the implementation of some programmes. Unlike economic or security cooperation, the desired outcomes of cultural cooperation

cannot be attained through mere implementation of certain projects. Change of cultural values is a gradual process. Moreover, societal receptivity to cultural change is a function of a large number of factors that can hardly be manipulated in orderly fashion. Further, there is the ideological nature of the cultural dimension. Although many in the Arab world adopt the cultural argument, it is primarily the pan-Arab and Islamic movements that tend to subscribe to it. The common perception among followers of these movements is that the goal of cooperation between north and south of the Mediterranean, particularly in the security field, is to ensure these movements do not come to power in the Southern Mediterranean (Balquiz, 1993, p. 141).

Current Dynamics and the Way Ahead

Given the above, it is not surprising to see only a few security proposals emerging from the Southern Mediterranean. It must be spelt out that the countries of the region have neither produced a solid vision for Mediterranean security nor come up with solid proposals thus far. All that exists are essentially rhetorical statements, a very ambitious wish list. As Hitti says (1998, p. 37), "too many ideas, concepts and initiatives emanate from the northern shore, while in turn, too many expectations emanate from the southern shores, accompanied most of the time by frustration due to a feeling that they are falling behind and are threatened by potential encroachment and interference." Mediterranean countries tend to react to European and Western ideas (Saif, 1998, p. 104). Things look only little better on the other side of the Partnership. Europeans have made many security proposals. However, the real value of such proposals is doubtful: most if not all have no wings to fly. The failure of both sides to come up with coherent visions for Mediterranean security is a result of the specific nature of the Mediterranean region. The fact that the Mediterranean falls short of constituting a conventional security region has been stated over and over again. The region does not readily lend itself to conventional security treatment.

The differences between the European and Southern Mediterranean perceptions of Mediterranean security can be summarized as follows. Europeans recognize the hard security aspects of the Mediterranean, but they also recognize the limited ability of the EuroMed framework to address hard-core security issues. In particular, Europeans recognize the very limited EuroMed capacity to deal with the core components of the Arab Israeli conflict and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the Middle East. These difficulties do not discourage Europeans from addressing the peripheral aspects of hard security issues in the Mediterranean. Developing measures of confidence building has been the approach pursued by the Europeans. Southern Mediterranean countries, on the other hand, are highly concerned with hard security threats in the Mediterranean. They are the main security concerns of the southern countries. They recognize the limits of the EuroMed but want to use it as an additional forum to raise their concerns. Moreover, they are not ready to take part in the confidence building approach suggested by their European partners. In the Arab view, taking part in the peripheral components of hard security issues could jeopardize their central security interests.

Europeans tend to put more focus on the soft security threats, which can be managed within the EuroMed framework. Some of these issues are straightforward security threats, such as drug trafficking, organized crime and illegal labour trafficking. Others are rather political issues, such as poverty, good governance, corruption and migration. However, Europeans fail to make a distinction between these issues. They tend to perceive them in holistic fashion, and offer a comprehensive package of political, economic and security instruments to address them. Southern Mediterranean countries, by contrast, classify soft security threats differently. They tend to conceive them as police matters. They also tend to see the political concerns as developmental in nature. One can therefore speak of three categories of security issues: hard security, soft security, and political issues. Cooperation between the Southern Mediterranean countries and their European counterparts is more likely to progress in the fields of soft security/police issues. Hard security issues are more amenable to being gently addressed through declaratory measures and dialogue. Political issues are the most difficult to handle. The Southern Mediterranean countries consider them sovereignty-related issues that should be guarded against interference by outsiders.

For obvious reasons, there is an implicit reluctance among the Southern Mediterranean countries to admit the domestic, south-originating nature of the security threats in the Mediterranean. They prefer to classify the threats of political instability, terrorism, migration and drug trafficking as developmental problems. Therefore, there is a tendency in the Southern Mediterranean to emphasize the importance of traditional hard security issues. Abdel Halim (1998) identifies two Egyptian security concerns in the Mediterranean: the presence of foreign naval powers and nuclear armament. The underlying aim of Egyptian security policy is preserving independence and limiting the foreign interference in Egyptian internal affairs (Abdel Halim, 1998, p. 21-22). Guarding against foreign influence is among the most important features of Egyptian political culture and its foreign policy aims. Among the approaches used to achieve this goal is the denial of the security dimensions of domestic southern problems. The obvious rationale behind this is to avoid providing a justification for foreign interference. Another example of the same approach is evident in the criticism of the guidelines for the Mediterranean security charter produced by the Euro-Mediterranean meeting in Stuttgart (Selim, 2000). Selim criticizes the guidelines for focusing on conflict prevention rather than conflict resolution; for granting Europe a role in Southern Mediterranean security without granting the Southern countries a role in European security; for emphasizing regime transformation in the south while ignoring interstate conflicts in the region; for focusing on confidence building measures without ending current conflicts that perpetuate the unjust *status quo*; and for failing to respect the culturally pluralistic nature of the Mediterranean by imposing Western definitions of human rights and democracy under the assumption of the universality of these values.

Such criticism is widely shared among the state elite,

nationalists and Islamic forces. Some of the criticism raised by these important groups is valid. Engaging with these views is a must if common Mediterranean security are to progress and especially important to counter the prevalent feeling that keeping radicals from power is high among the goals of the EMP (Chourou, 1998, p. 45). The gap between the attitudes prevalent among conservatives in the Southern Mediterranean and the attitudes prevalent in Europe obstructs the progress of the EMP in the field of security. Partnership implies the presence of common values and goals, which is not the case in the EuroMed. The divergence of values and goals is the major challenge facing the EMP. The dilemma of the EMP is that each side needs to win the cooperation of other sides but in different fields and to achieve different objectives. Skimming over the 'not-so-harmonious' needs and goals of the partners is a challenge the EMP must address.

Southern Mediterranean reformists view things differently. Some argue that the focus on conflict prevention should be enhanced (Al-Sa'aidi, 2001). They stick to the promise of Barcelona, including democracy, human rights and gender equality, but find progress difficult because of the poisoning effect of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Al-Yousefi, 2003). Reformists would rather try to limit the negative impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the EMP. The latter approach appears to be more reasonable. Settling for modest security cooperation in the Mediterranean looks unavoidable anyway. Under such conditions, Mediterranean security cooperation should aim for two goals: the elimination of suspicion and mistrust, and the promotion of a new security culture.

For security culture, two dimensions still need to be introduced to the Southern Mediterranean. Concepts of collective security, cooperative security and sufficient defence are new to the Southern Mediterranean. Although a significant number of officials, especially diplomats, and scholars are familiar with these concepts, they have not influenced security policies in a meaningful way. Raising awareness of such concepts and demonstrating their practical value and applicability could help to enhance security cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Discussing security in multilateral setting is also new to the Southern Mediterranean (Gillespie, 2002, p. 8). Creating more multilateral *fora* to serve this purpose could also be helpful. It is important to involve the relevant institutional structures involved in security in most Southern governmental organs.

Cultural dialogue and fighting terrorism are areas that lend themselves to security cooperation within the EMP. Southern officials have identified these on different occasions, including by Jordan's foreign minister in his speech at the mid-term conference of the foreign ministers of the Euro-Med Partnership, and by Ahmed Maher, Egypt's foreign minister, at the Mediterranean Forum Aghader meeting in October 2001. The value of cultural dialogue for Mediterranean security is significant. The cultural underpinnings of the differences between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean countries have not yet been addressed properly. Counter terrorism, on the other hand, readily lends itself to greater level of cooperation among the Mediterranean partners. Terrorism is no longer a soft security threat: it links soft and hard security risks. European and Southern Mediterranean countries feel equally the burden of terrorism. Cooperation could help to overcome the different approaches and attitudes toward security cooperation across the Mediterranean.

It might be helpful in that regard to capitalize on the presence of multiple forums for Mediterranean cooperation. In particular, the Mediterranean Forum could provide an additional venue for cooperation in certain areas where the EMP framework might not be appropriate. Fighting terrorism is among the issues where the Mediterranean Forum could prove instrumental. It has been noticed by Spain's foreign minister that Israel's absence from the Mediterranean Forum could better help member countries to improve cooperation in the fight against terrorism (Al-Shark Al-Awsat, 27 October 2001). Certain threats associated with illegal migration can be subject to cooperation as well. Coordinating efforts to counter human trafficking, consulting on European migration policies and considering the developmental needs of Southern Mediterranean countries could create a comprehensive package toward this purpose.

Conclusion

EMP results have not been impressive, particularly where security cooperation is concerned. The general belief in the Southern Mediterranean is that the Mediterranean is not seen as relevant enough to ensure that the real security issues of the region are addressed (Chourou, 2000). This belief helps to explain the lack of progress. The Mediterranean countries avoid making this point clearly so as not to alienate their European partners. Their willingness to accommodate the needs of their European partners should be appreciated, reciprocated and capitalized upon.

Settling for less ambitious plans is the way forward. Lowering partners' expectations should help avoid frustration and tension. A selective and partial approach could be more effective. This could be achieved through a careful selection of areas of cooperation. Illegal migration, organized crime and terrorism are good candidates. Adjusting the collective multilateral approach to the various security concerns of the Southern Mediterranean countries could also be helpful. In other words, compromising the comprehensiveness and indivisibility that characterized the original Mediterranean security concept seems inevitable. Over the long term, there may be better news for Mediterranean security. But this depends on developments that fall mostly beyond the mandate of the EMP.

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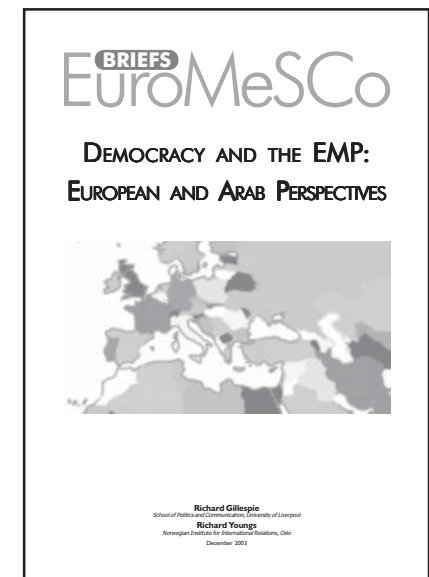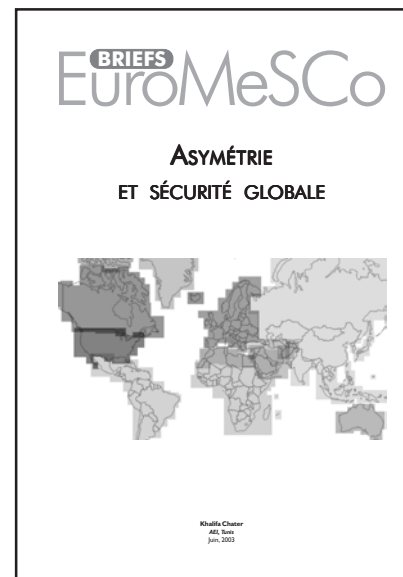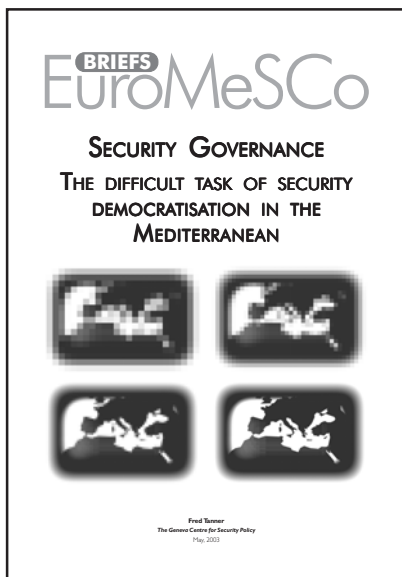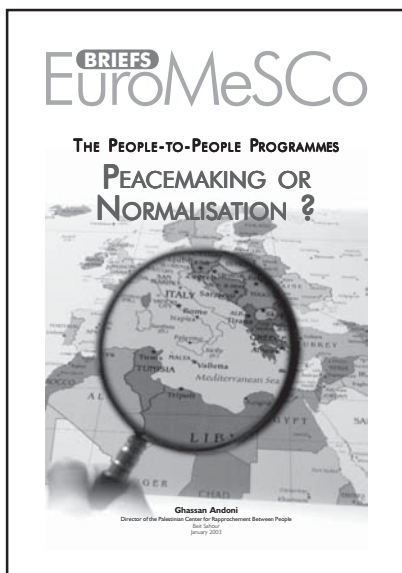
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