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From Idealism to Pragmatism. Euro-Mediterranean Relations 20 Years after the Barcelona Declaration

Chiara Greco

University of Catania & University of Liège

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Abstract.

More than twenty years after the Barcelona Declaration, this paper wants to analyse the trajectory of Euro-Mediterranean relations by showing how the EU approach towards the Southern neighbourhood has changed from the ambitious region-building model imagined by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 to the more pragmatic Union for the Mediterranean (2008). The prioritization of security and the depoliticization of Euro-Mediterranean relations will be investigated as aspects of this pragmatism. The European Neighbourhood Policy will be also taken into account before reflecting upon its recent review at the end of 2015. The conclusion will resume some considerations on EU actorness and the attempt to build a foreign policy regime on behalf of the EU, without forgetting the importance of Southern Mediterranean actors.

1. Introduction

In the last decades, the European Union (EU) has launched different cooperation initiatives with its neighbours. The first attempt to build a Euro-Mediterranean region dates back to the 1995 Barcelona Declaration, which established the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) including, alongside European member states, the countries Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and the Palestinian Authority. In 2004, the EU adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which addresses both Eastern (Belarus, Moldavia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and Southern (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Palestinian Authority) neighbourhoods. In 2008, the EMP was relaunched as Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). This latest framework establishes collaboration with Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended), Tunisia and Turkey. In addition, the importance of the wider Middle Eastern context is recognized, since the participation of the Arab League is envisaged in all UfM meetings.

The failure or the ineffectiveness of these initiatives have been differently acknowledged by scholars. Notwithstanding the failure of the EMP region-building model, some scholars have argued that the adoption of bilateral differentiation that characterizes the ENP is incapable of triggering region-building dynamics (Adler and Crawford 2006). Others have viewed the ENP as a good complement to the EMP, whose holistic region-building approach is difficult to achieve in the Mediterranean (see, for instance, Pace 2007). In other studies, functionalist bilateralism has been considered as a strategy to promote EU-centred reforms (see, for instance, Smith 2005), which relegates neighbours to a 'peripheral dependence' (Joffé 2007). Nevertheless, the ENP bilateralism and the UfM selective cooperation could be appreciated as the only way to cooperate in tackling common problems.

More than twenty years after the Barcelona Declaration, this paper aims to assess what is left of the region-building process that was set in motion in the

1990s, by highlighting some relevant aspects that show, in the overall EU Mediterranean policy trajectory, a shift from idealism toward pragmatism. For this purpose, the paper departs from the idea that there is not a unique Mediterranean policy (Panebianco 2008, 2012b). Rather, distinct cooperation frameworks coexist, namely the EMP/UfM and the ENP, and it is difficult to assess which region-building model or approach predominates (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:138). First, the paper will make an overview of the different EU approaches toward the Mediterranean neighbourhood, by retracing the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean relations from the idea of a multilateral partnership to the more pragmatic and flexible UfM based on *à la carte* cooperation. Second, it will draw the attention on the importance of security and stability in all the cooperation frameworks and on the prioritization of security concerns over promotion of values in the neighbourhood. Third, the (de)politicization of Euro-Mediterranean relations will be taken into account as one of the aspects of the general pragmatism. The last part will reflect upon the Review of the ENP at the end of 2015 as part of the broader Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy the EU adopted in June 2016.

The conclusion will state that the EU is a pragmatic actor, will resume the debate about EU (in)coherence and (in)consistency by underlining the interrelation between interests and values in EU external action, and it will stress intra-EU and intra-South divisions and the importance of Southern actors in any further development in the region. The focus will be on Middle Eastern countries, insofar as Cyprus and Malta eventually joined the EU in 2004, Turkey has initiated the accession process in 2005 and the Balkan countries constitute a minority, albeit contributing to the diversity and complexity of the region.

2. From holistic region-building, through differentiated bilateralism to selective cooperation

Since the 1970s, a process was set in motion to encourage tighter regional interactions in the Mediterranean. In 1972, the then European Community adopted the Global Mediterranean Policy (1972-1991), swiftly followed by the Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1991-1995). These policies tried to create a multilateral cooperation framework, yet they failed and merely 'resulted in a

bilateral policy based upon trade, financial and technical cooperation'
(Panebianco 2008:116). In 1995, the innovative EMP optimistically launched a
region-building process, whose multilateral dimension was an undeniable
achievement if compared to the former years of Euro-Mediterranean relations
(Bicchi 2011:8). The Barcelona Declaration indeed envisaged the goal of
creating an area of peace, stability and shared prosperity (Barcelona Declaration
1995:2-3) in the Mediterranean.

The holistic region-wide cooperation conceived by the EMP is far from being
achieved and is currently being put aside. Twenty years ago, the EMP
established three broad dimensions of regional cooperation: the Political and
Security Partnership, the Economic and Financial Partnership and the Social,
Cultural and Human Partnership. Nevertheless, the most concrete and *de facto*
implemented of the three has been the economic dimension (Barbé and
Herranz Surrallés 2010:134). The EMP was conceived as multilateral, although
a complementary bilateral dimension was provided between the EU and the
countries that signed the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements. The
multilateralism prospected by the EMP has been difficult to sustain, therefore
bilateral differentiation and selective cooperation have replaced the early
holistic approach (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:130). Moreover, while the
EMP was conceived with a normative rationale (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés
2010:134), the evolution toward more pragmatic approaches implied a
weakening of the normative aspect.

With the ENP, bilateralism and differentiation have become the guiding
principles. Leaving aside the overambitious original project of a Euro-Med
region, the EU inscribed both Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods in the
same framework, deciding to deal singularly with its partners. Therefore, it
abandoned the region-building intent in favour of bilateralism, seen as being
more suitable to deal with states of an incompact area. As the major objective
of the ENP was bilateral integration with the EU, the ENP seemed to
contradict the regionalism of the EMP (Holden 2011:160). While the EMP
framework envisaged negative conditionality to foster political change, the ENP
opted for the "more for more" principle, or positive conditionality, 'using
benchmarking of human rights and democratic development' (Panebianco
2008:119). Moreover, with the ENP, the EU assumed stability in the

neighbourhood as its crucial interest (Panebianco 2012a:156). In such a context, scholars were divided over the role of bilateral differentiation. Whereas for someone it was incapable of triggering deeper region-building dynamics (Adler and Crawford 2006), to the eyes of others it stood out as a positive turn towards a better accommodation of partners' preferences (see Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:136), and convergence with the EU.

Drawing from an idea of the French President Sarkozy to move towards a Mediterranean Union, the UfM was eventually created in 2008 as a new relaunch of the EMP. The UfM established a flexible approach based on *à la carte* cooperation, i.e. 'a framework designed to identify projects of common interest that can be carried by a particular group of countries, not necessarily involving all EMP partners' (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:137). Since the Barcelona Declaration, the context had changed: the EU had nearly doubled its size and this enlargement influenced its agenda and the reduced multilateral approach toward the Southern neighbourhood (Bicchi 2011:5). Nevertheless, the UfM has in its turn crystallized a time-specific political context with its set of preferences and constellation of powers (Bicchi 2011:4), something which makes UfM institutions outdated in the present-day context. As Comelli explains, 'while the EMP's aim was the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean region, Sarkozy's aim was to develop a Mediterranean region through intra-sub-regional cooperation between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean' (Comelli 2010:399). The proposal of a new organisation excluding non-Mediterranean (in its deceptive geographical sense) EU member states was unacceptable to countries such as United Kingdom and Germany, as both have interests in the region.

Despite Germany's will to maintain the framework "European", the participation in the UfM is fragmented and diverse on the part of European states, as well as on the non-EU countries' side. Slightly adapting Bicchi's schematization, while the EMP imagined a relation EU+Med, and the ENP focused on EU+single countries relations, the UfM is mostly made up of a relation of the type single country(ies)+single country(ies) (Bicchi 2011:10). Moreover, the UfM tried to readjust the too much EU-centred ENP by introducing a Southern co-presidency, with the idea of offering 'partner countries the potential for more leverage over agenda-setting and the negotiated

outcome' (Johansson-Nogués 2011:26). The Southern presidency was occupied by Egypt from 2008 to 2012 and is currently held by Jordan. The enhancement of co-ownership promoted by France would imply the empowerment of partners in all areas of co-operation and at all UfM levels in order to reach a cooperation based on intergovernmental consensus (Johansson-Nogués 2011:23). However, Southern Mediterranean countries have often complained for being informed late on the EU agenda and for their low consideration in a process that seems to be mostly controlled by the EU Presidency and the EU bodies (Johansson-Nogués 2011:22). France has imposed its leadership and monopolized Northern presidency until 2012, year in which the EU replaced France. French leadership apparently meant a loss of multilateralism (Bicchi 2011:10). Other innovations of the UfM were top-level intergovernmental meetings every two years between Heads of states and a very small Secretariat, which was originally planned for early 2009 but that started to function in 2010 because of Arab-Israeli tensions.

The UfM has a 'project-tailored structure' (Panebianco 2008:121) that focuses mainly on business development, energy, water and environment, urban and transport development, education and civil protection. The limited development of these six priority areas, however, can hardly lead to the realization of Sarkozy's early ambitions. UfM projects may reveal a functionalist rationale but Bicchi has highlighted that functionalism has not adapted to this framework so far (Bicchi 2011:11). In fact, it is questionable whether neo-functionalism can lead to wider regional cooperation in the Mediterranean. Panebianco argues that in the Mediterranean "maybe more than in other areas 'states count' [...] If state actors are able to control regional dynamics, there is no room for any spontaneous spill-over towards more regional integration" (Panebianco 2010). Holden specifies that the UfM differs from functionalism as conceived by Mitrany (1975) because it is not a specialist organisation but rather an 'overachieving framework which deals with various socio-economic sectors' and it is highly politicized (Holden 2011:165). The latter is a controversial aspect, which will be discussed in more details in the following paragraphs. As Holden points out, however, 'what is noteworthy is a greater emphasis on the discourse on visible, tangible development projects that directly affect the lives of ordinary people' (Holden 2011:164). Women empowerment is currently an important feature of the UfM initiatives. Five out

of seven projects activated between 2012 and 2015 in the social and civil affairs area were entirely focused on women.

The overall EU Mediterranean policy trajectory shows the abandon of multilateral region-building processes in favour of more pragmatic solutions to a difficult cooperation. As Barbé and Herranz Surrallés suggest, 'assessing whether differentiation boosts convergence and region-wide intensified cooperation or leads to fragmentation of the Euro-Med space is an empirical question that should be addressed in the context of specific policy domains' (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:138). In this regard, Bicchi argues that the UfM has more elements of change rather than elements of continuity in comparison to the EMP and it has signified a step towards fragmentation in an artificial region (Bicchi 2011:5). In her vision, the UfM has weakened the EU region-building strategy in the Mediterranean (Bicchi 2011:8). The alleged co-ownership remains a mirage. 'The UfM is once again an initiative that claims to be Mediterranean but that actually originates from an EU Mediterranean country. For this reason, the non-EU Mediterranean countries have displayed a reactive rather than proactive response' (Comelli 2010:401).

The shift from ideal regionalism to pragmatic cooperation in the evolution of EU cooperation frameworks with the Southern neighbourhood is in line with the idea of the EU as an adaptive actor that tries to achieve stable and beneficial cooperation by adjusting its policies to better suit the changing global and regional conditions. The Arab-Israeli conflict has played a crucial role in Euro-Mediterranean relations. While the optimism for a possible resolution of hostilities went hand in hand with the Barcelona Declaration, a recrudescence of the Arab-Israeli conflict impaired the whole process by hindering the advancement of cooperation and created the necessity of sub-regional frameworks such as the 5+5 dialogue of the Western Mediterranean (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:135). Extraordinarily, Israel and the Palestinian Authority were in fact in the same EMP, whose creation was linked to the optimism for the Peace Process following the 1993 Declaration of Principles (Seeberg 2011:14). When the UfM was launched in July 2008, few months later the Israeli incursion into Gaza, the consequent worsening of the relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians had a direct effect on cooperation. Some Arab states blocked the ministerial meetings of early 2009 (Seeberg

2011:13), bringing the UfM to a standstill. Since then, the deteriorated situation in the Middle East has been an obstacle to cooperation, although intra-European fragmentation should be taken also into account (Bicchi 2011:10). Even if some meetings were resumed later on, they continued to be conditioned by the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Johansson-Nogués 2011:31). The biannual summit that should have taken place in 2010 was postponed and no UfM foreign ministers' annual meeting has been held since the one in Marseille in 2008. It is only in 2011 that the UfM labelled its first project -the creation of a desalination facility in Gaza- which seems to have taken some concrete steps. From 2012 until today, the number of projects has increased to 37, with many currently in the implementation phase, plus 4 approved on 16 February 2015, for a total of 41 projects.

Apparently, so far, the comprehensive goal of making an area of peace and stability, the economic goal of developing an area of shared prosperity and the social goal of creating a democratic multicultural area as imagined by the EMP have failed at large. Particular attention deserves the 'Mediterranean Free Trade Area' (EMFTA) that the Barcelona Declaration wished to implement by 2010. The Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements aimed at a progressive removal of the barriers to trade and investments between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries and among Southern Mediterranean countries themselves. The Agreements were signed, and later entered into force, by Tunisia (1995; 1998), Israel (1995; 2000), Morocco (1996; 2000), Palestinian Authority (1997; 1997), Jordan (1997; 2002), Egypt (2001; 2004), Lebanon (2002; 2003) and Algeria (2002; 2005). As Holden points out, 'the major thrust of its [of the EU] policies is based on regional and global trade liberalization' as the EU generally makes use of a 'an instrumental […] neo-liberal approach to external economic policy, and this is reflected in its approach to regionalism' (Holden 2011:158). The EMFTA is regarded as 'an essential element' of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (Barcelona Declaration 1995:21) and such intent remains unaltered in the ENP. In 1995, the objective concerned essentially trade in goods, now it envisages agricultural and service sector's liberalization, as the Advanced Status Agreement signed with Morocco especially confirms. Moreover, 'the pressure of EU trade liberalization policies, combined with global pressures, has encouraged other intra-Mediterranean trade arrangements most notably the Agadir Agreement (2004), which has

developed free trade between Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia' (Holden 2011:160). Although progress has been made, especially with Tunisia and Morocco, the goal of a fully-fledged EMFTA missed the 2010 deadline. The reasons include the different positions of European actors regarding the EMFTA and the role of other international actors in the region, as well as persistent tensions in the Mediterranean and very low South-South cooperation and sub-regional trade. Even in the most advanced of the three original EMP dimensions, such as the economic one, Euro-Mediterranean relations still reveal a pattern of the type EU+single countries rather than a genuine regional partnership system.

3. Security above all

If the Barcelona Declaration called for the defence of common values, the most recent evolution of the processes in the region seems to be based on the pursuit of common interests and on the problem of shared security issues. Scholars have talked about the increased attention that the EU has been giving to security in recent times, something Kausch and Youngs refer to as a 'securitization' dynamic (Kausch and Youngs 2009:968) of the EU agenda. This tendency is to be linked to the emergence in the 1990s of a new multidimensional security concept that encompasses -apart from the traditional military dimension- human, environmental and economic aspects. This approach to security has had an impact on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation frameworks starting from the 1995 EMP. The Chapter on the Political and Security Partnership of the Barcelona Declaration can be considered as the 'early official text of cooperative security building in the Mediterranean and the fundamental agreement of a regional security partnership' (Attinà 2013:132). The EMP envisaged the creation of a security partnership in terms of a commitment to the establishment of a 'common area of peace and stability' (Barcelona Declaration 1995:2). This goal has to be attained through political dialogue, development of the rule of law and democracy, respect of human rights and pluralism, respect of international law, enhancement of cooperation in fighting terrorism and organised crime, and promotion of regional security by adhering to nuclear and chemical non-proliferation (Barcelona Declaration 1995:2-3). Nevertheless, the attempt of a specific Mediterranean Charter of Peace and Stability was a failure,

as Mediterranean governments had divergent perceptions of the existing threats and of the risks to stability and security of the region (Attinà 2013:132). Although the Barcelona Declaration agreed on a regional security partnership, Middle East conflicts, post-9/11 anti-terrorism policies and the adoption of the ENP slowed down the security partnership-building process (ibid.). Today, a number of elements, such as rising extremism, the unsolved Palestinian question, the global repercussions of the Syrian conflict and the refugee crisis are reasons of tension in the Mediterranean. In addition, from the region-building perspective, a 'security culture gap' between European and Arab countries seems to exist (Attinà 2013:127). While Europe experienced the Helsinki Process, most of its Arab neighbours have not experienced security cooperation-building processes of the same level. In addition, Arab countries have generally been suspicious of the European security and military dimension, especially with regard to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Comelli 2010:393). In order to talk about a regional Mediterranean security, what has not been achieved is the co-management of security issues, especially because security in a region requires governments to share similar views about the management of security problems (Attinà 2013:129).

In the 2000s, three security priorities have emerged both at the global and regional level: terrorism, migration, energy. The EU has adjusted its external action strategies accordingly (Panebianco 2008:120). With the ENP, the securitization of neighbours has become a paramount interest as requisite for EU's own stability (Panebianco 2008:124): having stable neighbours reduces migratory inflows and the rise of extremism as well as safeguards economic interests. The intrinsic linkage between EU internal and external security concerns and needs has thus been acknowledged (Ioannides 2014:114). 9/11 and the "global war on terror", together with the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London terrorist attacks, had a major role in making terrorism one of the most relevant issues of the security agenda. Since the 2000s, migration has been increasingly defined as a security concern with the result of an exclusionist approach to security towards North Africa (Kausch and Youngs 2011:965).

Frontex started to negotiate agreements on the return of migrants, with North African states as its primary targets (Kausch and Youngs 2011:966). The 5+5 Dialogue on Migration established in 2002 made up of 10 members (Algeria,

France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia) was especially intended as a security forum to control migration flows. With the combination of terrorist attacks, energetic crises and the identification of migration as a security issue, the main threats to European security and the most sensitive issues to be addressed in the Mediterranean have become terrorism, shortage of energy supply and migration (Panebianco 2008:120).

As a consequence, the ENP framework adopted economic integration, mobility management and energy security as key cooperation areas. Generally, cooperation with neighbours was primarily conceived as a way to combat illegal immigration, to reinforce energy security and to safeguard EU citizens from terrorist acts (Panebianco 2008:126). At the regional level, a code of conduct for counterterrorism was adopted in 2005. Energy is also one of the priority areas of the UfM and in 2015 a Climate Change Expert Groups was formed together with an Extended Technical Committee on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. Projects in the field of energy are extremely important for two reasons. First, North Africa is an increasingly significant supplier of energy to Europe. Second, the EU has always encountered difficulties in creating an integrated energy market and in building the Southern gas corridor (Ioannides 2014:120). The recent Paris terrorist attack in November 2015 and refugee flows are keeping terrorism and migration high on the agenda. Concerning migration, only three mobility partnerships were established bilaterally with Morocco (2013), Tunisia (2014) and Jordan (2014). The EU Global strategy on Foreign and Security Policy that the HR/VP Mogherini presented in June 2016 will have to deal with counterterrorism, migration management and energy security in view of the internal-external security nexus.

The case of the Arab uprisings started in 2010 exemplifies how security counts as a priority for the EU in the relations with the neighbourhood. In theory, the Arab Spring's demand for dignity and freedom against authoritarian regimes was seen by the EU as a confirmation of the attractiveness of its democratic values (Noutcheva 2015:21), which the EU to reinforce the normative commitment for democracy support in its discourse (Noutcheva 2015:24). Yet, in practice, security came first at the level of implementation (Dandashly 2015). Despite the EU strategic creation of the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity and the review of the ENP in 2011, 'as the events developed, the

security threat resulting from instability in the MENA pushed the EU to prioritize its security concerns' (Dandashly 2015:50). In particular, it was the fear of illegal migrants coming to Europe that led the EU to prioritize security over democracy promotion (Dandashly 2015:41). Nevertheless, it would be misleading to assume that democracy promotion is exempt from interests. In fact, Europe supported authoritarian regimes and avoided democracy promotion all the times the latter could have destabilizing effects, while it made a narrative shift toward active democratic support and elaborated a new strategy when people in the Southern neighbourhood started protesting against those very same regimes. As Panebianco argues, 'democracy promotion (or the lack of it), instead of being a normative objective, has been an instrumental strategy to pursue regional security' (Panebianco 2012a:158).

4. The (de)politicization of Euro-Mediterranean relations

For some scholars, depoliticization increasingly characterizes EU policies towards the Mediterranean (Seeberg 2010). According to Seeberg, the substance of the UfM is indeed pragmatism and depoliticization (Seeberg 2011:14). The pragmatic rationale appears to be significantly linked to the ENP, rather than being just a relaunch of the EMP. In this sense, the UfM has proven to be a continuum of the closer ENP in terms of pragmatism and even bilateralism to some extent. Seeberg states that the 'overall pragmatic tendency in EU foreign policy toward the Middle East, as it is expressed through the bilateral channels of the ENP, in many ways can be said to continue in the UfM, but here in a multilateral setting' (Seeberg 2010:293). By contrast, Bicchi argues that the shift in the governance structure has shown a loss in terms of the multilateral fora wanted by the EMP and an increase in the bilateral relations exemplified by the ENP approach (Bicchi 2011:5).

This paper lean towards Bicchi's argument in this regard, since it seems that intergovernmentalism as found inside the UfM leaves little space for practices that are really multilateral and in favour of bilateral or sub-regional cooperation dynamics. Concerning depoliticization, Bicchi claims that politicization characterizes the UfM institutional setting (ibid.) and is sceptical that the depoliticization of the regional dimension of Euro-Mediterranean relations will

occur (Bicchi 2011:8). This paper suggests that we can speak of depoliticization with regard to the flexible and selective cooperation approach in which political reforms and democratic governance in the neighbourhood do not have a key role. In fact, the priority areas of the UfM do not interfere much with the "authoritarian sphere" of the partner countries. However, since the UfM works as an intergovernmental framework, the relations remain politicized (Bicchi 2011). At the level of the institutional governance, conflicts among parties certainly influence the execution of the work, as the boycotts and postponements of meetings have proven to be the case. In this perspective, politicization is unavoidable, not only because of a divided and conflictual Middle East but also because of the disagreement among EU member states and their different degree of interest. Nevertheless, from the point of view of an EU-led UfM, obstacles have mostly come from the Southern part, especially in relation to Arab-Israeli conflictual relations. Having considered that the UfM 'is highly politicized at the regional level, because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, while at the same time it is depoliticized in its content, because of the low interest in any project of political transformation' (Bicchi 2011:14), the term 'depoliticization' is thus used below in comparison to the level of politicization of the EMP.

In the sense specified above, the progressive depoliticization is retraceable in the evolution of the cooperation frameworks promoted by the EU until the culmination of the 'pragmatic and technical cooperation, unencumbered by sensitive political issues' of the UfM (Kausch and Youngs 2011:964). A clarification is necessary concerning the instruments: the EMP envisaged negative conditionality to foster political change in its Mediterranean partners but it was never really implemented given EU support for past authoritarian regimes in the Southern Mediterranean in the name of stability. The ENP preferred to adopt positive conditionality and gave priority to security and stability in the neighbourhood. Although political and democratic reforms are considered in the ENP, 'the operative instruments remain weakly identified, as if the EU wanted to avoid any destabilising effect provoked by political and democratic reforms' (Panebianco 2008:118). Nevertheless, the EU has revealed a tendency to replicate its own model in the neighbourhoods. The economic dimension has always been fundamental together with the belief that development and free trade eventually trigger democratization. The result has

been an unsuccessful strategy to promote liberal democratization through a Western-type economic development based on the assumption that what has worked for Europe must also work for the others (Panebianco 2012a:160). The economic chapter of the EMP promotes economic and institutional reform in partner states (Barcelona Declaration 1995:4-5), while there is no such emphasis on strategic policy reforms in the most recent UfM, which focuses on socio-economic projects. Some scholars have viewed pragmatism and differentiation as the only way to make progress in tackling common problems, thus bypassing the 'Achilles heels of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership thus far: the assumption of the "common Mediterranean space" and of regime commitment to domestic reform' (Calleya 2006:129). The ENP initial idea of creating a 'Ring of Friends' using positive conditionality eventually meant, according to Seeberg, the adoption of pragmatic policies (Seeberg 2011:14). This tendency toward pragmatism has become even more evident with the UfM, where the force of attracting neighbours into cooperation continues to be preferred over coercive means (Bicchi 2011:8). According to Holden, although the ethos may not be in itself 'neo-liberal', 'the UfM in fact does not replace the EU's core "trade and integration" policy' because it does not replace the previous policies nor it represents a new beginning in Euro-Mediterranean relations but it is rather an addition to EU foreign policy (Holden 2011:155). By now, the ENP and the UfM reveal a pragmatic attitude that seems to maintain the impression of the EU as a primarily economic actor in the region (Seeberg 2011:14). In fact, the UfM 'downsizes the political significance of EU foreign policy towards the area, although it also introduces a degree of realism' (Bicchi 2011:8).

It has been reasonably pointed out that the depoliticization of the UfM priority areas is a considerable advantage from the perspective of Arab authoritarian regimes, which can skate over macro-political goal such as democratization (Schlumberger 2011). Actually, Bicchi observes that the early 'dialogue about democracy' has vanished (Bicchi 2011:5) and that "the political project of 'constructing a Mediterranean region' based on democracy and human rights has been largely abandoned amid a progressive fragmentation of efforts" (Bicchi 2011:14). From the European perspective, some scholars have been sceptical about the UfM because of 'the risk of inconsistency between the pragmatic UfM approach and the wider political or pro-reform aims of the

EMP and the ENP' (Barbé and Herranz Surrallés 2010:138), at least as claimed in EU discourses.

Nevertheless, according to Seeberg the ENP and the UfM can be interpreted as an attempt to construct a foreign policy regime on behalf of the EU (Seeberg 2011:14). Quoting Dannreuther and Krasner, he views EU strategy in the Middle East as one of 'regime building' aimed at establishing principles, norms and rules regarding EU international behaviour (Seeberg 2011:1). Gillespie recalls that the UfM is first and foremost an aspect of European foreign policy (Gillespie 2008:278). Interestingly, apart from the private sector, member states and international financial institutions, the UfM has received funds from the EU through the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) and from 2014 through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the financial instruments of the ENP. This is an additional confirmation of the fact that the UfM does not replace the previous EU policy frameworks but rather represents an addition to the complex EU Mediterranean policy. As Comelli points out, since no specific funding has been allocated for the UfM, the result is that the ENP, which was not conceived as a Mediterranean policy, is the most concrete policy in the Mediterranean (Comelli 2010:401). As Johansson-Nogués writes with regard to the UfM co-presidency, according to the Marseille Declaration (2008:4), the EU part of the co-Presidency 'must be compatible with the external representation of the European Union in accordance with the Treaty provisions in force'. (Johansson-Nogués 2011:26). This shows the attempt of keeping the UfM under the supervision of the EU and of making the UfM coherent with the EU's overall image. In 2012, the co-presidency has been assumed by the EU, thus ensuring a closer link with the ENP. The review of the ENP by the European Commission on 18 November 2015 again confirms the attempt of building a comprehensive EU foreign policy regime when it says that 'this review has been closely coordinated as part of the broader work on the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy' (Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy 2015:3). This also signals the increased importance of the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who at this point represents the Northern co-presidency of the UfM.

5. An overview of the 2015 review of the ENP

In order to reflect upon the most recent developments of the relations between the EU and its neighbours, it is worth having a look at the Review of the ENP presented by the European Commission in November 2015. Some main points for the purposes of this paper will be highlighted to see if the review is coherent with what has been noticed so far and whether the EU may have the intention of modifying the trajectory of Euro-Mediterranean relations. In the Review, the following aspects are observable:

- *Short-term priorities:*

'Stabilising the neighbourhood' (p. 3) is seen as the most urgent and pressing challenge in the short-term. The Review recognizes that the causes of instability are various and vast – poverty, inequality, injustice, corruption, weak economic and social development, lack of opportunity for young people – and expresses the concern that they increase the vulnerability to radicalization. Supporting economies, improving prospects for the local population and tackling uncontrolled movement of people are efforts to be made. More engagement with partners in the security sector is strongly encouraged. (pp. 3-4)

- *Nature and range of the partnership*:

The Review states that 'partnership should be more focused on fewer priorities' (p. 4). It also considers that European partners have different aspirations. Relations with partners who wish to pursue deeper relations are to be encouraged (p. 4). As far as the regional dimension is concerned, Euro-Med cooperation is confirmed through the UfM: 'regional cooperation in the Southern neighbourhood has seen progress through the Union for the Mediterranean. The organisation has proved to be a valuable forum for political and economic discussion' (p. 18). Further developments may concern an outreach beyond the boundaries of the ENP area and new thematic frameworks with migration, energy and security as priorities (p. 18).

- *Ownership*:

'Ownership by both sides' should be enhanced. The ENP should reflect EU interests and the partners' interests. A new engagement in 2016 envisages 'the

possibility to jointly set new partnership priorities, which would focus each relationship more clearly on commonly identified shared interests' (p. 4).

- *Instruments*:

The Review recognizes the limits of the "more for more" principle and argues that the incentive-based approach is effective in supporting reforms in the fields of good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights, only where there is political commitment by partners to such reforms (p. 5). Therefore, the Review states the necessity of exploring more effective ways for the EU 'to make its case for fundamental reforms with partners, including through engagement with civil, economic and social actors' (p. 5). ENI remains the main financial instrument (p. 19).

- *EU actorness*:

The Review calls for coherence and unity among member states: 'there should be greater involvement of Member States in the ENP' (p. 4); 'the new ENP should be the focus for a more coherent effort by the EU and the Member States. The EU is more influential when united in a common approach and communicating a single message' (p. 5). The Review also reaffirms the commitment in promoting 'universal values through the ENP' (p. 5). It stresses the importance of the rule of law, independent justice systems, institutional accountability and transparency, protection of human rights and gender equality, as crucial elements to social and economic stability and goals to be pursued in the neighbourhood (pp. 5-6). The support for civil society is also mentioned (p. 6).

- *Joint priorities for cooperation*:

-'Economic development for stabilization' (p. 7): concerning trade, the 'creation of an economic area with those who enter the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)' is envisaged while lighter options should be negotiated with partners who do not wish to pursue such objective (pp. 7-8). Other issues are 'economic modernisation and entrepreneurship' (p. 8); 'employment and employability', especially of the youth (p. 9), 'transport and connectivity' (p. 10); 'energy security and climate action' (p. 11).

-Priorities in the 'security dimension' involve security sector reform, crisis management and tackling of radicalisation, terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime (pp. 12-14).

-'Migration and mobility' (p. 15): increased cooperation with partners beyond the neighbourhood, tackling illegal migration, facilitation of beneficial high-skilled migration and circular migration, supporting neighbours in hosting refugees and border management are matters of concern (pp. 15-17).

From this brief overview, we can observe that the Review of the ENP is calling for differentiation, bilateralism and selective cooperation (point 2), that may lead to more fragmentation in the South because of the privileged status of some countries. Despite the slow progress of the UfM, the Review reaffirms the UfM as a framework for regional cooperation and vaguely encourages further regional cooperation efforts (point 2). The belief in the power of economic development and institutional reform to counter instability and conflict persists in the logic of the EU (point 6). Regarding security, the priorities have not changed (points 1-2-5). Still today, as Seeberg remarked in 2010, the EU agenda 'is attached to a pragmatic scheme, which apart from the pragmatism partly can be explained by the focus on security in European foreign policy' (Seeberg 2010:300). The Review confirms that 'the most urgent challenge in many parts of the neighbourhood is stabilisation' (point 1). With regard to values, there is the persistent equation *European values=universal values* and commitment to their promotion in rhetoric (point 4). From previous experiences, we know however that this does not necessarily transform into action and that the discourse-implementation gap is not an anomaly. The EU's intra-divisions and the limits of positive conditionality are acknowledged (points 4-5).

Conclusion

The overall EU Mediterranean policy trajectory shows that the EMP region-building intents have been replaced by pragmatism and flexible cooperation. Having considered the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean relations and the different approaches in the cooperation frameworks of the EMP, ENP and UfM, we can conclude that the EU is pursuing pragmatic policies toward the

Mediterranean to deal with the difficult and different political realities of the Middle East. The UfM has tried to bypass conflicts but its launch remained trapped in those same conflicts. Today, MENA countries are still threatened by territorial conflicts, political fragility, economic imbalances and terrorism, and in order to achieve deeper cooperation the resolution of regional conflicts seems essential. Southern neighbours are not a homogeneous reality, they are not moving in the same direction. South-South trade remains low while some countries are more interested in tighter economic relations with the EU, such as Morocco and Tunisia. Relations have increasingly adopted a bilateral dimension and have become selective in their aims. The Mediterranean appears as an area where sub-regional dynamics prevail over region-wide interaction (Comelli 2010:390). Nevertheless, the level of Southern integration is not the only reason for the loss of region-wide efforts, because the evolution toward lack of multilateralism is also affecting intra-EU relations (Bicchi 2011:10). EU member states disagree about a common foreign policy strategy, let alone about a Mediterranean policy. The EU is a divided actor in the Mediterranean (Panebianco 2012b). Member states do not have the same interests in the region and this is exemplified by the UfM, which represents different things to different actors (Bicchi 2011:8). Moreover, the depoliticization of the content of the UfM further contributed to weaken the role of the EU as a normative actor in the region. Overall, the EU has to be viewed as an adaptive pragmatic actor that adjusts to external conditions, has to deal with its institutional limits and to cope with internal divisions. It is appropriate to go beyond the debate on the EU as either a 'normative power' (see Ferreira 2011) or a pragmatic actor and on EU (in)consistency and (in)coherence. Rather than considering the EU either as merely pursuing its interests or acting to promote its values, we should go beyond the interest-values dilemma and admit that interests and values are interrelated and inseparable. In a recent speech on the Global Strategy the EU, the HR/VP Mogherini makes it clear: 'I believe that our interests and our values can only go hand in hand. We have an interest in promoting our values around the globe. And the way we articulate our interests has to embed our fundamental values. So, we need a strategy to protect proactively our interests, keeping in mind that promoting our values is an integral part of our interests' (Mogherini 2015:1). As the EU is a composite actor, its 'member states hold the key to projecting a strong external image of the EU as a capable and consistent actor' (Noutcheva 2015:29) and this is stressed by the HR/VP who insists on

the necessity of unity and complementarity (Mogherini 2015:3-4), an aspect also found in the Review of the ENP. Euro-Mediterranean relations are complex and vague, as it is the EU approach towards the Mediterranean. However, the path toward an EU foreign policy regime and the Global Strategy show, at least in terms of discourses, an attempt to shape a more coherent, comprehensive and unified EU strategy for external action. This seems unlikely to happen in the short-term, with the EU's image being damaged, for instance, by its incapacity to deal with the refugee crisis. Despite these EU-centred remarks, the "Mediterranean component" must not be underestimated, as the future of Euro-Mediterranean relations will depend on the evolution of the unstable situation of the Middle East and on the will of determinant Southern actors. Loose EU normativity may be positive for Middle Eastern countries, as long as they actively put forth the dynamics of a rebirth and the local actors take centre stage. Here-hence, a way could be paved for stable neighbours to demand more effective forms of co-ownership and successful cooperation, potentially renewing the UfM. A scenario of increasing differentiation and bilateralism as previously discussed could, on the contrary, reward those privileged countries who are able of and willing to comply to EU rules and conditions, while undermining the already compromised situation of those undergoing political instability, regional tensions or other socio-political issues. Moreover, it could worsen the fragmentation among Southern countries in the Mediterranean and increase the dependency on the EU as an influential international actor and donor, thus determining the abandon of the idea of co-ownership. This would mean that Southern states would be passive actors confined to the intent of replicating a model, that experienced by European states, that may not be suitable for their socio-political contexts. Selective cooperation per se is not to be interpreted merely as the lost idealism of the initial years of the EMP but has to be analysed, in the years to come, in light of the evolution of EU actorness as well as that of Southern partners. For now, the 2015 Review of the ENP confirms that security and stability in the neighbourhood remain the top priorities.

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