

CHANGING EURO-MEDITERRANEAN LENSES

12-13 July, Rabat





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INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference “Changing Euro-Mediterranean Lenses” held in Rabat on 12-13 July 2018, over 150 researchers and practitioners from the Euro-Mediterranean region gathered in order to challenge prevailing narratives on Euro-Mediterranean relations. The following report summarizes the discussions and outcomes of the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference 2018.

The report starts with a short contribution of EuroMeSCo to the Euro-Mediterranean public debate based on the exchanges at the Annual Conference, targeting not only policy makers but also media and civil society.

The report then gives an account of the presentations and discussions that were held in the Plenary Sessions. The sessions explored on the one hand how recent developments in Europe affect the situation in the Southern shore, the EU's capacity of projection in the Mediterranean and ultimately the Euro-Mediterranean relations and on the other hand how these developments are perceived on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and how they impact the way southern and eastern Mediterranean countries engage in Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Three “working sessions” offered an opportunity to discuss in smaller format specific angles of these issues. They were structured around presentations from researchers to be transformed into academic papers.

In addition to the thematic focus, EuroMeSCo annual conferences are traditionally a pivotal moment for the research activities of the network. Accordingly, the report also includes a reference to the sessions in which the work of the three 2017-2018 joint research groups was presented and to the kick-off sessions of the research groups to be developed in 2018-2019.

A CONTRIBUTION OF EUROMESCO TO THE PUBLIC DEBATE

1. The EuroMeSCo Annual Conference on “Changing Euro-Mediterranean Lenses” took place in Rabat on 12-13 July 2018. It gathered representatives of 106 institutes that are members of the EuroMeSCo network (the largest Euro-Mediterranean network of think tanks dealing with political and security issues), alongside a number of practitioners, diplomats, policy makers and young researchers.
2. Following this conference and ahead of the next meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Union for the Mediterranean to be held in Barcelona on 8 October, EuroMeSCo is eager to reach out beyond circles of experts or policy makers and contribute to public debates, too often dominated by eurocentric reflexes on the European side, and recriminations on the southern Mediterranean side.
3. Too often, in the European public debate, the southern part of the Mediterranean is portrayed as the source of problems facing the European Union. Misinformed and misleading public debates on violent extremism and migration have exemplified this. Violent extremism tends to be presented as an import product, ignoring thereby the European own responsibility in the surge of the phenomenon. Similarly, Europe tends to be portrayed as a continent under siege by migrants, ignoring thereby the migration challenges posed to countries of the southern Mediterranean.
4. Healthy and balanced Euro-Mediterranean relations require a serious effort of introspection on the European side. A number of developments in the European Union also have an impact on the southern Mediterranean and ultimately Euro-Mediterranean relations.
5. The necessary and above-mentioned effort of introspection in Europe should not be accompanied by misplaced recriminations against the European Union that too often dominate political discourse on the Southern Mediterranean side. The European Union is a very reliable as well as committed partner and remains part of the solution rather than a problem.
6. However, the rise of populism in some member states, translating among other things in the securitisation of the EU's approach, the breach of some foundational values of the European Union such as solidarity or human rights, and the renationalisation of EU foreign policy, affect not only the European integration process but also the Southern Mediterranean region, the way the EU is perceived in this region, the credibility of its actions and the overall Euro-Mediterranean



partnership. The EU needs to better assess the consequences of some of its actions for southern Mediterranean countries and better understand how it is perceived on the other side of the Mediterranean.

7. Statements from European heads of state and government on the idea to open regional disembarkation centres in North African countries without a proper consultation of these partners, have been badly received in southern Mediterranean countries.
8. The development of a more realist EU Foreign Policy and the need for the EU to take full responsibility for its own security, should not lead to renouncing to some of its foundational principles.
9. At a time when multilateralism is under serious threat and given that Euro-Mediterranean relations are still largely perceived as asymmetrical by southern Mediterranean countries, the Union for the Mediterranean uncontestably represents an institution to cherish and further strengthen.
10. Almost 25 years after the Barcelona Declaration, 10 years after the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, it is important to overcome the negativity of public debates on both sides. Leaders of the 43 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Union have a responsibility in contributing to a more positive public debate. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

is part of the solution to address issues such as climate change or youth unemployment. The Brexit largely happened as a result of a flawed public debate and the incapacities to explain the benefits of the European integration process over the last decade. Let's make sure both rims of the Mediterranean do not drift further apart as a result of equally misconceived public debates.

PLENARY SESSIONS

Opening Session

Abdelhak Bassou, Senior Fellow, OCP Policy Center, welcomed the participants and guests of the Annual Conference to Rabat on behalf of Karim El Aynaoui, General Director, OCP Policy Center. He highlighted the role of the EuroMeSCo network in building peace and tolerance in a Euro-Mediterranean area, affected by many crises.

Senén Florensa, Chair of EuroMeSCo General Assembly, welcomed the participants and thanked the OCP Policy Centre for hosting the Annual Conference in Rabat. He highlighted the importance of the 2018 edition of the annual gathering, which aimed to reverse the prevailing focus of discourses on Euro-Mediterranean relations and concentrate on how developments in Europe affect the southern Mediterranean partner countries and ultimately the Euro-Mediterranean relations.

In his intervention, **Ricardo Diez-Hochleitner**, Ambassador of Spain to Morocco, stressed the importance of EuroMeSCo in stirring awareness of citizens about the necessity and the benefits of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and in providing advice and recommendations to political stakeholders involved in Euromed relations. He highlighted the need to rebalance public debates on Euro-Mediterranean relations, currently dominated by a Eurocentric approach. Instead, more space should be given to Southern Mediterranean partner countries' perceptions of Europe. 22 years after launching of Barcelona Process and 10 years after creating the Union for the Mediterranean, and against the backdrop of renewed challenges in the region, there is a need to redouble the efforts and to act with a consensual and common vision of the opportunities which a more intense cooperation would bring. He highlighted the major role that the Union for the Mediterranean may play in this context. Euro-Med relations should not only be a matter of stability, but above all of awareness of the genuine interdependence of societies.

There is a need to rebalance public debates on Euro-Mediterranean relations, currently dominated by a Eurocentric approach.

Claudia Wiedey, Ambassador, Head of the EU Delegation to Morocco, highlighted the role of perceptions and perspectives in the Euro-Mediterranean relations. An example of how perceptions can easily change through pictures, and thus seriously affect Euromed relations is migration. A few years ago, the picture of a young drowned boy on the coast of Turkey aroused empathy and support to people fleeing from countries affected by war and crises.

Reflections on how to deal with the challenges cannot be limited to exchanges between governments and public institutions. EuroMeSCo has an important role to play in this context.

Those feelings have drastically changed and were replaced by fear when images of boats packed with migrants started to be disseminated. In many member states populism and anti-migration discourses have gained ground. Therefore, it is important to project both the success and the challenges, as the Euromed cooperation is made of the two. Ambassador Wiedey agreed that it matters to go beyond the narrative of stability and stress that shared vision and values are also pivotal for the relationship. In this context, Ambassador Wiedey cited the example of Morocco as a pioneer in Euromed relationship, which shows, beyond the issues that make headlines, what can be achieved if both parties are committed and have a joined agenda. Reflections on how to deal with the challenges cannot be limited to exchanges between governments and public institutions. In this context, EuroMeSCo, with its knowledge, research capacities and capability to think outside the box, has indeed an important role to play through continuing challenging the EU and providing input to the debates with in-depth multidimensional analyses.





KEYNOTE SPEECH

Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, commended the choice of the theme of the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference, agreeing that it is important to pay particular attention to how southern Mediterranean countries perceive Europe and Euro-Mediterranean relations.

He called for a paradigm shift in order to acknowledge that most of the Mediterranean challenges are genuinely common to both shores of the Mediterranean. While recognizing that the scope and scale of these challenges such as migration, pressures on democracies, youth unemployment, radicalisation and climate change, have reached unprecedented levels in the last few years, he also argued that the region has a great potential to become a vibrant economic and social centre. The Mediterranean is a fast growing platform for economic, energy and infrastructural connectivity between Europe, Africa and Asia. However, such a potential is untapped largely because of a lack of integration.

Euro-Mediterranean region's potential remains untapped due to a lack of integration.

In light of the unfolding scenario in the Mediterranean and in order to achieve progress, the focus should be on defining common priorities for cooperation and the ways to achieve them rather than on differences and divisions. Intensified dialogue and closer cooperation among all stakeholders are of the utmost importance. Therefore, the Union for the Mediterranean has a prominent role to play, as the only institution fostering regional dynamics in the Mediterranean, with 43 countries collectively responsible and on equal footing.

The Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean highlighted the importance of EuroMeSCo, which as the main network of think tanks on politics and security in the region, provides the UfM with key analyses and recommendations on the fields of work of the organisation. EuroMeSCo's role is particularly important now, he said, ahead of an important Ministerial meeting on 8 October 2018 that coincides with the 10 years anniversary of the UfM. EuroMeSCo should continue to strive to make its voice heard beyond circles of experts and to contribute to mainstream public debates.

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The State of Europe and Its Impact on Euro-Mediterranean Relations _____

Mohamed Loulichki (Chair), Senior Fellow, OCP Policy Center; **Katarzyna Pelczynska-Nalecz**, Director, ideaForum – a think tank of the Stefan Batory Foundation; **Ibrahim ElBadawi**, President, FEMISE; **Iliana Olivié**, Senior Analyst, Elcano Royal Institute; **Gilles Bertrand**, Policy Adviser, Managing Directorate for Middle East and North Africa, EEAS.

A number of developments and trends in European countries have been affecting the Euro-Mediterranean region and Euro-Mediterranean relations directly and indirectly.



One of the most significant challenges is the rising wave of populism in European states. Even when populist parties are not represented in governments, they tend to prompt the radicalisation of political discourses, narratives and strategies of the mainstream parties. The phenomenon of populism is correlated with the renationalization of European politics. The assumption that too often prevails that European affairs are a zero-sum game not only harms the EU decision-making process in areas such as migration, but also changes the patterns and dynamics of EU foreign policies. The Brexit is often analyzed as a victory of populist arguments and a materialization of the renationalization of European politics. The effects of Brexit for the Mediterranean region were also discussed. The MENA region could experience the greatest negative outcomes from the relocation of UK development funds from EU channels. However, the EU will remain the first global donor of aid and will keep its close ties with the MENA region, especially when it comes to socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. In this context, the benefits of the introduction of a Neighbourhood, Development and International

Rising wave of populism, correlated with the renationalization of European politics are challenging the European project and the role of the EU in the world including in the Mediterranean.

Cooperation Instrument that would combine existing external foreign policy instruments for EU cooperation with the MENA region were also discussed.

European populists have largely played and reinforced rising fears related to migration flows from or transiting through the MENA region. The media also hold some responsibility for blurring the boundaries between different issues such as migration and violent extremism. Under the combined effect of narratives developed by populist politicians and misconceived media coverage, mainstream European public opinion seems to have forgotten the fact that the level of home-grown violent extremism in Europe was rising.

Among other effects, the policy responses to the “migration crisis” and the externalization of migration policies to neighbouring countries (as illustrated by the EU-Turkey deal) have put at



stake the credibility of the EU. The panelists discussed how intra-European migration and labour movement in particular were increasingly questioned in many states. It is indeed mainly the alleged consequences of the immigration from EU member states such as Romania or Poland that were used as an argument by the Brexiters to make their case. This problem has been significantly underestimated by the European governments and should be addressed. While discussing this issue it

should be remembered that namely intra-European migration had contributed to the current prosperity of the Union. In any case, the panelists urged to reverse the biased and negative public debate by making experts in the area of migration more vocal.

Through public and private partnership the EU could accelerate positive developments by helping the MENA region to enter the global value chain.

The economic situation of the EU is another dimension that affects South and East Mediterranean countries and Euro-Mediterranean relations in general. The panel agreed that the current economic shape of the Union is solid, as illustrated by a strong and consistent GDP growth over the last 4 years which has a positive impact on the economic situation of the Mediterranean region even if the share of MENA region in the total European trade remains quite small and reaches only 4,5% and the share of EU investment in this region is even smaller – around 1%. As a panelist argued, there is a risk that the EU economy slides towards a so-



called “secular stagnation”, which can lead to a further declining trend of global investment, including in South and East Mediterranean countries. However, through public and private partnership the EU could accelerate positive developments by helping the MENA region to enter the global value chain. The role of the diaspora in integrating a particular country into the global value chain was also mentioned in the discussion (e.g. Lebanese diaspora in Brazil).

Overall, South and East Mediterranean countries could be harmed by more inward-looking EU policies that could result from political developments in Europe. The EU may become not only less capable but also less interested in playing a role as a normative power and in supporting transformation in third countries, in particular in the field of rule of law and human rights. However, with all its limitations and weaknesses and with the pressures it faces from inside and outside, the EU remains a predictable partner, unlike other global players in the world stage, and remains part of the solution rather than of the problem.

Despite its limitations and weaknesses, the EU remains part of the solution rather than of the problem.

How Southern Mediterranean Countries Engage with the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean?

Anis Nacrou (Chair), former Head of EU Delegation to Syria; **Omar Amghar**, Director of the Department of Morocco-EU Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; **Ehab Fawzy**, Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs and International Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egypt; **Nabil Ammar**, Director General Europe, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tunisia; **Marc Otte**, Senior Associate Fellow, EGMONT – Royal Institute for International Relations.

The second plenary session took stock of bilateral relations of selected south Mediterranean countries, namely Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia, with the EU, identifying the priorities to be followed in future cooperation. The regional dimension of cooperation was equally addressed, as the only way to effectively address the common challenges.

For Morocco, Europe has been a strategic partner because of geographical, historical and human factors.

For Morocco, Europe has been a strategic partner because of several factors, including geographical, historical and human. The relations between Morocco and the EU, which started in 1969 with a trade agreement, developed into an established partnership, with Europe being Morocco's first trade partner and investor. The signature of an Association Agreement constituted a milestone in the partnership, leading to an extended cooperation in political, social and cultural areas. The question of the Moroccan community in Europe, tourism, as well as development of cooperation in science and research were some of the main priorities at that time. The advanced status granted to Morocco in 2008 brought a new dynamic to the cooperation, leading to intensified trade cooperation, strengthened political dialogue on key common topics of interest, such as terrorism, as well as creating ground for cooperation among non-state actors. Nevertheless, it was observed that EU-Morocco relations faced numerous challenges, in particular in the field of agriculture and fishery. The common vision and interests helped to overcome those obstacles and develop increased cooperation, including on counter terrorism. Some challenges cannot be solved on a bilateral level. Cooperation on a regional level, through frameworks such as the Union for the Mediterranean, should be therefore given more attention and further promoted.



With regard to Egypt, it was noted that the country had always been a natural partner for the EU, because of many common challenges as addressed in the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2017-2020. Egypt is also very committed to the Euro-Mediterranean project. Confronting terrorism is one of the key challenges to be addressed jointly. In order to efficiently tackle this phenomenon, there is a need of a multifaceted regional strategy and an integrated approach, combining military and law enforcement, economic empowerment,



deradicalisation programs, education, as well as empowering local communities. Secondly, the prevailing sense of insecurity translates into increasing arms procurement that further challenges the regional security order and serves the interests of criminal networks and terrorists, as well as diverts budgetary allocations that could serve socio-economic purposes. More proactive disarmament policies and the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, are needed. The third challenge is sustainable development that Egypt is trying to address through increasing trade with African partners, carrying out economic reforms, attracting more investment as well as increasing technological and scientific cooperation. Migration was also mentioned as a key issue of common concern, which could be addressed through developing efficient integration policies and measures and a healthier debate in the European Union focusing on the opportunities as well as more support from the EU to efforts deployed by Egypt to curb illegal migration.

Last, more efforts should be made to prevent further escalation of current political crises in the region. Maintaining the unity and integrity of states, reaching a political solution as well as addressing the root causes of conflicts should be priority for all actors involved. EU-Egypt cooperation geared towards solving the Libyan crisis and reconciling Palestinian factions provide just some examples of this engagement. Such cooperation could be extended to conflicts in other theatres.

For Tunisia, the partnership with the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was presented as a civilizational project. Tunisia's objective is to increasingly link the country to the European space and to the EU, with which it shares common values and interests. Tunisia has put in considerable efforts to boost its partnership with the EU. However, for Tunisia to successfully

More proactive disarmament policies and the establishment of a zone free of WMD in the Middle East is needed.

The success of Tunisia transformation should be considered as a joint priority.

complete its political transition, more assistance, flexibility and commitment from its partners is needed. The success of Tunisia transformation should be considered as a joint priority.

In addition to bilateral relations, the regional Euro-Mediterranean dimension of cooperation should be promoted. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation should be given more visibility and a proper identity, by adopting more formal and consistent structures as well as further strengthening of regional frameworks of cooperation, in particular the Union for the Mediterranean. Concrete achievements and advantages of the partnership should be better communicated and disseminated to the citizens, with a focus on youth. Youth exchange, cultural and education programs should be boosted, to effectively tackle cleavages and clichés. Negative image of the Mediterranean disseminated by some media should be countered. Strengthening Euromed cooperation should be regarded through positive lenses, as a potential for growth for both shores of the Mediterranean.

There is a need to develop common vision of the Euro-Mediterranean and protect the Euro-Mediterranean project against electoral, populist and xenophobic agendas.

For the Euro-Mediterranean relations to be successful, there is a need of a more pragmatic approach. Currently, the Euro-Mediterranean relations are affected by internal political developments, such as elections, as well as by a lack of coherent political vision. There is a need to develop a common vision of the Euro-Mediterranean, above political divisions, as well as protect the Euro-Mediterranean project against electoral, populist and xenophobic agendas.

In the debate, the diversity of Southern Mediterranean partner countries was highlighted in terms of their relations with the EU and their perceptions of the European space. Those differences should be considered in order to design effective and tailored policies and strategies. Political courage, flexibility and solidarity, as pillars of a true partnership, should prevail over political calculations.



Closing Session

Before Ambassador Florensa as Chair of the EuroMeSCO General Assembly, and Abdelhak Bassou as host of the event concluded the Annual Conference, former Secretary General **Fathallah Sijilmassi** gave a keynote speech, where he highlighted two methodological key points that should be addressed in order to improve Euro-Mediterranean relations.

First, there is a need to reach a fine-tuned balance between the

lessons learned from the past, taking into account the process of Barcelona, and the actual global and regional agenda in matters such as migration, climate change or youth employment. Second, a focus on the content of policies should prevail over a focus on the container, the institutional mechanisms structuring Euro-Mediterranean relations. Once the content of public politics is well defined, finding the right formula for the container should not be a problem.

In this regard, Mr. Sijilmassi set two substantial guidelines: scaling up on the one hand regional integration among southern countries as well as the European-Mediterranean-African partnership and, on the other hand, sustainable human development with focus on youth education and women empowerment.

In order to face these challenges and meet up the goals, a strong growth rate is needed on both shores of the Mediterranean. This in turn can only be achieved if governmental plans are inclusive, by taking into account all stakeholders including enterprises, academics, think tanks and civil society.

A focus on the content of policies should prevail over a focus on the “container”.



WORKING SESSIONS

Is Europe Exporting Instability to the Southern Mediterranean? _____

Mohamed Masbah (Chair), Associate Fellow, Chatham House; **Moussa Bourekba**, Researcher, CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs; **Cigdem Ustun**, Associate Professor, CES – METU – Center for European Studies – Middle East Technical University; **Jana Treffler**, Intern, FES – Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung; **Roderick Parkes** (Chair), Senior Analyst, EUISS – European Union Institute for Security Studies.

The Southern Mediterranean region currently faces many crises and challenges. The session examined the extent to which those developments are triggered or aggravated by strategies and policies of external actors, with a focus on the EU and its Members States. Three case studies were examined: the approaches to countering and preventing violent extremism, the security assistance of some EU member states in Tunisia, as well as migration deals, as possible disrupting factors, which may affect the EU credibility.

A new approach of preventing violent extremism (PVE) complementing traditional ways of perceiving and fighting terrorism with new tools and focusing on countering the root causes of radicalization, has gained ground over the last years. International and regional action plans and strategies adopted subsequently have however failed to provide a clear definition of “violent



extremism”, leading each country to develop its own interpretation and policies to address it. Some commonalities can be however still observed. In Europe, radicalization is mostly understood as resulting from misinterpretations of Muslim religion by young Muslims. Moreover, the fact that most of the terrorist attacks were led by Moroccan or Tunisian descendants have centered the attention on failure of integration policies (and not on exclusive socio-economic policies).

In Southern Mediterranean countries, which have shifted towards PVE (Morocco, Tunisia,



Egypt), radicalisation is perceived as being a result of misunderstanding of Islam (and not a result of state repression). Consequently, those states tackle the phenomenon through controlling of religion in the public sphere (training Imams and fostering a moderate Islam), as well as through tight control of domestic population. Only Tunisia is recognizing socio-economic discrepancies as roots of radicalization.

These varying understandings of violent extremism may affect the dynamic of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. First of all, there is a tendency in Europe to outsource its domestic problems. Despite recognition of home-grown terrorism, most EU member states still tend to concentrate on diaspora, allowing security apparatus from Southern Mediterranean countries to expand their surveillance to diaspora in Europe. Secondly, many European countries extend their cooperation with neighbouring countries in the training of imams, which shows that radicalisation continues to be perceived as primarily linked to religion.

Perception of Southern Mediterranean countries a key stability and security partners leads the EU to overlook domestic repression and human rights violations.

Perception of Southern Mediterranean countries as key stability and security partners, leads the EU and its members states to often overlook domestic repression, human rights violations, as well as severe restrictions of civil liberties. Thus, it can be stated that instead of being a soft tool that complements hard approaches, the PVE contributes to reframing several policy issues (equality, fundamental rights, integration) from the perspective of counter terrorism and strengthens authoritarian regimes, considered as threat containers.

Misconceived security assistance may also have counterproductive effects. The German security assistance in Tunisia was presented as a possible case in this regard. Germany has always stressed its support to democratic transitions of Southern Mediterranean partner countries. The Security Sector Reform (SSR) plays an important role in Tunisian transformation from a police state to a civil democracy. However, SSR in post-revolutionary Tunisia encounters many obstacles including strong political polarisation of security sector leading to blocking of the reform initiatives for political reasons; growing regional instability and the rise of terrorism; difficult and incomplete transitional justice process resulting in the prevailing feeling of impunity; lack of regulations framing the prerogatives of newly-created police unions that tend to become themselves political stakeholders blocking reforms on political premises.

The main rationale behind the German assistance is to increase the security capacities of selected countries, thus allowing them to guarantee security and stability in their region. In this context, Germany has provided training and equipment to Tunisian police and security services, overlooking, however, some other important aspects of the SSR, such as promotion of respect of the rule of law and human rights. The cooperation with armed forces contributed to strengthening their position in opposing reform efforts. In order to assist Tunisia in undergoing democratic transition and ensure its long-term stability, a comprehensive, population-centered strategy would be needed instead.

Lastly, migration deals concluded by the EU with some neighbouring countries were analysed as another example illustrating the securitisation of EU approaches to Southern Mediterranean countries. The Turkey-EU deal reached in March 2016, as well as joint statement on migration situation in Libya issued in November 2017 amount to an attempt to externalise the migration issue and entail serious risks of serious breaches to human rights. Debates on extraterritorial processing of asylum application, which started in June 2018, the increase of the budget of Frontex, as well as launching of European border and coast guard confirmed this trend of externalization and securitization of EU policies. Moreover, financial aids to Turkey and Libya, and recognition of some Southern Mediterranean states a key partners in tackling the migration crisis contributed to legitimising authoritarian trends in some countries.

Those policy developments were said to strongly affect the credibility of the EU and its perception by civil society as a defender of values and human rights as well as peace and democracy promoter. On top of that, the mainstreaming of populism, the instrumentalisation of migration issue in national elections, as well as Brexit added up to question marks on the EU capacity to continue acting as a normative actor. For the EU to be considered a normative power rather than a pragmatic

EU migration policies affect the EU credibility and its perception as defender of values and human rights.

Mainstreaming of populism, instrumentalisation of migration issue in national elections and Brexit question EU capacity to continue acting as a normative actor.

Socio-economic development and education should be at the core of EU policies.

security focused actor, democratisation and respect of rule of law should be a priority in every agreement/deal or statement issued or reached with its neighbours. Social and economic development and education should be at the core of EU policies, as efficient ways to deal with migration flows. Lastly, international law should be the main guiding principle of all the policies and actions developed to control and manage migration.

Is Europe a Priority for Southern Mediterranean Partners? _____

Hassan Abouyoub (Chair), Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco in Italy; **Amr El Shobaki**, Senior Researcher, ACPSS – Al Ahran Centre for Political and Strategic Studies; **Cengiz Gunay**, Vice Director, OIIP – Austrian Institute for International Affairs; **Sherin Gharib**, Affiliated Researcher, OIIP – Austrian Institute for International Affairs; **Irene Fernandez-Molina**, Lecturer in International Relations, University of Exeter; **Rabha Allam**, Senior Researcher, ACPSS – Al Ahran Center for Political and Strategic Studies; **Ahmed Driss**, Director, CEMI – Centre des études méditerranéennes et internationales.

This session examined the role of the EU in the new Euro-Mediterranean dynamics after the Arab Spring characterized especially by restructuring southern societies, challenges to the previously established liberal international order and the emergence of new players in the region. Three case studies were analysed: the role of democracy in the revival of Euro-Mediterranean relations; the new-old elites and their responsiveness to EU Policies, the cases of Egypt and Tunisia; and power transition, rational choice and role conflict: explaining the trajectories of the Maghreb countries' EU Policies since 2011.



Before the Arab Spring, the European Union Neighbourhood policies have often reflected and exported the culture and dynamics of the European institutions. However, the EU has not intervened to impose democratic transition in the Southern Mediterranean. This approach has been seen as realist and state-centered one, supported by security concerns and the assumption that states in



the south are homogeneous entities. As the first case study shows, the EU's strategy helped its image remain quite positive among official levels, however, its consequences diverged in each country after the Arab Uprising.

In Egypt, following the failed democratic transformation of January 2011, a segment of pre-revolutionary regime made a comeback in a different form and with a new out-front narrative. The new regime openly affirms that the Arab world is not yet ready for democracy, nor the rule of the law and human rights. It prioritizes a powerful military rule that would counter terrorism and defeat extremist Islamist groups. Surprisingly, according to one of the participants, this narrative gained popularity among a part of the society.

The Egyptian new political scene is dominated by the military class and its social allies, a change in the elites that led to a smaller role for the EU. The regime's anti-liberal discourse emphasises the question of national sovereignty and of taking back control from foreign interventions. Nevertheless, this doesn't prevent it from willing to cooperate in limited sectors.

In contrast to the Egyptian case, transition in Tunisia has translated into a rise of a new political elite that depends on EU assistance and is willing to integrate EU norms in order to become a 'success story of the Arab Spring'. The Tunisian commitment culminated in the launch of negotiations for Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU in 2015.

In addition to the EU, other new players participate in the development of the Southern Mediterranean region after 2011. China is becoming an important piece in this equation in which the Maghreb countries seek new partnerships mainly in the economic sphere. That is the case of Algeria which ranks in the top of Chinese investments in the region. As for Morocco, it was

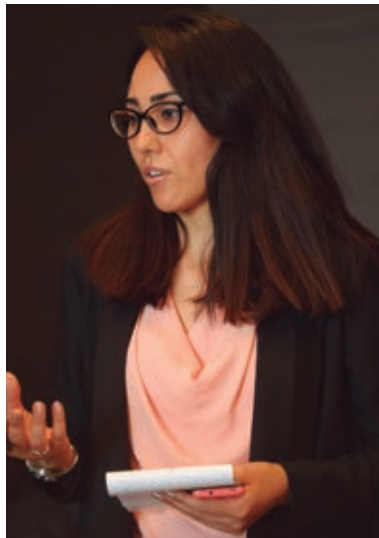
The Egyptian new political scene is dominated by the military class and its social allies, a change in the elites that led to a smaller role for the EU.

Putative decline of the Western-based liberal international order could result in gradual disengagement from the EU of some of its neighbouring countries.

observed that the putative decline of the Western-based liberal international order could result in its gradual disengagement as longstanding 'model student' of the EU.

Revitalising Euro-Mediterranean Relations

Munevver Cebeci (Chair), Associate Professor, European Union Institute, Marmara University, Istanbul; Visiting Professor, College of Europe-Natolin; **Larabi Jaidi**, Senior Fellow, OCP Policy Center; **Ivan Martin**, Professor, Universidad Pompeu Fabra; **Tasnim Abderrahim**, Junior Policy Officer, ECMPD – The European Centre for Development Policy Management; **Miguel Medina**, Professor, CEI International Affairs; **Nadine Abdalla**, Research Associate, AFA- Arab Forum for Alternatives; **Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues**, Associate Professor, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals; CIS Fellow, London School of Economics; **Giancarlo Sestini**, Board Member, Diplomatia.



This session examined the current state of play in Euro-Mediterranean relations and, taking into account a rising number of threats and challenges in the region, offered new ideas in order to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation with a particular focus on the Union for the Mediterranean. Three case studies were analysed: current formats of cooperation between Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries; developments in the EU migration cooperation with Morocco and Tunisia; and the capacity of the Union for the Mediterranean to deliver significant policy outputs and overcome obstacles and spoilers in Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Following the Arab Spring and the migration crisis, promoting stability in the region imposed itself on the top of the European list of concerns.

EU policies with regard to the Mediterranean region are characterized by specific approaches towards each south and east Mediterranean country. It can be explained by historical reasons as well as strategic interests. Various formats of special relationships between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners have emerged including the Advanced Status with Morocco and the Privileged Partnership with Tunisia. However, as a result of the Arab Spring and the migration crisis, pragmatic approaches geared towards promoting stability in the region imposed itself on the top of the European list of concerns, over normative democratization and socio-economic transformation

strategies. The EU plans to unify different cooperation instruments with the Southern Mediterranean countries after 2020. The participants acknowledged the difficulties of aligning these formats into one or several interconnected schemes, especially with regard to standardization of the contents of Association and Economic Partnership Agreements. Moreover, merging these frameworks can have strategic implications and be misinterpreted by EU partners.



Current patterns in the field of migration cooperation illustrate the differences between both sides of the Mediterranean. The limited progress of Mobility Partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia demonstrate that incentives do not guarantee the cooperation of partner countries and their willingness to discuss EU proposals. The participants agreed that disagreements of the Southern Mediterranean countries with some EU proposals over the migration issue are related to the inherently asymmetrical relationships imposed by the EU. The most difficult point of negotiations is the issue of readmission of the third country nationals. First, the controversy of the topic of readmission, especially of the nationals of third countries, prompted political concerns about sovereignty and image of Morocco and Tunisia. Second, readmission of nationals from Sub-Saharan Africa may be potentially at odd with Moroccan and Tunisian diplomatic efforts to strengthen their ties with countries of the region. Third, the concerns are shared by the civil society, worried about the readmission rules. It was also argued that the EU had failed to involve its partners thoroughly to discuss the European migration agenda. These factors put into question the feasibility of the joint readmission-visa facilitation policy approach.

Disagreement of the Southern Mediterranean countries with some EU proposals over the migration issue results from the asymmetrical relationships imposed by the EU.

The third case study was dedicated to the analysis of the role of the Union for the Mediterranean in light of the current challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Launched ten years ago,

The UfM can contribute to reinforcing political dialogues and promoting regional and subregional initiatives.

this institution aimed to overcome some of the flaws and shortcomings of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. However, the expected «Ufemisation» of Euro Mediterranean relations (a process by which the main stakeholders transfer or delegate responsibilities to the UfM) has not taken place. The UfM has been facing numerous obstacles to become a platform for solving political issues. However, based on a sectorial approach, the UfM can have a real impact on the life of citizens from South and Southeast Mediterranean countries. The UfM has also become a rather pragmatic institution that can contribute to reinforcing political dialogues and promoting regional and subregional initiatives.

TAKING STOCK OF EUROMESCO RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Concluding the 2017-2018 research groups

The Annual Conference was the opportunity for research groups developed in 2017-2018 to present the results of their work. The groups on “New Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean”, “Minorities in the Middle East and North Africa”, and “The EU-Tunisia Privileged Partnership” explained the main findings of their research, gathered in the three corresponding Joint Policy Studies, all available on the EuroMeSCo website.

Kicking off new research groups

Working Package: Cooperation with Religious Institutions as a European Policy Tool

Patrycja Sasnal (PISM – The Polish Institute of International Affairs), **Yasmine El Menouar** (DGAP – German Council on Foreign Relations) and **Sergio Altuna** (Elcano Royal Institute) presented the initial concepts of their research, which will materialize in a Joint Policy Study on the Religious Institutions as a European Policy Tool, to which **Georges Fahmi** (EUI – European University Institute) will also contribute as main author, as well as **Isabelle Werenfels** (SWP – German Institute for International and Security Affairs) as a reviewer.

The main goal would be to assess the scope and impact of the interactions both between European policy-making actors and religious institutions in Europe, and between religious institutions in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Joint Policy Study will aim to provide an overview of interactions between states and religious institutions in European policy formulation in several domains, including migration and integration processes, to analyse political roles, popularity and outreach of the religious institutions in the Maghreb, and to explore the cooperation between Al-Azhar and the Vatican in the sphere of



preventing violent extremism. The publication will also provide recommendations on policies and actions to be implemented by European policy-makers in order to foster collaboration with religious actors.

The main goal will be to assess the scope and impact of the interactions between European policy makers and religious institutions in Europe on the one hand, and between religious institutions in the Euro-Mediterranean region on the other.

Among other comments, a participant insisted on the importance of distinguishing between the management of religion, which is an internal issue in both Europe and Southern Mediterranean, and engagement of religion as an aspect of external religious diplomacy. Specific definitions to connect very diverse approaches to the topic and different ways of interpretations of relations between state and religion might be included in the Joint Policy Study. For instance, religious institutions are present in many European policy areas, such as security, external affairs, inclusion and accountability spheres. Participants to this session invited the authors to narrow down the field of research and to examine concrete policy areas important for the whole Euro-Mediterranean region. In order to make a research more manageable, authors might also clarify whether the concept of religious institutions used in the study includes informal religious institutions like preachers, Brotherhoods, Sufi orders, or involves only the formal ones. The concept of «religion», as well as its difference from the «religiosity», might also be clarified.

Working Package: The Role of Russia in the Middle East and North Africa. Strategy or Opportunism?



Valeria Talbot (ISPI – The Italian Institute for International Political Studies), **Youssef Cherif** (Columbia Global Centers Tunis) and **Christopher Hartwell** (Bournemouth University) presented the initial framing of the Joint Policy Study they would develop on “The Role of Russia in the MENA Region”. The research team will be as well composed of **Ziad Akl** (ACPSS – Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies), **Mira Milosevich** (Elcano Royal Institute), **Chiara Lovotti** (ISPI –

The Italian Institute for International Political Studies) and **Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti** (ISPI – The Italian Institute for International Political Studies) as main authors of the study, as well as **Marc Franco** (EGMONT – The Royal Institute of International Relations) as a reviewer.

The myth of a Russian “return” to the MENA region after a prolonged period of quasi-absence has captured increasing attention by policy makers and the scientific community. In particular, since late September 2015, the Russian military intervention in Syria has prompted the rise of expectations and speculations on Moscow’s intentions to impose itself as a central actor able to affect the course of events in the broader Middle East.

The Joint Policy Study will aim to determine the nature of Russian presence in the region (extemporaneous or planned, strategic or opportunistic), through analysis of the interests of Russia in the MENA region from historical and economic perspective, the Russian policy in the region since 2010, the influence of Russian presence on the balance of power in the region, as well as the perceptions of Russian policy by the West.

A participant to the session observed that Russia has no comprehensive strategy for the MENA region, placed at a second level compared to other regions (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, etc). The Russian strategy is to acquire global power/status and to undermine the United States’ role by cooperating with their enemies and weakening relations with their friends. Participants suggested that the analysis of perceptions of Russia’s role in the region can also include the individual perceptions of the EU member states. Similarly, authors might also consider how Russia policy is seen by the regional states, as well as examine its relations with Iran and with China, in view of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Russian economic capacity to sustain a greater external role it wants to play on a global arena can be equally examined.

Working Package: Les effets des changements climatiques au Sahel sur la sécurité humaine et globale dans le bassin méditerranéen

Abdelhak Bassou (OCP Policy Center), **Bouchra Rahmouni Benhida** (OCP Policy Center), **Amira Halim** (ACPSS - Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies), **Niklas Bremberg** (UI Swedish Institute of International Affairs) and **Patricia Lisa** (Elcano Royal Institute) presented the initial concepts they intend to develop in a Joint Policy Study, to which **Xira Ruiz-Campillo** (UNISCI - Research Unit on Security and Cooperation, Complutense University of Madrid) will also contribute as a reviewer.

The Joint Policy Study will aim to determine the nature of Russian presence in the region – extemporaneous or planned, strategic or opportunistic.

It was observed that the Sahel zone, due to its geography, demography, as well as its level of precarious development, is more threatened by the climate change than any other region of the world. The developments in the Sahel present as well direct challenges to the Mediterranean region.

Climate change as amplifier of population vulnerability, local criminal and terrorist groups, as well as EU responses to climate-related developments will be at the core of the Joint Policy Study.

The authors will examine how the climate change combined with the strong population growth in the Sahel countries amplify the vulnerability and poverty of the populations living in this area, as well as how criminal and terrorist groups exploit the vulnerability caused by climate change to achieve their objectives and increase their activities in this region. The Joint Policy Study will assess as well the EU responses to address climate-related developments, including its policies on migration and asylum to address environmental migration, as well as other climate-related security risks, with the aim to analyze how and under what conditions these responses can be effective.

Among other comments, the participants pointed out to some prevention methods such as education, which may mitigate climate change by developing a better water management, among others. The people movement resulting from environmental degradation as well as its impact on the creation of grey areas which become nest for criminals and human traffickers was also mentioned. The importance of interviewing local populations, analysis of best practices, as well as the need to support the study with recent data were equally highlighted.





Founded in 1996 and comprising 102 institutes from 30 European and South Mediterranean countries, EuroMeSCo (the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) is the main network of research centres on politics and security in the Mediterranean, striving at building a community of research institutes and think tanks committed to strengthening Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The objectives of the network are to foster influential quality analysis and reflection on Euro-Mediterranean politics and policies; to serve as a platform for dialogue between the members of the network and key stakeholders to discuss the key trends and challenges on the region's agenda; to increase the impact of think tanks and research institutes and to actively contribute to policy-making through dissemination of research outputs of the network to experts and national, European and international institutions linked to Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes a research programme with five publication lines (Joint Policy Studies, Papers, Briefs, Spot-Ons and reports), as well as numerous activities, including annual conferences, seminars, workshops, presentations, formal and informal meetings with policy makers on the key political and security dynamics. It also includes communication and dissemination related activities (website, newsletter and targeted institutional dissemination) to raise awareness and promote the work of the network and to stimulate debate on Euro-Mediterranean affairs.