EuroMeSCo Annual Report 2006

Getting it Right: Lessons of the "Cartoons Crisis" and Beyond

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Largo de São Sebastião, 8 – Paço do Lumiar – 1600-762 Lisboa – Portugal
Telephone: +351 210 306 700 – Fax: +351 217 593 983
mednet@mail.telepac.pt – www.euromesco.net

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Getting it Right: Lessons of the "Cartoons Crisis" and Beyond

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Executive Summary

This report was prepared in response to a request by the European Commission. It analyses the role of inter-cultural initiatives in the process of building a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States, on the basis of an assessment of the so-called Danish "cartoons crisis" and the "clash of civilisations" debate. The Report focuses on the repercussions of the "cartoons row" in the Euro-Mediterranean area without taking reactions further afield into account.

Intolerance and Xenophobia: Major Challenges of Our Times

The cartoons crisis erupted against the background of a new strand of xenophobia which grew over the last decade in various European countries, which is based on the view that cultural and political identity is being threatened by immigrants and their descendants, particularly by Muslims. It also reflects the persistence of extremist groups with identity-based ideologies in some countries in the south, as well as the behaviour of some political leaders that are willing to adopt the similar positions in order to boost their reputations in the short-term. The "cartoons crisis" confirms that intolerance of difference has become a key element in populist politics in both the north and south of the Mediterranean. Islamophobia and anti-semitism are two aspects of contemporary ideologies which reflect intolerance, but they are far from being the only ones. *The future of Euro-Mediterranean relations and of the Community of Democratic States, and even of democracy and European integration depends largely on finding the right response to intolerance and cultural discrimination.*

A Political Crisis

The controversy in Europe and the southern Mediterranean over the caricatures of the prophet Muhammad became a crisis for essentially political reasons. In Denmark it was fed by the tension between the Muslim communities and the influential and xenophobic far right, and in the Middle East the incident must be seen in the context of the debate on political reform, the rise of political Islam and regional and international crises which have also had a strong impact on events in Syria and Lebanon. The crisis confirmed that negative perceptions of "Self" and "Other" have developed throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region and reflect accumulated tensions over the war in Iraq, the Palestinian question, terrorist acts in Europe and the unilateral actions of the Bush administration. Negative perceptions and religious prejudice were mobilised for short term political gain in the south and, to a certain extent, in the north as well. Whatever the causes, the political manipulation of such a sensitive topic only served to boost stereotypes and intolerance and gave the crisis the appearance of being cultural and religious in nature rather than what it

really was: a political issue. *In the current climate of tension in the region, we have to expect that crises such as the cartoons issue will tend to erupt repeatedly in the future. Any effective response to them in the medium-to-long-term will necessarily involve finding answers to the basic problems of the South Mediterranean region, problems which now also dominate the global political scene.*

Refuting the Civilisational Paradigm

One of the outcomes that this Report confirms is the growing popularity of culturalist theories of politics such as Huntington's "clash of civilisations" thesis and the development of pro-identity politics in the north and south. Huntington uses the term "civilisation" in its widest definition, which includes the spiritual dimension of culture, as well as technical development. The author then reduces the concept, as many others also do, to the notion of tradition, as a fossilised vision of current realities, without taking past and future perspectives into account. The concept of the "clash of civilisations" has been mobilised to explain reactions in both the north and the south to the cartoons. In consequence it has so obscured the political and social realities underlying the crisis until they have become virtually imperceptible. This approach conflates complex causes into a misleading and dangerous perception of an immense and radical revolt against the "West" and involving a whole "civilisation." Such explanations couched in civilisational terms only serve to feed xenophobia and stereotyping by associating whole regions and societies or entire religions with specific attitudes, and to thereby polarise relations in the Mediterranean by identifying "civilisations" as political actors, whether through negative or positive terms of confrontation or dialogue respectively The focus, instead, should be on political and social realities and not on civilisations. *The enormous mutual ignorance of political realities, the "knowledge gap", has enabled each side to make gross generalisations about the other in terms of stereotypical images of two putatively monolithic and opposed worlds. Real political and social political problems underlie existing crises, not civilisations.*

The Notion of a "Shared Fate" and the Future of the EMP

During the crisis, most political leaders, representatives of migrant communities and civil society actors opted for political debate and peaceful demonstrations. Indeed, the majority expressed a desire to avoid further divisions between Muslim communities and non-Muslims in the European Union, and to avoid aggravating negative perceptions of "the other" among northern and southern citizens, or to politically manipulate religious sentiment. The same attitude of prudence was apparent among most Islamist groups in the south, which suggests that there is broad agreement that a "shared fate" and shared interests for Europe and the countries of the Southern Mediterranean is still a possibility in the future. The crisis also highlighted the development of civil societies in the southern Mediterranean

that transcend the traditional nationalist agenda, operating instead on political and social issues. This, in turn, generates more common ground with European civil societies. *Paradoxically, the cartoons crisis has shown that there is a political basis for EMP goals, provided that the initiative includes a plurality of actors, not just governments, but also the complete range of political parties (including Islamist parties) and civil society groups.*

The EMP: Inclusion within Diversity

As the cartoons crisis has shown, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) can act as an adequate framework for handling crises of this nature. They are a challenge to the essence of the EMP itself, for it is a unique partnership that aims to build a democratic community based on an intensely variegated reality in terms of culture and religion. It is a community based on the principle of inclusion within diversity – inclusion because all citizens should enjoy the same rights, including the right to cultural diversity in the context of the principle of hospitality, because there must be a firm commitment to face serious economic and social problems, because immigrants and their communities must be seen as fundamental actors in inter-regional relations, and because all citizens and political currents within civil society should enjoy the same freedoms. *The success of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership today depends not only on the capacity of the countries of the south to democratise, but on that of European states to accept the internal diversity and the cultural transformations that such a change implies, and to address migration in accordance with the values of the Union.*

Getting it Right: "Differentiation", Clarity of Goals and Targeted Initiatives

The report strongly argues that current realities must be rigorously interpreted, and the host of political and social factors that feed conflicts analysed on a case-by-case basis so that the appropriate responses can be found. The cartoons crisis has shown that diplomatic initiatives should be seriously considered before issues are allowed to reach crisis proportions. In considering the best imitative to address any given issue, it is crucial on the other hand that the EMP clearly sets forth the goals it seeks to achieve. This requires the perils of stereotypes and conventional wisdom be consistently averted, and in this regard the report points out that:

- Freedom does not come from cultural or civilisational dialogue, but from the politics of reform and democratisation.
- Cultural diversity is not the same as normative relativism, and human rights are, indeed, the rights of the whole of humankind.
- Not all conflicts are security problems, a view that has become all too common in the age of the "war on terror".

- Not all Muslims are Islamists, not all Islamists are Radicals, and not all Radicals are Terrorists. Stereotypes are misleading caricatures of reality and must be avoided.
- Freedom of expression is a key instrument in the fight against intolerance; there is a world of difference, however, between freedom of speech and hate speech.

Policy Recommendations for "Inclusion within Diversity"

The Report recommends that the EMP undertakes concrete initiatives that firmly set in place the protection of diversity as a fundamental right and a fundamental pillar of the process of Euro-Mediterranean integration. A common agenda on human rights should be a top ministerial priority from 2007 onwards. In this light, the four EMP initiatives recommended in the Report can be summarised as follows:

- An EMP Initiative against Intolerance and Xenophobia, involving the establishment of a EuroMed Council against Discrimination and Racism, as well as a EuroMed Racism and Intolerance Observatory.
- An EMP Charter of Migrants' Rights, concentrating on equality through political participation.
- A common initiative to overcome the knowledge gap; addressing this issue would justify convening a Euro-Mediterranean Convention on the Knowledge-Based Society.
- A concerted effort to promote artistic pluralism and intellectual freedom across the Euro-Mediterranean area, through cultural exchanges that make known the best the arts and literature have to offer, reorienting the mandate of the Anna Lindh Foundation along these lines.

Getting it right – working towards the EMP motto of inclusion within diversity – ultimately requires that the bias of cultural relativism or culturalism be as resolutely abandoned as Huntington's civilisational paradigm. In working towards the Partnership's goals, the ultimate objective of a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States should always be kept in sight. Diversity is a valuable asset, not a liability in striving towards this goal. The EMP must ideally be able to pre-empt, and at least to respond adequately and timely to the kinds of tensions and crisis such as the one analysed in this report which can be expected to arise in the future.

I. Introduction

The aim of this Report is to contribute towards policies designed to combat intolerance and cultural and religious discrimination. It also seeks to deconstruct the theory of the "clash of civilisations" – which some have called the "clash of ignorance" – for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership must reject the bipolar logic of "West vs. Islam". Its project is to promote political and social "inclusion" based on human rights, democratisation and cultural diversity within a context of shared economic prosperity. The Report focuses on the repercussions of the "cartoons crisis" in the Euro-Mediterranean area and does not take reactions in the Gulf region, Africa or Asia into account, though they were particularly violent in Afghanistan, Kenya, Somalia, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

Negative Perceptions

The publication of the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed by the daily Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* of Copenhagen on September 30, 2005, and its republication on January 10 by Norwegian *Magazinet* generated intense and broad debate throughout the Euro-Mediterranean area between those defending freedom of speech (and the separation of state and religion), and those emphasising the need for respect for religion and culture. Most notably, however, the crisis confirmed the existence of negative perceptions of the "Self" and the "Other". Over the last few years, particularly since September 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq in 2003, mutual negative perceptions have developed throughout the Euro-Mediterranean area. One effect that is visible on both sides of the Mediterranean has been the growing tendency to conflate the attitudes of the general population with those of marginal xenophobic or radical groups that preach intolerance. Given these negative perceptions and the widespread tendency to simplify complex realities in both official and popular analyses, it has been difficult to forge a true understanding of how rights and cultural diversity can be guaranteed. Yet these problems could be particularly addressed in a meaningful and constructive way by Euro-Mediterranean institutions.

The "Clash of Civilisations"

The crisis also confirmed the continuing popularity of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilisations" theory, which posits an ongoing existential conflict driven not by politics or economics but by cultural and civilisational differences, the primary manifestation of which is the confrontation between the West and Islam. This view became particularly popular after September 11, 2001, and has been accompanied by the argument that Islam and democracy are incompatible because democracy is the product of a certain culture defined in religious and ethnic terms, is not compatible with the political values of the Islamic world and is further threatened by immigrants from that part of the world. In Europe, the Huntington thesis has been particularly popular within the New Right, and has indirectly influenced debates about "European" values

and the identity of the European Union (EU). Thus, because of the way in which the thesis has been applied to the issue of democracy in some EU countries, the debate has focused on the political and cultural adaptability of immigrants from other cultures – namely North Africa – on their ability to integrate and adjust to European democratic values, and on the effects on the national identities of those countries. This restrictive concept of national identity is the ideological platform of the new xenophobia.

Deconstructing "Civilisational Dialogue"

Unfortunately, the Huntingtonian thesis has become the theoretical basis – as well as often being seen as a common sense approach informing political and cultural projects designed to promote "dialogue" between peoples. Although such projects are undertaken with the best of intentions, they perpetuate the erroneous notion that the world is divided into homogeneous and discrete civilisational blocs, that the people within each bloc have more in common with one another than they do with people from another civilisational bloc and that international politics in the post-Cold War era is about minimising conflicts between essentially antagonistic civilisations. Such projects cannot hope to succeed in bringing people closer together if their starting point is that the people in dialogue are coming from different international positions defined in civilisational terms not least because this does not reflect reality. Instead it internalises the fundamental premises of the Huntington argument even as it tries to confront it. The consequence is that its prescriptions are essentially irrelevant to resolve the problem it addresses.

The Euro-Med Challenge: Focusing on Democracy and Human Rights

The aim of this report is to deconstruct this culturalist view and propose new policies to deal with what has rightly been called the "clash of ignorance" that feeds xenophobia and intolerance. Further, it argues that the basis for better relations between peoples of all kinds is the spread of democracy. Not "democracy promotion" as posited by the Bush administration – which is more about imposition of American power than truly about giving people choice and freedom – but supporting a truly endogenous process of democratisation, one which allows people everywhere to freely choose their governments and to live under the rule of law and within a context of respect for the human rights which have already been recognised and accepted as universal by all states within the United Nations system. This basic need and reality – the need for a system of government that allows the majority to peacefully choose and rotate political leadership and which allows people to live under non-arbitrary and predictable rules (the rule of law), and the reality that all UN states long ago accepted that the premise for participation in the world community of states was to approve and abide by the basic principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the two main international rights covenants – is the core that unites all states and peoples. This is the core that must be strengthened; it must not be replaced by some "war" between "civilisations" putatively diametrically opposed.

II. Political Interpretations of the Cartoons Crisis

Responses to the "cartoons" were very varied and complex but the crisis has been portrayed in a highly simplistic culturalist light, as an example of a conflict between a secular rights-defending Europe, and a "backward" Muslim "culture". However, to understand the various reactions to the cartoons one needs to understand how concepts of culture were used in each context, what were the national backgrounds of discriminatory immigrant policies which were linked to the rise of xenophobia in various EU states, and the nature of the resistance of some southern states to political reform and human rights, which led them to exploit the crisis politically.

Reactions to the cartoons differed from country to country, reflecting local tensions, and the attitudes of government and legal and illegal opposition groups. A country-by-country topology of the crisis can be drawn up on the basis of the positions adopted by governments and the most influential political and social groups in each of the countries concerned. We have decided here to group countries together which had similar reactions (although differences among them are also noted). Another way to examine the crisis is to look at the reactions of different political currents and their tendency to politically manipulate – or not – the issue of religion. An analysis of Islamist movements is a case in point. The attitude of immigrant communities in Europe is especially important. The reaction of migrant communities in the EU reflected the degree of their integration in their host countries, the extent to which they consider that their rights are protected, whether or not they see themselves as victims of discrimination and xenophobia, and the role they play in the societies they inhabit and in their countries-of-origin. On the other hand, the north and south are also divided by ignorance and mutual negative perceptions. It is also for this reason that there is a need to look at negative perceptions on both sides of the Mediterranean, and how feelings of mistrust combined with a lack of knowledge of the culture and religions of others have contributed to creating tense relations between North and South, both during the "cartoons crisis" and in general.

Major Reactions: A Country Analysis

The analysis below shows that the existence of significant migrant communities and host community attitudes towards them – the degree to which xenophobia is present – is a key determinant of attitudes in Europe. Very broadly, this analysis shows that there are three groups of countries in the EU: those with significant migrant communities in which far right xenophobia is also significant, such as Holland and Denmark; those with even greater migrant communities but where there are no links between government and the far right, such as France, Britain, Spain and Germany; and those with no significant communities of North African origin such as Portugal. Non-EU states, such as Turkey and the countries of the southern

Mediterranean, are differentiated by their degree of proximity and interaction with domestic European politics as a result of the presence of migrant communities in Europe. These countries can be divided into two broad categories: the countries of the Maghreb and Turkey, which have complex relations with Europe; and the Arab countries of the Middle East, with less intense ties with Europe (with the exception of Lebanon). The Israeli government stood aside during the crisis, since it did not feel that it was directly involved, while the media recalled that Jews are regularly depicted in the context of anti-Semitic cartoons in the Arab press. Other elements that differentiate these countries and explain the positions they adopted, are the nature of political actors and of civil society, the regional context, an issue which was particularly relevant in the Middle East, and the relative significance of political Islamism or secularism – which was particularly important in the French debate. In light of the above, countries can be divided into the following four general categories according to reactions to the cartoons crisis.

Increasing anti-immigrant agitation by right-wing parties since the 1980s has contributed to generate a climate of intolerance towards immigrants in several European countries and to the reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudice towards Muslims.

Intolerance, the New Xenophobia and Anti-Immigrant Policies

The first set of reactions was marked by powerful new xenophobic and anti-immigrant currents. Although these exist in all countries, it was particularly pronounced in those where the far right has a direct or indirect influence on government policy. There are also political currents that cannot be classified as of the traditional "far right" but which undertook a "crusade" against political Islamism as the "new enemy".

Increasing anti-immigrant agitation by right-wing parties since the 1980s has contributed to generate a climate of intolerance towards immigrants in several European countries and to the reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudice towards Muslims. The crisis can be explained by the power of the populist and anti-immigration Danish People's Party, which backs the government in Parliament and has influence on policies towards second generation immigrants (the so-called "new Danes"), particularly on integration policy, and has played a key role in disseminating the notion of Denmark as a culturally and religiously unified nation-state. In this context, anti-immigration political programmes have gained increasing backing, and been popularised through inter-party competition. These discriminatory policies in what is a traditionally tolerant country generated powerful tensions between the far right and the representatives of mostly Muslim communities, which reacted against the caricatures and the absence of any reaction by the Danish government. The Danish government supported the publication of the caricatures in the name of free speech and the deep roots of freedom of the press in Denmark. But of the twelve caricatures that were published, at least two were clearly xenophobic as they implied that Muslims are terrorists and thus contributed to the propagation of the stereotype of the violent Muslim, a key element of Islamophobia.

The crisis confirmed the mistrust of Islam or the view that there is an all-out war against "Christianity and the West" among some political movements that were

already inclined that way. For anti-Islamist and anti-immigration sectors the crisis proved the view, widespread in Europe, that Islam and democracy are incompatible and that Muslims pose a threat to the political and cultural identity of host countries, that Islamism is a threat to freedom of expression and that it is necessary to "defend the values and freedoms of the western world".

Similarly, in Italy xenophobic discourse has been popularised by the right-wing Northern League. In its view, the reaction to the cartoons confirmed the view that Islam is engaged in an all-out war against Christianity and the "West". The right argued for limits on migration, failed to distinguish between moderate and radical Islamists, conflated Islam and terrorism, and obviously accepted the notion of a "clash" between Islam and Christianity. Xenophobia was also a factor in the Netherlands, where the first political movement that considered Islam and Islamic migrants as a threat to Dutch and "European civilisation" was established (and its leader Pym Fortuyn was murdered, as was film-maker Theo van Gogh for involvement in a television programme held to mock Islam).

However, and as in Denmark, the crisis in the Netherlands was also fed by those who believe that tolerance is an active value that must be imposed on society, even on those who appear to resist it (one example is the new citizenship test in Holland, which deliberately tests the ability of would-be citizens to cope with the consequences of Dutch toleration of a wide gamut of social behaviours, many of which are difficult for conservatives to accept). Such a commitment to "tolerance" eventually becomes a form of intolerance since it automatically excludes any objective consideration of the objections raised by minority communities. What is particularly dangerous about this new xenophobia, one based on a defence of the cultural identity of a particular society, including its political values, is that unlike past forms of xenophobia, it finds support in democratic parties.

Secularism, Freedom of Expression and Diversity

The European countries with large immigrant communities in which xenophobic movements have no significant influence on government policy during the crises such as France, Spain, Germany, Belgium and Britain, adopted a prudent stance and affirmed the importance of diversity and freedom of speech (although this does not mean that the far right did not enjoy some success in focusing on immigration from a negative and security-related perspective). Some governments were quick to respond to the publication of the cartoons with statements to the effect that interference with press freedoms was not permissible (although some also resorted to appeasing statements that mitigated such a principled stance, mainly to assuage the feelings of Muslim communities). Other governments argued that action should be taken against those responsible, suggesting that blasphemy laws should exist to protect Islam and other religions against such offences, or that an international convention limiting criticism of religions should be adopted.

In France, with its distinctive, deeply rooted tradition of secularism and where there is a large Muslim migrant community, the debate focused on freedom of the press, secularism and blasphemy, and on the need to deepen knowledge of Islam in Europe. Radical secularist sectors mobilised against the threat posed by religious fundamentalism to what in France is called the republican conception of society. During the Islamic headscarf debate radical secularists had already attacked the perceived fundamentalism of sectors of the Muslim community. Similar arguments were reiterated during the "cartoons crisis", with some expressing concern with anti-cartoon demonstrations as hostile to free speech. This is largely why many French papers republished the cartoons.

The government and the main political forces reacted very cautiously, not wanting to antagonise the immigrant community because of the *banlieue* crisis and a growing perception of the fragmentation of French society, although they did uphold the view of France as a secular state defending freedom of expression. The government reaction also reflected the desire to ensure that France was not seen as an enemy by states with a Muslim majority in the Mediterranean or the Middle East. The cautious reaction of the government and main parties was criticised by the media and more radical secular movements in particular. Similarly, in Italy the government tried to avoid increased tensions with radical members of Muslim communities. Mainstream politicians emphasised freedom of speech, the integration of immigrants, the distinction between moderate and radical Islamists, and cooperation with the Middle East.

In Britain freedom of speech was a major issue for the left and right and in the media, as during the Rushdie affair. It was ably supported by the press in Britain, which argued that the homogeneity of British society (an illusion that is crucial to the self-image of the right) and its fundamental value of tolerance were being threatened by a supposed "wave" of illegal immigration. The result was that freedom of speech became a dominant theme within the British Muslim community, which was either forced to confirm its commitment to such values or, through its extremist elements, to confirm the accusations levelled at it. The demonstrations in major cities, particularly in London, expressed the internal struggle within the Muslim communities between a commitment to and a rejection of the values of the host society. The underlying issues of cultural respect and tolerance, and the alienation felt by the Muslim communities before the crisis were thus not addressed.

In Germany, the Christian-Democrats focused more on freedom of religion and the right of religious people not to be slandered or discriminated, whereas the more secular parties focused overwhelmingly on freedom of speech, the press, and pluralism. However, because the government is a Christian Democratic and Social Democratic coalition, both parties had similar positions, advocating "inter-cultural" dialogue and respect for the beliefs of others in a context of secularism and democracy. There was some low-level violence in Kiel, in the north close to the Danish border, but it is not clear to what extent the cartoons, as opposed to local conditions, was the

cause of violence. In fact, and as in Spain, polls show that more than 60 percent of people disliked the caricatures for discrediting religion. Liberals and leftists were critical of government prudence and the fact that the caricatures were not reprinted in Germany was seen as a blow to freedom of speech. Overwhelmingly, the mainstream media rejected the "clash of civilisations" thesis, and links were established between reactions in the Middle East and the Palestinian crisis, the war in Iraq, and the "war on terror". Muslim organisations were reticent in their responses. The Spanish debate was similar to that in Germany. The government sought to limit tensions and halt the political manipulation of the cartoons by anti-Islamic sectors. The Spanish government also sought to have an international impact, with the public letter from the President of the Government and the Turkish Prime Minister.

In the countries without a large Muslim community, the dominant debate was on freedom of speech and its limits, not just in the context of relations between "European values" and "Islam" but more generally. In fact, the tendency was to avoid the issue in most European countries. The EU was criticised for being too slow to react, although the statements it issued were considered to be adequate by Christian and Muslim organisations alike.

The Call for Dialogue

"Anti-Islamism should be treated as a crime against humanity like anti-Semitism."

A third set of countries, including Turkey and the Maghreb countries with large immigrant communities in European countries, focused on the issues of intolerance, Islamophobia, and anti-immigration policies, and also tried to assuage tensions or curb the crisis, calling for mutual understanding.

In his speech as co-sponsor of the Alliance of Civilisations Initiative at the European Council in Strasbourg, the Turkish Prime Minister stated that "anti-Islamism should be treated as a crime against humanity like anti-Semitism." The government was highly critical of the cartoons, not only because of the sensibilities of the predominantly Muslim Turkish population, but more importantly, because of the sensitivities of the governing party Adalet ve Kakinma Partisi (AKP) and its core constituency. The AKP upholds the "civilisational" paradigm (backing peaceful coexistence) and the crisis reinforced this worldview and what it sees as the growing "anti-Islamism" of "the West". The government called the cartoons a "Western provocation". The Islamist media in particular, be it moderate or radical, followed the civilisational paradigm, seeing the caricatures as a manifestation of a long tradition of western "Orientalism". They were also very critical of how Islam is equated with terrorism in Europe. The crisis was linked with the situation in Palestine, Iraq and in Afghanistan, with the argument that western countries continue to dominate and humiliate the "Islamic world" as they have done since the nineteenth century.

In Morocco the reaction to the crisis was also shaped by the presence of a large migrant community throughout Europe. The government, political parties and

religious authorities criticised the depiction of Mohammed but tried to appease the population and prevent violent reactions that might upset a delicate domestic balance. There was also a call for dialogue in various countries of the Maghreb. The Council of Imams in Morocco, for instance, considered the publication of the caricatures an "obstacle to fulfilling noble aims related with the consolidation of the rapprochement of humanity and building the pillars of peace that should reign among peoples." There was a very similar reaction in Algeria: the government was intent on downplaying the issue and the press adopted a relatively neutral line. The cartoons were criticised as an example of European xenophobia toward Islam, of course, but there was no heated debate.

Manipulating Religion and Strategic Issues

In a fourth group of countries – most of the Arab countries of the Mashrek with small immigrant communities in Europe – reactions were conditioned by regional and international strategic considerations, specifically the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Iraq war, the retreat of Syria from the Lebanon, the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections, the pressures of a political reform agenda, and the global "war on terror."

Egypt played a major role during the "cartoons crisis". After Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen refused to meet the ambassadors of eleven Muslim countries in Copenhagen, Egyptian diplomats mobilised intensely to denounce the offence against the Prophet and the attack on Islam. The Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Abou Al Ghait, sent a series of official letters to a considerable number of representatives of regional and international organisations in advance of the meeting of the Islamic Conference on 7-8 December at Mecca and the extraordinary meeting of the Arab League Ministers of Foreign Affairs at Cairo on 29 December. The *Al Ahram* newspaper followed this diplomatic onslaught by publishing interviews with Egyptian diplomats and articles and editorials expressing strong indignation with the offence against the Prophet and the position adopted by the Danish Prime Minister.

The real crisis, however, developed after the Islamist show-of-force in the Egyptian general elections in November and December 2005 and as the full impact of the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in January 2006 became clear. Officials, therefore, concentrated on counteracting the growing force of Islamist political movements in Egyptian political life. The attitude of the Egyptian government was similar to that adopted by various other Arab governments that face increased domestic opposition from Islamist groups, and respond by resorting to a civilisational discourse in their political and diplomatic relations. This explains the strong rhetoric adopted by official religious institutions. In Egypt, for instance, Al-Azhar, the leading official religious institution, took a very strong stance during the cartoon crisis. In what was an unusual move, the grand

Imam of Al-Azhar appeared at a march at the campus of Al-Azhar University, along with thousands of students and professors, to protest the cartoons. Al-Azhar and a number of Islamic organisations, called for a boycott of Danish products. Al'Azhar decreed that the boycott was "an obligation for the nation of Islam."

It is also no accident that this occurred just when the EU had begun to show some openness towards moderate Islamists, and begun to support human rights and political reform more assertively. Faced with pressure for domestic and international demands for political reforms and respect for fundamental rights, some governments opted to adopt a position of moral superiority towards European governments. Governments were thus also able to send out the message that the choice available was either their relative moderation, or the extremism of popular sentiment influenced by Islamist groups. In Palestine, the attacks on the offices of the European Commission in Gaza in February were undertaken, not by Hamas but by the Yasser Brigades – a radical group linked to El Fatah, which had lost the elections and therefore blamed the European Union for having called for them in the first place – and by the al-Quds Brigade, an armed faction of Islamic Jihad.

The political manipulation of wounded religious feelings was not just an issue in the Mashrek but also – albeit on a lesser scale – in the Maghreb. The attacks on the newspapers defending secularism and which dealt with the cartoons crisis from a freedom of speech perspective provide evidence of this. The example of the demonstration in front of the building housing the *Journal Hebdomadaire* for supposedly republishing the cartoons is a good illustration of this.

In Syria and the Lebanon, the international context was crucial in explaining the violence at the Norwegian and Danish embassies in Damascus and Beirut. Syria was under severe international pressures because of the UN Security Council Resolution 1559 of September 2004 (demanding the Syrian retreat from the Lebanon and an international enquiry into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri). In this context, the attacks on the embassies were not a spontaneous revolt by "the Muslim masses" as many argued, but rather a clear show of the "nuisance" capacity of those that feel they have been victimised by what they regard as such unacceptable international pressures.

Whatever the causes of the violence, the political manipulation of such a sensitive topic for short term political gain served to boost stereotypes and intolerance, giving the crisis the appearance of being a cultural and religious concern, rather than what it really was: a political issue.

The Rise of New Actors

An analysis of the crisis shows that various different actors played a role in its evolution. First, governments had a critical role. Second, there were various new

actors that emerged in the region as central players and their positions have to be taken into account. Although some of these have a national basis, their attitudes and positions were convergent during the crisis. This is certainly the case of the Islamist parties that are seeking to enter the political arena, and of extremist minority currents. Communities of migrant origin have also played an increasingly important role in Euro-Mediterranean relations. Below is a summary analysis of the role played by some of these actors, particularly those with the most influence on this crisis and which may have preponderant weight in future incidents of this kind.

The Islamists: The Search for Recognition

A comparison between the statements by Islamist groups and religious authorities in various countries shows that the attitude of the former was certainly not more radical than that of the latter. The Islamists in Morocco, Egypt and Palestine, for instance, generally managed the crisis very prudently, thus attracting a lot of support. In Egypt and Palestine, boosted by recent electoral success, the focus was on cultivating the image as responsible political forces. The Moroccan Justice and Development Party distanced itself both from the "extremism" of some Europeans and from the extremism of Islamist groups. The Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo, Hamas in Palestine, Islamist currents in Rabat and groups of a religious Islamic nature such as Jamaa Islamiya, Hezbollah or Islamic Jihad in the Lebanon organised huge but peaceful demonstrations.

The political manipulation of such a sensitive topic for short-term political gain served to boost stereotypes and intolerance, giving the crisis the appearance of being a cultural and religious concern.

In fact, the prudence of the "Islamists" in general is a result of their entry into the legal political sphere (with the electoral victory of Hamas in Palestine, and the strong showing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, for instance), and their fear of the exploitation of the issue by the state or the media that might serve as a pretext to isolate them. Their delayed and somewhat laconic responses, which mainly emerged only after the end of January 2006, focused essentially on the "insult" to the Prophet, with appeals to boycott Danish and Norwegian products. Their indignation was directed almost exclusively at this "insult," and therefore centred on a defence of "Islamic culture." The demonstrations organised by the Islamist groups were peaceful and contributed not only to highlighting the importance of religious issues but also to showing the moderate nature of the organising groups and their willingness to participate in politics within the limits imposed by the constitution.

Hamas denounced the "caricatures that were insulting to the Prophet Mohammed of Islam" the Secretary General of Hezbollah railed against the "offence committed against the Prophet." The Muslim Brotherhood expressed their indignation over "the ridiculing of the symbol of the umma," and the Secretary General of the PJD referred to "the offence against the Prophet. The slogans at the demonstrations focused essentially on the insult against the person of the Prophet. The appeal for a boycott by Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood also included a demand addressed

to Muslims and/or the Arab states to take a strong stand. The Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Mohammed Mahdi Akef, called on Muslims worldwide to boycott Norwegian and Danish products in January, and to adopt firm measures against states that had demonstrated a lack of respect (*istihzaa*) toward the Islamic and Arab umma. However, unlike in other situations, they did not mobilise to organise that boycott. Many groups criticised governments for being too "soft" with European governments, but most Islamist groups criticised the Danish and Norwegian states specifically and not the "West" or Europe.

Extremist Identity-Based Currents

There was also an intolerant extremist minority in the north and south. Some espoused a religious anti-Christianity, arguing that there was an innate clash between Christianity and Islam which had been revealed by the crisis. Some portrayed the publication of the caricatures as a "crusade against Islam", in which the "we" (Muslim believers) were pitted against the "Other" (Western sinners and evildoers). The West was portrayed as a homogenous entity that threatens Islam, its identity, values and sacred symbols. Some even argued that the "cartoons crisis" was part of the "American-Zionist conspiracy", an attack on Hamas by Europe, the US and Israel, or even fabricated to justify intervening in Iran and/or to promote the idea of a "clash of civilisations". Some extremist sectors reacted with anti-Semitism to the publication of the cartoons. This was the attitude of the Iranian newspaper Hamshahri – which is published by Teheran's conservative municipality close to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The paper held a competition to produce cartoons about the Holocaust, announcing it as a response to the publication of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet. With his support for revisionist historians of the Holocaust the President of Iran has been feeding anti-Semitism in Iran and using it to gain support in the Arab world in name of the opposition to Israeli policy in Palestine and the Lebanon. In reality, anti-Semitism is a component of identity-based extremism, rather like Islamophobia but far more focussed on the political outcomes. It should be noted that his views are challenged in Iran but they have an unimpeachable antecedent in that the call for the removal of Israel from the political map was first enunciated by Ayatollah Khomeini – although he never questioned the reality of the Holocaust.

In addition to traditional religious sectors and the Islamist political parties, there is an extremist "identity-based" current that preaches intolerance against the "Christian West", which uses the internet to spread its message of hate, and which makes use of a "civilisational" discourse. It is the mirror-image of the "clash of civilisations" thesis and thrives on evidence that bolsters its views. Because of its use of the internet, it is extremely effective at getting its message across and speaks directly to extremist Muslim movements in Europe, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir or Al-Mouhajjiroun in Britain. For this broad and amorphous movement, which essentially exists in

contemporary virtual reality, incidents such as the "cartoons crisis" are grist to the mill that merely confirm what it had always argued. This movement should not be confused with official Islam or Islamist political parties, which it rejects as impious and apostate. Indeed, one of the problems in Europe is precisely that there is no dialogue between these different groups so that proposals that moderates should engage extremists merely miss the point – no dialogue between them is possible because the extremists simply reject the moderates as partners for dialogue.

European Religious Authorities

One interesting aspect of the cartoon controversy is that while some Muslims perceived the cartoons as an insult by the "Christian West", it was mostly secularists and not practising Christians who defended the cartoons. Indeed, many Christian authorities and laypeople criticised the cartoons and empathised with Muslims about the need for respect for sacred symbols. Religious leaders, particularly conservative Catholic sectors, felt uncomfortable exploiting anti-immigration feelings caused by the crisis. The Vatican said that the publication was as "deplorable" as the "violent protest actions", and suggested that European countries act against any newspapers that published the cartoons. As stated by the Vatican spokesperson: "freedom of thought and expression, confirmed in the Declaration of Human Rights, cannot include the right to offend the religious feelings of the faithful, a principle that applies to any religion." Authorities representing other confessions also criticised the cartoons for offending the Muslim faith. The churches were particularly anxious to avoid casting "religion" as the culprit.

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As the comments above indicate, it is crucial to differentiate between the "Christian" and "post-Christian" "West". One way to highlight the difference between one and the other is to look at the difference between Western Europe and the US. The US government criticised the cartoons and the US media refrained from republishing them. A second key point is that the existence of a clear sentiment of inter-faith solidarity challenges the "clash of civilisations" theory and its "Islam versus the West" dichotomy. The solidarity between practising Christians and Muslims shows that, for many, the cleavage was not between religions but between the "religious" and the "non-religious". This is the route to rapprochement between the various religions envisaged by Pope Benedict XVI, which reflects a "dialogue of civilisations" perspective. The Pope stated at a conference in April 2005 "the true contrariety which characterizes the world today is not that between diverse religious cultures, but that between the radical emancipation of man from God on the one hand, and the great religious cultures on the other."

The Migrant Community in Europe: A Moderating Role

Muslim communities and their representatives were part of the mainstream tendency to calm tensions and avoid radicalism. The general attitude was to condemn the lack

of respect shown towards Islam but also to reject a radical "clash of civilisations" view and to condemn all acts of violence committed in the wake of the crisis (in part a product of lessons learned from past crises). In Britain the Rushdie affair shaped reactions to the cartoons. Outspoken Muslim protest and demonstrations resulted in defence of freedom of speech and subsequent anxieties about the threat of immigration to "British" values. As a result, official Muslim organisations tend to be very careful about how they articulate their concerns. While the cartoons were condemned as an insult to Muslim values and sentiments, moderate Muslims were also desperate to calm community feelings in order to avoid a major clash. Muslim communities in other European countries reacted similarly, so that the crisis did not have a major or long term impact for the majority of Muslims.

There is a radical minority, clearly. In Britain, for instance, extremist groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir and al-Mouhajjiroune capitalised youth alienation and organised major demonstrations, along with the far left, which highlighted alienation and "Western corruption." Extremists also used the "cartoons crisis" to reawaken the fears caused by the terrorist attack in London in July 2005. However, the vast majority of Muslim community organisations sought to contain the crisis and enter into a dialogue with governments. In Denmark, Danish Muslims did not feel at all represented by the more radical "media-Imams," especially after the destruction of the Danish embassies in Syria and Lebanon (indeed, according to a poll of May 2006, 63 percent of Muslim migrants did not feel represented by any such figures). Indeed, the crisis led to the foundation of a new party, Democratic Muslims, in March 2006, which seeks to bring together secularised cultural Muslims who do not feel represented by conservative imams and who believe that democracy, Islam and Danish identity are compatible, that politics and religion should be separate and that being a cultural Muslim is just the same as being a cultural Christian. In other European countries, politicians who belong to the Muslim community acted as mediators in the political arena, channelling fears of intolerance and xenophobia within Muslim communities. By doing so, they emphasised the need for pluralistic politics and freedom of speech as the right way to handle such crises.

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Journalists and Free Speech

The cartoons crisis revealed the importance of the role that the media play in modern societies and also highlighted that when it comes to issues like free speech journalists are actors in their own right. Generally speaking, European journalists mobilised in support of their Danish colleagues, particularly after talk of death threats against two caricaturists. In the south, various journalists reacted against the publication of the cartoons because they felt it offended religious feelings and that the publication was part of a campaign against stereotyped Muslims; some also took the opportunity to emphasise the need for freedom of the press in the south.

There were governments that were quick to respond to the publication of the cartoons with statements to the effect that interference with press freedoms was not permissible (although some also resorted to appeasing statements that mitigated such a principled stance, mainly to assuage the feelings of Muslim communities). Other governments argued that action should be taken against those responsible, suggesting that blasphemy laws should exist to protect Islam and other religions against such offences, or that an international convention limiting criticism of religions should be adopted. This reasoning favours imposing legal limits on press freedom in the name of the higher value of religion.

For human rights groups, such as Human Rights Watch, the crisis presented an opportunity to reiterate the principle of freedom of the press. While it rejected "the disrespectful and prejudiced attitudes reflected in the cartoons", HRW stated that "governments are not entitled to suppress speech simply because it is offensive or disrespectful of religion", and that "objectionable speech is best met with contrary speech, not censorship." The issue of the role of the media is a crucial one in democratic debate. The media, in particular the television stations which are motivated by profit, tend to contribute to a simplistic vision of reality. This is what happened during the "cartoons crisis", with images of violence dominating the news, replacing more rigorous reporting on the events that showed the full gamut and diversity of responses to the cartoons.

At the same time, the issue did lead to a debate about press freedoms in the north but also in southern countries. In Morocco, magazines such as *Le Journal* and *Tel Quel* questioned the limits on publishing cartoons on religion, and called for freedom of the press, even when blasphemy is at stake. The reaction in Algeria was very similar. The government intent on downplaying the issue and the press adopted a relatively neutral line. The cartoons were criticised as an example of European xenophobia but there was no heated debate. In fact, two journals, *Essafir* and *Panorama*, which are respected by Islamist groups, actually published some of the cartoons in the name of encouraging informed debate. The editors were arrested (causing general consternation) under legislation designed to preserve "Islamic decorum" and the reputation of the Prophet, but the government stepped in to quash the arrests and restore calm. In Jordan, two journalists were sentenced to two months in prison for publishing the cartoons.

The Debate among Arab Intellectuals

In many cases the uproar was not theological but an emotional reaction by people who felt that their faith and identity were being insulted. In some ways it can be seen as a "nationalist reaction," the reaction of the "Muslim umma." Virtually all Arab intellectuals disapproved of the cartoons, although their responses differed. Many viewed the crisis as a purely religious one, resulting from a lack of respect for the

Prophet among some Christians. Others saw it as a cultural clash that transcended religion, between a Western secular paradigm and an Eastern Islamic civilisation, which erupted not so much because of the differences per se, but because of their mismanagement. Other commentators focused on North-South relations, which "happen to" correspond to East-West relations, and noted that the crisis acquired a particular political tone because of other aspects of relations between two "civilisations." These commentators argued that the offending cartoons would not have caused the same level of outrage had they appeared in a different political and historical context. The anger displayed in many Muslim countries conveyed the level of disillusionment with politics, and a lack of trust in the ability of politicians north and south to address cultural differences.

Other Arab intellectuals blamed Westerners for failing to understand the depth of outrage and humiliation felt by Muslims. They did not blame all Westerners, stating that feelings of racial superiority among rightwing extremists in the West fuelled the crisis. The way that western leaders managed the crisis failed to persuade Arab intellectuals that any serious effort was made to assuage the feelings of Muslims. Some argued that a political rapprochement could put an end to the tensions that have always existed between the two camps for religious or cultural reasons. For some, a blending of the Western and Islamic civilisations is inevitable and Europe will overcome these tensions as it did past tensions with Protestants, Orthodox Churches, and Jews.

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Another perception was that the crisis was a political one and not a cultural trap. Advocates of this view did not focus on the polarisation between Muslims and the West, but rather between moderates and extremists. On this view, anger in "the Arab street" was a sign that ordinary people were tired of having no rights and being pushed around, that there is no civilisational clash but only humanity, that human civilisation is about interaction and cooperation among all cultures, and that the reason a culture fails to engage other cultures or opts for either isolation or collision is because it has been hijacked by despotic regimes. This view was expressed at most protests.

The most frequently advocated measure was dialogue, although there were different views about the kind of dialogue and rules for dialogue that should apply: some advocated religious dialogue, others focused on the need for a dialogue "among equals," others on a dialogue that might educate western citizens about Islam. Some did not want clerics to conduct dialogue and felt that the dialogue was not simply about theological issues. Their view was that a dialogue should also cover political and social issues, and include intellectuals and other public figures along with clerics. Many expressed a lack of faith in cultural dialogue, citing the failures of the past (one-sided monologues, west-centrism, the reaffirmation of stereotypes, the elitism of dialogue) and pointed out that the main problem is unjust political and economic conditions, and that common people were less interested in dialogue than in improving their livelihoods. Indeed, while some saw the conflict as religious, many others interpreted it as a complex political and cultural issue.

Some noted that the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League should play a prominent role in defending Islam. Many called for an international law banning insults to religions and religious symbols. However, not all focused on lack of respect for Islam in the West, highlighting lack of respect among Muslims (the mutual bombing of Sunni and Shiite mosques and the assassinations of clerics on both sides of the sectarian divide was referred to). Others noted that the images of Mohammed were more a product of the distortions of terrorists and their supporters than of westerners; others argued that the Islamic world is essentially responsible because it has allowed Islam to be equated with terrorism, and that the focus of demonstrations should have been terrorism which is more offensive to Islam than cartoons. Others called on Muslims living in the West to organise to increase the "electoral" impact of Islamic communities in Western countries or to form political lobbies to press for legislation forcing the media to respect Muslim religious feelings.

The Problem of Negative Mutual Perceptions

Perceptions matter: they lie at the foundations of what later become editorials, articles, academic studies, political party platforms and government policy. Despite the cosy and comforting assumptions behind the notion of "inclusion within diversity," which inform the European project and the Barcelona Process, negative perceptions have developed both in Europe and the southern Mediterranean. Many Westerners think that "Islam" is waging war on them through military, political and cultural means, and they are trying to persuade others from their "civilisation" of the severity of the threat and the need for bold action; and many Muslims think that the "West" is waging a similar war on them, and are calling on their co-religionists to "wake up" and join the resistance. The "cartoons crisis" exacerbated these feelings on both sides. Many Muslims perceived the cartoons as a concerted Western insult against the Prophet that needed a vigorous response. For many of them the attack on the Prophet was a manifestation of xenophobia, of intolerance and of an attack on themselves. Indeed, for many with profound religious feelings there was no essential difference between xenophobia, intolerance and blasphemy. The general sense was one of incomprehension as to why they should have been attacked through the cartoon issue. Many in the West perceived the Muslim response as an attack on core democratic values and on the principles of secularism – laïcité – and felt that Islam was inherently incompatible with these values and that a "clash of civilisations" was inevitable. The crisis revealed that such accumulated misunderstandings and misperceptions should be taken very seriously indeed.

These sentiments are documented by the Pew Global Attitudes survey, which asks whether the "cartoons crisis" was caused by Western disrespect or by Muslim intolerance. Most Muslims (in Muslim and Western countries) blamed Westerners, while the latter blamed Muslim intolerance by a wide margin. In France, Spain

and Germany, for instance, between 21 and 28 percent of respondents blamed Muslim intolerance, whereas around 86 percent of respondents in Jordan and Egypt blamed Westerners. Interestingly enough, the crisis does not appear to have undermined attitudes towards democratic governance, and the survey showed that both European Muslims and Muslims living in predominantly Muslim countries are more optimistic about prospects for democracy in the Muslim world than are those living in Europe. According to a recent German Marshall Fund survey on transatlantic trends, 56 percent of Europeans do not feel that the values of Islam are compatible with the values of democracy. However, majorities also agree that the problem is with particular Islamic groups, not with Islam in general. This is a paradox: on the one hand, Europeans seem to acknowledge that only a minority – albeit a powerful one – in Muslim countries opposes the values of democracy; on the other hand, most Europeans seem to conflate the views of this minority with that of all other Muslims and then conclude that "Islam" as a whole is not compatible with democracy.

There is a clear convergence between Europeans and people from the southern Mediterranean on a number of key international issues, including the war in Iraq. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, a majority in both regions believes that Iraq has generated more instability in the world (over 70 percent in France, Spain, Germany, Great Britain, Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt). This shows that there is a bridge spanning the perceived divide between the North and South of the Mediterranean, and also challenges the view that "the west" is a homogenous bloc.

The "cartoons crisis" has shown how far some political leaders are prepared to go when they face difficulties with domestic opposition forces, using religious sentiment and conflating piety with a defensive nationalism, thus spreading prejudice for political ends.

A First Conclusion: Combating Identity Politics

Despite the different reactions to the cartoons crisis some issues were common to northern and southern countries and to Muslim migrant communities across Europe. There was a consensus that religious feelings were offended, and a shared perception that the crisis was linked with the "war on terror" and the view of Islam as "the enemy". Generally speaking, in the southern countries the focus was on the defence of religious feelings and on criticising the conflation of Islam and terrorism. Some governments and political movements sought to use the crisis for political ends, thus feeding intolerance based on religious and cultural differences.

Among persisting cultural and religious stereotypes, the one with the strongest repercussions is that which conflates Islam and obscurantism, which is espoused by a growing "new xenophobia" based on identity politics. This is not the traditional position of the old anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic far right such as that of pre-War anti-democratic movements, but a new attitude that permeates democratic parties that defend national political and cultural identity which is seen to be threatened by immigrants and their descendants. In the South, extremist groups have been able to manipulate public sentiment in favour of arguments supporting the civilisational

divide and thus the rejection of institutions and political practices that reflect what is perceived to be a secularising Western project, democracy. Indeed, the "cartoons crisis" has shown how far some political leaders are prepared to go when they face difficulties with domestic opposition forces, using religious sentiment and conflating piety with a defensive nationalism, thus spreading prejudice for political ends. For some, the phenomenon of extremism among groups that call themselves Islamic is a result of religious belief itself, and so they identify a whole human group of believers with a lack of respect for human rights and with violence. Others feel that religion is the one identity reference.

Despite the general perception that the crisis was serious and pitted the north against the south, the tendency was for both sides to seek to contain the crisis and not to allow it to spread. Most European governments sought to dissipate tensions, promoting dialogue with Muslim organisations at home, and distancing themselves from the position adopted by the Danish government. This attitude was criticised by anti-Islamic sectors that sought to manipulate the crisis for political reasons, and by those who felt that governments failed to stand up for freedom of speech with enough vigour. However, there was a clear awareness that Muslim communities and Euro-Mediterranean relations would suffer if the crisis were to be manipulated radically. Thus, most countries distanced themselves from those few that opted to aggravate the crisis in order to reinforce their bargaining power *vis-à-vis* Europe. Both in the North and South there are many who felt and feel that the crisis did not prove the existence of a cultural or civilisational divide, and who believed that human civilisation is about interaction and cooperation among all cultures. The promoters of this point of view argued that the reason any given nation or group of nations fails to engage with others in the name of "culture", or opts for either isolation or collision, is that it has been hijacked by despotic regimes or influenced by an extremist "identity politics".

The key to combating all forms of identity based nationalism lies in a defence of democracy and the right to cultural and religious diversity. An analysis of the "cartoons crisis" shows that it is possible to develop a Euro-Mediterranean agenda to promote the defence of fundamental rights and to combat intolerance. For this to happen, it will be necessary to develop a capacity to find political and social realities in the deceptive fog of civilisational interpretations.

III. Clash of Civilisations and Cultural Relativism

For many, the "cartoons crisis" confirmed two of the underlying theses of the "clash of civilisations" theory. The first sees conflict in its geopolitical terms, between civilisational blocs which are innately hostile to each other as a result of their separate interests and values. The second takes a more specifically culturalist approach, identifying an incompatibility between Islam on the one hand and democracy and human rights, including freedom of speech, on the other. Of course, the two theses are intimately interrelated, for the latter is really only a more specific version of the former. More interestingly, perhaps, in the Huntingtonian world, culture has replaced the all-embracing deterministic economic theories that explained all political and social dynamics by reference to economic paradigms. These marked, even marred, the first years of the Barcelona process with the conviction that economic development would lead to stability and one day eventually to political reforms and democracy – an unfortunate amalgam of the economic theory of politics and a crude version of rational choice theory.

Huntington uses the term "civilisation" in its widest definition, which includes the spiritual dimension of culture, as well as technical development. The author then reduces the concept, as many others also do, to the notion of tradition, as a fossilised vision of current realities, without taking past and future perspectives into account.

"Culturalist" theories are a component of identity-based nationalist ideology, which is part of what made the "cartoons crisis" what it was.

The popularity of cultural relativism

The popularity of culturalist and civilisational theses has been accompanied by an increase in the popularity of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism, first developed at the beginning of the twentieth century, became popular amongst social scientists as a new paradigm to study societies. Its main postulate is that "an individual human's beliefs and activities make sense in terms of his or her own culture". Cultural relativism supposedly allows the observer to suspend "ethno-centric" judgement in order to gain a "neutral" understanding of another culture. In this sense, relativism helps societies to accept differences and diversity. But cultural relativism is also an instrument of political relativism. In summary, it is possible to say that cultural relativism started out as a reaction against ethno-centrism, particularly Euro-centrism, but has now become a way of denying the universality of human rights. Although it is necessary to accept cultural and religious diversity, this must be done in a way that does not threaten basic rights and democracy.

The popularity of "culturalist" theories in Europe and the South led many to see very different reactions in the same light, such as the attacks on the embassies in the Lebanon and Syria, and the peaceful demonstrations held in various countries. "Culturalist" theories are a component of identity-based nationalist ideology, which is part of what made the "cartoons crisis" what it was. Cultural relativism is defended by some Christian and Muslim religious authorities, as demonstrated by the speech

by Pope Benedict XVI at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006. In that speech, the Pope reflected on the relationship between religion and reason, and argued that there was a significant difference between Catholicism and Islam, since the latter did not recognise reason as a supreme value, an essential element of the Hellenic tradition. At the same time the Pope as he had done throughout the cartoons crisis, called for Islam and other religions to unite against moral relativism. What is of concern here is that the readings made of the Pope's speech in the current context are political and so the speech contributes to reinforcing stereotypes of Muslims. The Pope's speech elicited an immediate reaction in the Muslim world. Some responses were reasonable criticisms, but others consisted of threats and violent attacks. These reactions also contribute to reinforcing negative views in Europe of Muslims, and in the south they reinforce the idea that there is a "clash of civilisations" promoted by a Christian West.

The "Clash of Civilisations"

In a 1993 article and a book published in 1996 Samuel Huntington predicted that a number of conflicts based on cultural differences between different civilisations would emerge in the post-Cold War era, claiming that "[t]he great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural" and that "[t]he clash of civilisations will dominate global politics." Eight major contemporary civilisations were identified, and one of the clashes anticipated by Huntington was that between the West and Islam. This theory has been challenged because it concentrates on the differences between so-called civilisations, ignoring their similarities, because there is a failure to acknowledge that civilisations are not monolithic (encompassing different countries, cultures and political systems), and further because an analysis of conflicts shows that civilisations have not been aligned against one another in the way Huntington suggests, and that the most dramatic conflicts have been between people that Huntington would place in the same civilisation (such as the Iran/Iraq war, the war in Rwanda, or Algeria). Whatever the critiques, the Huntington theory has become very influential with the difficulty many have in understanding and accepting the rise of Islamic movements, particularly after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and other similar events after it. Many politicians and commentators were quick to identify the tragic events as a first sign of a clash between the "West" and Islam, as suggested by Huntington, but others warned of the dangers of reading events in this way.

Not surprisingly, the popularity of the "clash of civilisations" theory increased after the attacks of 11 September. It became the theoretical basis for the global polarising response to those attacks. With it, the enemy was identified a nebulously defined amalgamation of radical Islamism, and all forms of terrorism became undifferentiated "threats to national/international security", and were amalgamated into a single entity. This was achieved through the artificial construction of non-existent links

between Al-Qaeda and the secular Iraqi dictatorship. Thus, Saddam became a target in the "fight against terror", with the tragic consequences that are now widely acknowledged. Another essential aspect of the US "war on terror" is that "Islam" is seen as a global problem. This has not been articulated in the conservative sense proposed by Huntington; rather, the Bush administration has adopted the transformative approach proposed by Bernard Lewis, which posits that Muslims are the "sick men" of the world and in urgent need of a "grand project" that will cure them of their ills by injecting them – forcefully if needs be – with a large dose of democracy and modernity. This approach is based on conflating radical currents of political Islam with those advocating religious purity. The idea of spreading democracy in the Greater Middle East, an area stretching from Marrakech to Bangladesh, and the largely rhetorical initiatives conceived to promote that end, are part of the "grand project" to "reform and democratise Islam" (the prime example being the post-invasion justification for the occupation of Iraq).

There is a vast diversity of views and attitudes on both sides of the Mediterranean divide and it is in their diversity that solutions will lie.

"Culture" should not be the primary target of international assistance for democratisation, conflict resolution and the fight against intolerance and extremism; rather, specific social and political forces should be targeted.

Civilisational Theories and Dialogue

Many of those who do not believe in the "clash of civilisations" thesis have ended up accepting nonetheless that civilisations are the main actors in international relations. Because of their awareness of the grave dangers of identity-based nationalism and the concomitant popularity of the "clash of civilisation" thesis, many people who oppose both phenomena have focussed on so-called "dialogue between civilisations" initiatives as a way to neutralize and prevent confrontation and conflict. Generally speaking, those promoting this kind of dialogue implicitly assume that civilisations must be mutually tolerant and coexist peacefully, but that they exist in different, isolated spheres. Although this kind of view is far removed from xenophobic intolerance, it is an approach that nonetheless perpetuates the idea that the international system is divided into polarised camps that are either in conflict or engaged in dialogue, and which exist as separate, culturally or religiously defined spheres.

Many people agree with Huntington's pessimistic view that the interaction between the Muslim and Western world is deeply flawed; others partly agree but refuse to live in a world destined to a succession of civilisational conflicts. This has given rise to a number of international initiatives, notably the UN sponsored Alliance of Civilisations, promoted by the Spanish and Turkish governments. This and other initiatives are certainly important and their areas they focus on also fit within Euro-Mediterranean initiatives. However, there is a conceptual problem with this initiative, which is suggested by its name: since it is a mirror-image of the original argument put forward by Samuel Huntington, it implicitly suggests that the concept of the "clash of civilisations" is plausible and that all must be done to avoid it through dialogue.

It is interesting to note that, in the High-level Group report produced for the Alliance of Civilisations in November 2006, the essential argument is that the problems are

not civilisational in nature but reflect political issues. It is argued in the report that "rifts between the powerful and the powerless or the rich and the poor or between different political groups, classes, occupations and nationalities have greater explanatory power than such cultural categories." However, virtually all of its proposals still reflect the essential structure of the initiative which assumes that dialogue between civilisational blocs is the key to a resolution of the problems it identifies. This confusion is heightened by its assumption that the "West" is as undifferentiated as the way in which it treats the "South", quite apart from the major differences in attitudes that exist between the EU and the US. In reality, as this report demonstrates, there is a vast diversity of views and attitudes on both sides of the Mediterranean divide and it is in their diversity that solutions will lie. It is as important to appreciate the distinctions between attitudes in, say, Britain and Italy as it is to understand that views in the Maghreb differ significantly from those in the Mashrek. It is also important to appreciate that such differences are not ascribed by cultural and civilisational identity but are the product of reactions to perceived and objective political issues and circumstances and that it is in this political awareness that real solutions lie.

As the "cartoons crisis" shows, the conflicts affecting the Euro-Mediterranean area are mainly political and social rather than cultural and they require international cooperation between people with different cultural backgrounds so as to combat intolerance and promote hospitality and inclusion. Thus, any initiative must begin by clearly rejecting the premises of the "clash of civilisations" theory. "Culture" should not be the primary target of international assistance for democratisation, conflict resolution and the fight against intolerance and extremism; rather, specific social and political forces should be targeted, in many cases involving citizens of the same country in other cases countries within the same "civilisational" area. This makes a relationship between equals possible, whereas making Islam the policy target establishes a new bipolarity that identifies also reduces the West to the "Christian world". For Euro-Mediterranean relations this means ensuring that the Partnership is not a framework for a bipolar dialogue, but rather a process of inclusion within diversity.

The importance of the sentiments of dialogue-informing initiatives like that undertaken by the UN is obviously great in light of the crisis described in this Report. However, the actual contribution of the UN initiative to inter-cultural understanding and to the promotion of peaceful relations depends on the degree to which countries deem it and its recommendations relevant. Like all such initiatives, it depends on the good will of supporting countries and their leverage over recalcitrant states. It is unclear whether another elite-oriented initiative with high-level personalities can influence other governments and even less the general population of various different countries. If the states associated with this initiative are serious about their commitment, they should not miss the opportunity to internalize the principles it espouses by creating and implementing grassroots projects that raise awareness and provide education in this area and to create the conditions for independent civil society activities.

Cultural factors are undeniably important in promoting solidarity among peoples, but they are certainly not the sole, nor even the strongest, ties favouring convergence and establishing solidarity. Public attitudes towards and perceptions of the war in Iraq have been similar in Europe and in the Muslim world, and have had little to do with the attitudes and motivations of leaders and governments. Similarly, the attitude of Muslim and non-Muslim Europeans towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been similar. The surveys in the Arab Development Report show that there is much support for the democratic ideal in the south as well as for other fundamental values. Huntington's theory does not help to shed light on the "cartoons crisis"; indeed, it can be said that its popularity contributed towards exacerbating the crisis.

Identity-Based Nationalism

At the heart of Huntington's theory – as his later work has confirmed – are his fears about relations between migrant and host communities, and his assumption that there is a profound antagonism between Islam and democracy. The idea is that democracy depends on a dominant western Christian culture to survive. Huntington posits that values and cultural identity are closely linked. He argues that American identity and the values it rests on is the "product of people with a distinct Anglo-Protestant culture." The question of immigration and the defence of America's threatened identity are at the heart of his clash of civilisations thesis. American identity must be defended from those who threaten it from the inside (new immigrants, particularly Hispanics). Huntington's is an identity-based nationalism: "America cannot become the world and still be America. Other peoples cannot become American and still be themselves. America is different, and that difference is defined in large part by its Anglo-Protestant culture and religiosity. The alternative to cosmopolitanism and imperialism is nationalism devoted to the preservation and enhancement of those qualities that have defined America since its founding."

This is a vision which absolutely rejects the notion of universal rights. Its capacity to cause destruction and suffering is great. Bosnia, which was subjected to the barbarian brutality of identity-based nationalism, and Rwanda, where the international community allowed genocide on an almost unimaginable scale to take place, only differs from other parts of the world experiencing similar processes in terms of the magnitude and duration of experience. Political parties with the primary purpose of defending national identities threatened by cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism have appeared and represent today the major threat to democracy and to political and social inclusion, and cultural diversity.

Identity based nationalism is a great problem today, and is particularly serious in the Euro-Mediterranean area, where it takes the form of xenophobia and intolerance. The universalism of human rights and democracy is the basis of the Barcelona Process. That universalism is not incompatible with the right to cultural and religious

difference and protection against discriminatory ethno-centrism (including dogmatic and radical forms of secularism); on the contrary, it is essential to ensure the survival of the latter. The political and social conditions for a shared Euro-Mediterranean defence of human rights and democracy and to combat intolerance and promote the right to diversity exist.

IV. The Right Response: Inclusion Within Diversity

Huntington's theories fail to address the real issues at stake. Huntington views civilisations as being fixed entities with their own cultural practices. These are monolithic entities that do not actually exist in reality. Further, it is self-defeating to accept a moral cultural relativism that accepts anything as valid as long as it belongs to a different culture, and suggests a hands-off approach to cultural practices other than "our" own.

Thus, one of the most serious problems today that contributes to the spread of an anti-Islamic identity-based discourse is the fact that the most varied kinds of political actors define certain kinds of social and political behaviours according to the religion of the members of a social group, which is then seen to be incapable of accepting fully the values of democracy and human rights. In this context, political and social factors lose their significance, and authoritarian governments are excused as are their supporters among the world's democracies. What is more, this creates a vision of an "other" that is not only different but also actively engaged in their own social and political backwardness. The importance of differentiating between religious and political spheres to ensure that stereotypes are not reinforced, and the importance of a secularism that accepts cultural differences could not be clearer in the wake of the "cartoons crisis".

Political actors define certain kinds of social and political behaviours according to the religion of the members of a social group, which is then seen to be incapable of accepting fully the values of democracy and human rights.

There is an alternative to Huntingtonian views and others similar to it, which sees diversity as a positive shared value. It emphasizes the importance of the right to cultural diversity and freedom of expression; the need to combat xenophobia and the role of culture and cultural pluralism in Euro-Mediterranean relations, and the concept of "hospitality" in inclusive cultural diversity.

Hospitality: The Right Approach to the Issue of Immigration

There is an alternative to "tolerant coexistence". It involves recognising that, despite a different cultural and traditional heritage every person is first and foremost a member of a single human family and, as such, needs the same basic rights. This has been the fundamental conviction that permits democratic states and regional communities such as the European Union to exist. In the words of Jacques Derrida, what is at stake is a "feeling of hospitality" based not on recognition of an "other" of different origin, nationality, religion or "civilisation" as intrinsically different, but on a recognition of "the other" as intrinsically similar: in other words, as an equal. It is a statement about the recognition of a common and shared humanity that denies the alienation of other by self and the recognition of a mutual responsibility, whether as migrant or host. This distinction is not as trivial as it appears at first sight: let us not forget the debate in Europe and the South about "levels of tolerance" for social inclusion or about the "limit" on the number of migrants that any given host society can "absorb". This debate stands as a useful reminder of how crucial this distinction really is.

Europe's Responsibility

The success of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership depends largely on the degree to which the European Union and its member states act consistently with the Union's model of integration and with its motto of unity within diversity. Any cultural or, what would be worse, religious definition of Europe spells self-inflicted defeat. In this respect, the process of Turkish accession to the European Union is crucial and its outcome will be decisive for the way the European Union will be perceived within its southern neighbourhood. The accession of Turkey would be a powerful stimulus to Euro-Mediterranean integration because it would illustrate the inherently positive outcomes of arguments that emphasise what individuals and institutions share through democratic inclusion, rather than highlighting what divides them and the civilisations of which they are part. Another crucial issue is the way in which the states of the Union deal with the issue of migration and migrant communities. These communities should be seen as central players in the process of Euro-Mediterranean inclusion, which is both economic and political in nature. The crisis in the French and British suburbs, and the affirmation of "difference" by some women through the use of the veil should not lead to a reinforcement of the "clash of civilisations" thesis but rather to measures that strengthen the spirit of "hospitality," encourage European citizens of southern Mediterranean origin to become politically active, and thus overcome discrimination and marginalisation. The success of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership today depends not only on the capacity of the countries of the south to democratise, but on that of European states to accept the internal diversity and the cultural transformations that such a change implies, and to address migration in accordance with the values of the Union. To do so in the current context is to provide answers to the problems of a region that now dominates the global political agenda.

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International Responses

Over the last few years, efforts have also been made at the international and not only European or Mediterranean levels to promote the values of hospitality and dialogue. One example of this is the type of initiatives outlined above, like the Alliance of Civilisations. Various other UN initiatives, however, are relevant in this regard. Combating racism – the "belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race", and xenophobia means "fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign", and all forms of xenophobia is an essential element of such initiatives. Since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination, in 1965, and the subsequent establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) – the first body created by the UN to monitor and review actions by States to fulfil their obligations under a human rights instrument – as well as the nomination in 1993

of a Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance agreement, UN State parties have demonstrated their commitment to dealing with this issue. By agreeing to have their actions monitored and even criticised, states took a clear step to combat racial, cultural and religious discrimination. The adoption of enforceable legal documents and the creation of relatively authoritative bodies is a powerful tool in the fight against all forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

The work of the UN in this field has focused on promoting the main principles enshrined in the International Bill of Rights, namely the principle of equality and of non-discrimination applied to all human beings. The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance has focused on determining the causes of Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism. All three phenomena involve the same exclusionary principle. The object of their dislike is objectified as a member of an unacceptable cultural group and thus denied an essential and shared humanity. He or she is then expelled from the community as an alien entity, not because of individual characteristics but because of an ascribed identity. The logical outcome of such attitudes is best described by Raoul Hilberg, one of the earliest and best chroniclers of the Holocaust, when he remarked that difference between the medieval pogroms in Germany and their Nazi successors was that, whereas persecution in the Middle Ages was based upon the principle that "Thou shalt not live amongst us", the Nazi principle was simply that "Thou shalt not live!" – a salutary reminder of what the outcome of any exclusionary ideology may be, whether official or informal.

The studies carried out by the Special Rapporteur show how hatred toward different human groups, be it xenophobic, cultural or religious, is at the root of contemporary forms of racism, and has fuelled conflict In spite of the total discredit into which racist theories, and even the concept of race itself, have fallen as a result of scientific advances, contemporary political, journalistic and intellectual discourse is nonetheless permeated by racism. The Special Rapporteur has been particularly vocal in denouncing the role of the media and intellectuals in the "Intellectual legitimisation" of intolerance, particularly that between the Muslim and the Western worlds. The Special Rapporteur mentions Samuel Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilisations," among other examples, to illustrate how such theories and views fuel attitudes of intolerance.

The UN has also adopted a Convention, which entered into force in 2003, to protect migrants, a group that is also the target of many forms of discrimination. It builds on previous international human rights instruments where labour, justice and medical care rights are concerned, consecrates the principles of non-discrimination and equality with nationals of host countries in all aspects of a migrant's life. The Convention has yet to be signed or ratified by any European country. The European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers has met a similar fate: only 9 states have ratified it, including six EU countries. It has been argued that the reason

states have neglected international and regional migrant conventions is that the provisions at stake establish too many obligations for host countries and fail to take into account the difficulty in absorbing the flux of migrant workers in Europe.

The Role of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The European states are at the forefront of the struggles that the tensions within complex societies can cause. The cartoons crisis, for example, directly involved some of the key countries of the Partnership, notably Denmark, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, which explains the importance of debates within the Partnership during the crisis. The EMP is the ideal framework to deal with north-south crises such as this one. In February 2006, Javier Solana issued a joint-statement with the Secretary-Generals of the United Nations and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference acknowledging the worrying consequences of the publication of the cartoons and urging dialogue and understanding between different communities. He then went on a tour of the Middle East where he met different Arab and Islamic representatives to promote the same goals. Indeed, doing away with mutual negative perceptions is a central Partnership goal, which is a "mega-confidence building" measure of sorts. During the crisis, the role played by the EMP in mitigating its effects and the division between Northern and Southern countries was acknowledged. It has been much harder – if not impossible – for the Partnership to deal with South-South crises, as was apparent during the war in the Lebanon which involved at least two EMP states. The crisis was debated by the Euro-Med Committee and was also the subject of proposals put forward by Egypt on behalf of the Arab group (The Defamation of Islam and the Dialogue of Cultures document), the European Commission (which presented the Decalogue of Ideas, finally endorsed by the Committee), and the Anna Lindh Foundation. It should be noted that all these proposals highlighted the role to be played by civil society networks working within the Partnership and by the Euro-Med Dialogue, which involves a vast network of journalists (and within the context of which the seminar on Racism, Xenophobia and the Media: Towards Respect and Understanding of all Religions and Cultures was held on 21-23 May in Vienna).

The visibility of the EMP was very limited during the crisis and there was no agreement for a common statement because of the divisions among partner states over press freedom and respect for religion.

The goal of these initiatives is to promote a better mutual understanding in the Euro-Mediterranean region and "intercultural dialogue" through the Anna Lindh Foundation. This view was reaffirmed at the Tampere EMP Ministerial meeting. It is true that the visibility of the EMP was very limited during the crisis and there was no agreement for a common statement because of the divisions among partner states over press freedom and respect for religion. However, it is nonetheless clear that the Partnership *should* be the framework with which to deal with crises of this nature. For it to adopt such a role, it is not enough for the EMP to contribute to mutual understanding and knowledge, and even less simply to promote an ill defined "dialogue between cultures." The only path to effective action is to place the emphasis on the issues of intolerance and cultural and religious discrimination.

Back to the Barcelona Declaration

The political and security aspect of the Partnership deals with the issue of discrimination, as stated in the Barcelona Declaration. States are called on to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and guarantee 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 members of the same group, without any discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, language, religion or sex." Further, partner states have undertaken to "respect and ensure respect for diversity and pluralism in their societies, promote tolerance between different groups in society and combat manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia". EMP states have also acknowledged "the importance of the role played by migration in their relationships", and have undertaken "to guarantee protection of all the rights recognised under existing legislation of migrants legally resident in their respective territories". Nevertheless, these commitments have not always been upheld in reality.

In sum, the problem is not the lack of international or regional instruments to promote tolerance and fight racism, but the lack of action at the national level to implement and to enforce regional and international human rights principles. If EMP states are serious about engaging in the fight against intolerance and about promoting diversity, a commitment to a shared set of norms would be a good starting point. International human rights norms must be understood as interdependent and not as inter-changeable. Thus, freedom of the press cannot be curtailed to prevent racist speech, defamation of religions; and religious freedom cannot be limited to protect "national identity".

The Barcelona Process: Beyond the Bipolarity of Civilisation

The Barcelona Process as defined by the November 1995 Declaration is an exercise in "inclusion within diversity". Thus, the great merit of the 1995 Barcelona Declaration is its eschewal of civilisational bipolarity and its affirmation of the possibility of integrating culturally diverse countries in the same project as long as this is based on a genuine convergence around democratic values, as has been the case within Europe. The principles and aims of the Barcelona Declaration are as relevant today as they were in 1995, only they are now on the regional agenda in a way that was not the case a decade ago. Indeed, the aims and principles of the EMP are at the heart of the debate in all Mediterranean countries today, be it in the Lebanon following democratic elections, in Egypt with its difficult reform process, or in Morocco, which is debating democratic transition.

When the EMP celebrated its tenth anniversary, EuroMeSCo published a report evaluating the potential and real *acquis* of the process and analyzing the extent to

which the original aims had produced tangible results. This was not an easy task because processes of inclusion are long, drawn-out affairs, and long-term effects are more easily identified with greater hindsight than that offered by ten years of experience. The key conclusion of that report was that the Barcelona Process had not contributed significantly to promoting the necessary conditions to ensure Euro-Mediterranean inclusion. It had failed to do so because despite the principles enunciated in the Declaration, the partners had given more priority to stability, the containment of political Islam and to limiting migration flows.

The Report concluded that it was necessary to review the links between development, security and democracy, and to abandon the erroneous view that dominated over the preceding decade, namely, that economic development automatically brings security and stability and perhaps even democracy in the long run. The Report further concluded that the causal sequence linking economic reform to democratisation did not work in the Mediterranean. In fact, some of the countries that have undergone greater economic growth are also those that have undertaken the most modest political reforms, and vice versa. At the same it, it was concluded that political Islam in its various guises has become an unavoidable reality. Thus, the European Union is now confronted with the need to involve its Southern partners in a process that prioritises political issues even as it develops an effective policy of economic inclusion. In other words, the Union must now adopt a comprehensive policy toward the region, based on the democratic principles of the Barcelona Declaration.

Democratic pluralism is a fundamental condition for guaranteeing the success of a policy of inclusion within diversity. To put politics first means to accept the great diversity of political actors in the region, including “Islamists”, including them in a common project. It also means accepting the autonomy of civil society. The need to develop better mutual understanding and combat negative Western perceptions about Islam should not serve as a pretext to ignore the urgent need for political reforms and measures to protect human rights in the name of cultural relativism. Inter-cultural dialogue is no substitute for pluralism, be it cultural or political. The political responses to the cartoons crisis, on both sides of the Mediterranean only highlight the opportunities that democratic pluralism could offer and the degree to which a failure to exploit its potential led to the current situation.

V. Recommendations for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

This report recommends the adoption of four EMP initiatives. However, before it does so, it highlights the urgent need to rethink some basic issues, and to challenge what seems to have become the "conventional wisdom". Thus, what follows is an exhortation to policy-makers to "get it right" in terms of the "way of thinking" about current conflicts and crises.

Getting it Right: the Key is Differentiation. The "culturalist" or "clash of civilisations" view, the division of the world into homogenous and discrete religious or civilisational blocs that must either cooperate or clash, has proved to be over simplified and simply misleading. It is argued in this Report that one of the first steps that must be taken to ensure that policies are appropriate is to "get it right" when interpreting current realities. The key word here is differentiation: differentiating between states, between different political groups within states, between political movements and civil society actors, between religious feelings and political behaviour and even between different religious actors. Once the conventional all-encompassing social and political realities are broken down into specific and differentiated realities, it becomes clear that concepts such as the "Islamic world" and the "West" are misleading and only serve to reinforce stereotypes. It is only by adopting a more nuanced, case-by-case analysis of the various political and social factors that feed conflicts in any given context that we can gain an accurate appreciation of specific conflicts and differentiate between them and the actors involved.

Getting it Right: Activating the Institutional Framework. As the crisis has shown, the EMP can act as an adequate framework for handling crises of this nature. But for that to be the case, it needs to put the accent on the political, diplomatic and social dimensions of the crisis and not fall into the trap of adopting the perspective of the "clash of civilisations". This is a perspective that paralyses political actors rather than freeing them up to adopt specific case-by-case initiatives to resolve specific, case-by-case problems. It should, after all, be obvious that a framework such as the EMP cannot "solve" a titanic "clash between civilisations" – but it can resolve tensions between an official religious institution in Egypt and Danish diplomats, for instance, or between an angry Moroccan migrant community in Europe, and, say, a European political party. As the Danish government has learned during the crisis, there is a need to take diplomatic initiatives seriously and to engage in them soon rather than later. The EMP must develop an agile framework to deal with such tensions and crises as they arise, one that is framed by a discourse of pragmatism.

Getting it Right: Targeting the Right Issues. Targeting the right issues means clearly defining one's goals, and then working out which actions best further those goals. The discourse of pragmatism is that best suited to "discover" which initiatives should be pursued. Pragmatism means navigating the path between defeat ("clash" and "normative relativism") and impossible and undesirable ambitions (absolute

"harmony") between traditions and cultural practices. It means "inclusion within diversity" and "hospitality". From these two principles there naturally emerges a need to rethink certain issues which have become obfuscated by "conventional wisdom".

- ***Freedom does not come from cultural or civilisational dialogue, but from the politics of reform and democratisation***. Tradition is the context; political institutions are the means; and the goal is individual freedom and fulfilment, which history has proved is best served by democracy – a system for the peaceful rotation of power and leadership selection – within the rule of law – a system for predictable or non-arbitrary government by law. This goal cannot be confused with "civilisation" or "culture" or any other content specific issues. What is at stake is a system for leadership selection and for predictable governance, the content of which will be defined in each country according to local customs, but with respect for the universally accepted norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the various human rights instruments adopted by the UN.

- ***Cultural diversity is not the same as normative relativism, and human rights are, indeed, "human".*** One of the major achievements of the last quarter century that is being threatened as a result of the "civilisational" and "security-based" discourse of today is the advancement of the global human rights agenda, which took giant steps forward in the 1990s in all parts of the developed and developing world. There is a high level of consensus about which basic human rights are necessary to all human beings, and the EMP should work to strengthen this consensus and broaden it to new areas, notably the rights of women, minorities and migrant communities, and working to eliminate racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

- ***Not all conflicts are a security problem.*** One aspect that needs to be rethought is the tendency in the age of the "war on terror" to view all social and political conflicts as "security problems". Not only is some degree of tension and conflict a natural aspect of political and social life – and the aim of total harmony and peace an impossible chimera – but the way to deal with tensions and conflicts that do arise should be primarily political in nature and a real effort should be made to remove security concerns from the approaches adopted towards a large number of political and social problems, such as migration.

- ***Not all Muslims are Islamists, not all Islamists are Radicals, and not all Radicals are Terrorists.*** Complex and heterogeneous realities cannot be conflated into a single, homogenous entity that is an "enemy of the West." Indeed, it is only a tiny minority of people who see an undifferentiated "West" as an enemy; all other political and social actors have specific, domestically-informed agendas which have little to do with enmity towards Europe and much more to do with resolving political and developmental issues that post-independence states were unable to address successfully.

- ***Freedom of expression is a key instrument in the fight against intolerance.*** Freedom of expression is a key component in the promotion of freedom and pluralism in any democratic reform process. Only a free press can effectively contribute to creating mutual knowledge and combat stereotypes, including those of a religious nature. The "cartoons crisis" reflects the need to defend freedom of expression not only against religious intolerance but also in the face of political manipulation by extremist currents and governments.

- ***Freedom of speech is not the same as hate speech.*** Press freedoms should not be confused with the acceptance of hate speech. Many countries – notably those that have faced problems in the past with hate speech and state promoted racism – have laws against hate speech. Freedom of the press is a condition for civil society to flourish and for individuals to be able to curb the over-weaning power of the state. Indeed, it is for society (and not the state) to determine what we should be allowed to say and not say. Thus, the solution to intolerance and racism is not muzzling the press, but to make media actors more culturally sensitive and aware. This means more openness and not less.

- ***Refusing stereotypes should be a major priority.*** The danger of conceiving of political issues in stereotypical terms which are little more than caricatures of realities, is virtually universal. Yet the phenomenon is the main obstacle to both debate and comprehension and thus to the appropriate construction of effective policies in response. One of its worst features is that it is always attributed to the "other" and never to "self". Yet its most malign effects lie in the inability of its purveyor to perceive his own prejudices. It is of paramount importance that all commentators and analysts involved in influencing the policy process ensure both their own awareness of this tendency as well as their propensity in identifying it in their protagonists. Indeed, if stereotyping is not eliminated from the policy process, there is little hope that even the EMP can ensure positive and desirable outcomes from its interventions.

- ***The Alliance of Civilisations initiative should evolve towards a global alliance for "inclusion within diversity".*** However, it can only achieve this if it is prepared to question the very notion of "civilisation" as an actor. It will also have to reject the notion of the opposed opposites of "East" and "West"; "North" and "South", relying instead on the value of cross-cultural interaction and fusion. The European Union and the EuroMed countries should promote activity within the framework of the Alliance towards encouraging inclusion within diversity, as well as cooperation on cultural and artistic matters.

In light of these challenges, this Report recommends four EMP initiatives to promote "inclusion within diversity".

1. **An EMP Initiative against Intolerance and Xenophobia.** Combating discrimination and xenophobia should become a top ministerial goal in 2007. One of the aims should be the establishment of a ***Euro-Mediterranean Council against Discrimination and Racism.*** The Council could undertake a number of initiatives, among them:

(a) disseminating information about legal measures that individuals can take to sue those responsible for discrimination, racism or other forms of illegal intolerance; (b) promoting the ratification of all human rights treaties, among them those related with racism, xenophobia and discrimination; (c) involving migrant communities more closely in the EMP political process. A parallel aim should be the establishment of a ***Euro-Mediterranean Racism and Intolerance Observatory.*** The EMP should develop its own knowledge base on racism and discrimination in the Euro-Mediterranean region, perhaps working with the European Union anti-racism initiatives and similar institutions in the southern Mediterranean. This would provide individuals on both sides of the region with access to information about how to defend their rights and seek support to forge links through civil society with other communities in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

2. **An EMP Migrants' Rights Charter.** The EMP should promote efforts to protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of migrant workers and their families, in line with the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers. European states should work towards the ratification of this very important instrument as well as of the relevant ILO and COE conventions. A commitment to tolerance at home also implies promoting minority rights and working towards de facto equality between all communities, particularly with regards to their political participation.

3. **A common programme to overcome the knowledge gap.** The EMP should promote a very large programme to promote common knowledge of political, historical and cultural, and social realities affecting the Euro-Mediterranean region, by making use of the latest techniques available to the contemporary "information society". This programme should finance the introduction of access to information technology, both in terms of skills and equipment. It should also finance large-scale translation of the relevant information into Arabic and from Arabic, Arabic becoming an obligatory language in all initiatives financed by the Union. This should also finance generalised low-cost access to major publications from different countries within the region, and strengthen media initiatives, as well as expanding existing student and faculty exchange programmes and inter-university cooperation. A Euro-Mediterranean Convention on the Knowledge-Based Society should be convened at the earliest possible date.

4. **An initiative on artistic pluralism and intellectual freedoms, involving the reorientation of the Anna Lindh Foundation.** The Anna Lindh Foundation should focus on activities that promote cultural pluralism and mutual understanding between the peoples of the Mediterranean and Europe. Encouraging artistic and intellectual activities and defending freedom of speech and artistic freedoms are central to any initiative to promote cultural pluralism and cooperation. The artistic production of the Euro-Mediterranean region should also be publicised. Cooperation between cultural actors from a whole range of activities should be financed. The Foundation should not attempt to act as a civil society platform (there are other organisations that have this role), but should focus instead on the intellectual and artistic communities on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Short Chronology

September 30, 2005. Copenhagen, Denmark. Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* publishes twelve cartoons of the prophet Mohammed under the title of "The faces of Mohammed".

October 19, 2005. Copenhagen, Denmark. Eleven Muslim countries' ambassadors call for a meeting with Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and demand that he acts against *Jyllands-Posten* and other Danish media that offended Islam. The Prime Minister refuses to meet the group claiming that the government has no power over freedom of the press.

November 7 – December 9, 2005. Egyptian legislative elections.

December 8, 2005. Mecca, Saudi Arabia. During the OIC summit, the topic of the cartoons is discussed.

December 29, 2005, Cairo, Egypt. The Arab Foreign Affairs Ministers, meeting at the headquarters of the League of Arab States reject and condemn the cartoons.

January 10, 2006. Oslo, Norway. Norwegian Magazinet publishes the twelve cartoons.

January 25, 2006. Palestinian election won by Hamas.

February 2, 2006. Gaza, Palestine. A dozen armed men surround the EU offices premises.

February 4, 2006. Damascus, Syria. The Norwegian and Danish embassies are torched.

February 5, 2006. Beirut, Lebanon. Protesters torch the Danish consulate located in the Christian neighbourhood of Achrafiyeh and throw rocks at two churches and shops.

February 6, 2006. Teheran, Iran. Hundreds of protesters launch Molotov cocktails against the Danish embassy.

February 9, 2006. Copenhagen, Denmark. *Jyllands-Posten* publishes a new version in Arabic of its apology letter to Muslims on its website. The text containing the apologies is clearer and more direct than a version published on 30 January.

Bibliographical Note

Contributors

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Amr ElShobaki, "The Arab Intellectuals' Debate over the Cartoons Crisis".

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Ulla Holm, "The Danish Cartoon Crisis: Polarisation and Reconciliation".

Rania Safar, "Crise des caricatures en Egypte, Syrie et Liban".

Álvaro de Vasconcelos, "A Dialogue of Civilisations or 'Inclusion within Diversity'?", *Euro-future*, 6, Winter 2005.

The reports also draws on questionnaire-based articles commissioned within the EuroMeSCo network on reactions to the "cartoons row" in selected countries written by Roberto Aliboni (IAI, Rome), Lotfi Boumghar (INESG, Algiers), Amr ElShobaki (ACPSS, Cairo), Felix Heiduk (SWP, Berlin), Emily Landau (JCSS, Tel-Aviv), Luis Martinez (CERI, Paris), and Eduard Soler (Cidob, Barcelona).

Other Documents

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EuroMeSCo Secretariat
Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais
Largo de São Sebastião 8, Paço do Lumiar,
1600-762 LISBOA
e-mail: mednet@mail.telepac.pt

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