

The Mediterranean Policy of a Wider Europe

Michael Emerson

Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS),
Brussels

With the enlargement of the EU from fifteen to twenty-five members, a new «Wider Europe» debate rises high on the EU agenda, as complementary to the draft Constitution prepared by the European Convention. Together they define the shape of the EU to come. The Convention defines the EU from the inside, while the debate on a wider Europe is seeking to define it through references to its outer perimeters and more extended neighbourhood.

As early as March 2003 the European Commission published a first policy communication on the subject. This has been followed by a document on European security strategies submitted to the European Council in June 2003 by Javier Solana, the perspective of which is different, but whose content overlaps with that of the Wider Europe. These two documents may be viewed as either «white» or «green» papers of the EU institutions. They are important references, yet highly preliminary and far from complete, to the point that at the time of writing there is no official Mediterranean policy for a wider Europe, unless we refer to a simple description of the point reached so far by the existing Barcelona Process (for which see other chapters of this volume). Our task is therefore more involved with advancing possible ideas than detailing policies.

What is the Wider Europe? The Commission's Communication of March 2003 is ambiguous, entitled «Wider Europe - Neighbourhood». However, a reading of the text makes it clear that the Commission has in mind both the new neighbours of the former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) and the Mediterranean states of the

Barcelona Process. The origin of the wider Europe initiative came essentially from Northern member states and Central European accession candidates, with an initial focus on Ukraine and Moldova. As debate in the Council of foreign ministers developed, around the end of 2002 and into 2003, the familiar EU policy-making dialectic between North and South came into play, and so the Mediterranean was also brought in. The Solana document on strategies of security further emphasises the Middle East and the Islamic world as main sources of security threats.

This North-South dialectic may reflect the lobbying process among EU member states with different interests of priority, but it hardly amounts to defining future EU policy toward either the European or the Mediterranean states of the EU neighbourhood. The argument presented here is that the EU may or should differentiate more clearly between the European states of the wider Europe, with which it means precisely the member states of the Council of Europe, and the states of the Greater Middle East, which may be taken as extending from Morocco to Kirghizstan. In other words, the whole Islamic belt of states from Maghreb to Mashrek to the Gulf, and on through Afghanistan into Central Asia. This does not give the issue of a Wider Europe priority over of the Greater Middle East, since the EU's major security risks come from the latter. It does, however, recognise that these two vast cultural regions constitute different strategic situations for the EU's external relations.

The Wider Europe as here defined consists of states that are all willing to subscribe to the Council of Europe regulations that deal with democratic and human rights, and to the binding jurisdiction of its Conventions and Court of Human Rights. These states uncontroversially form a part of Europe, and have a European identity and aspirations. The EU is

THE EU AND ITS ENLARGEMENT

Presidency Conclusions. Copenhagen European Council (12/13-12-02)

The accession negotiations have been concluded with the 10 countries that will be incorporated into the Europe of the 25 current members. The enlargement will mean new dynamics in European integration, which will represent an important opportunity for the advancement of the relations held with neighbouring countries, based on shared political and economic values. In this context the Council have expressed the desire to strengthen relations with Russia, the Ukraine, Moldavia, Byelorussia and the countries of the southern Mediterranean, through a long-term approach that will promote democratic and economic reforms, sustainable development, and trade.

SN 400/02

http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/73842.pdf

A Wider Europe. Neighbourhood: a New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (11-03-03).

Proposal for a new framework for relations with neighbouring countries in the East and the South of the EU. This means the creation of a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood environment, a «circle of friends», with whom relations can be maintained on a basis of cooperation. This new neighbourhood policy seeks to establish a framework for the development of new relations, which in the mid-term will not include the perspective of membership, nor the role undertaken by the institutions of the EU (everything but institutions). For the development of this new policy, the establishment of both national and regional strategic plans has been proposed, developed by the Commission in association with the neighbouring countries. Once agreed, these action plans could substitute the common strategies in order to become the main policy document of the EU regarding mid-term relations with neighbouring countries.

COM (2003) 104 final

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0104en01.pdf

Wider Europe - New Neighbourhood. Council Conclusions concerning the Communication (16-06-03)

The Council expresses the resolution of the EU to define a new set of policies regarding its neighbouring countries, based on common values such as freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, and fundamental

liberties. However, these new neighbourhood policies cannot ignore the already existing framework of the EU's relations with Russia, the countries of the East, and the southern Mediterranean region. In this way, the implementation of the already existing agreements is maintained as a priority. In addition, the Council urges the Commission to submit a report on the concept of the new instrument for neighbourhood relations.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/we/doc/cc06_03.pdf

Paving the Way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument. Communication from the Commission (01-07-03)

Evaluation of the possibility of creating an instrument for building neighbourly relations, based on the coordination work within the framework of the programmes INTERREG, PHARE and TACIS. With the objective of guaranteeing the application of a global approach, the new instrument should also include the neighbouring countries that would benefit from the cooperation within the context of the CARDS and Euro-Med programmes, despite the fact that the western Balkans are not included in the political field of application of the Communication on a Wider Europe. The Commission proposes the adoption of a two-phase approach: the initial phase (2004-2006) will be concentrated on achieving a notable improvement in the coordination between the different instruments of funding within the already existing legislative and financial framework; and with the second phase starting in 2007, a more wide-reaching solution will be sought that will involve the creation of a new instrument for neighbourly relations, after evaluating any pertinent legal and budgetary questions.

COM (2003) 393

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0393en01.pdf

Report on the Communication from the Commission Wider Europe, European Parliament (09-11-03)

Promotes the idea that the new boundaries of the enlarged EU should be considered a positive opportunity for the construction of a network of more intense relations between the directly affected countries and regions. It is the task of the EU to develop the clear and effective concept of neighbourhood relations, which will be capable of strengthening the search for more effective solutions to the problems of interdependence and globalisation.

A5-0378/2003

http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm

moreover the leading actor in this area, unlike the situation in the Middle East, where the US is often the major external influence (to say the least). But the main distinction is found in the essential questions of political ideology and identity. There is virtual consensus among the states of this Wider Europe concerning what we may call the Council of Europe ideology. Not all the member states achieve the standards that have been agreed, but there is little dissent over the direction and intention. In contrast the states of the Greater Middle East are in ideological turmoil. Even the so-called moderate and progressive states of the Mediterranean, such as those identified in the Agadir group (Morocco, Tunis, Egypt, Jordan), are nowhere near approach-

ing the regulations of the Council of Europe on democracy and human rights. Morocco may be edging in a liberal direction in its electoral processes, but the authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Jordan and Tunis are still far removed. Neither the states of the region nor the external powers – either the EU or the US – seem to have clear ideas on the sequences of political, economic and social reforms at which to aim. Any pushing by the EU or the US of Western ideologies would raise objections of cultural imperialism from Islamist parties, and certainly from fundamentalists.

Nevertheless, even before the Iraq war there was a growing development of ideas among Arab scholars in favour of the region's progressive democrati-

sation as a key to modernisation and development. The United Nations Development Programme report in 2002, written by Arab scholars, provided a template document, with focus on the three deficits: freedom, the empowerment of women and human capabilities and knowledge.

From within the EU, the clearest stance is made by Commissioner Chris Patten, but his speeches and writings can only be read as the directions he would ideally choose for EU and US policies. A recent article of his, entitled «Democracy doesn't flow from the Barrel of a Gun», is directed principally at the American neo-conservative influences that led Bush to attack Iraq, with the expectations of the US troops being welcomed as liberators with dancing in the streets. But his target is also EU Mediterranean policy:

«When it comes to donors taking a consistent line on human rights, the short-term dictates of *realpolitik* almost invariably trump strategic goals. Talking tough on human rights is easier than acting tough. That is why I have suggested that Europe should set aside a proportion of its aid to the Mediterranean each year to reward those who are making a genuine effort to improve governance and human rights. I hope that this idea will gain support. It is at the cutting edge, between aspiration and operation».

Let us place these ideas into an ordered framework of strategic options for Western policy toward the Greater Middle East. They may be summarised under five models:

- *Model 1: Acquiescence*, with priority given to stability of regime, even when the regime is authoritarian and repressive. A blind eye is turned to objectionable regime features. It is now appreciated that such regimes have not only failed to deliver economic and social progress, but have in fact contributed to the environment responsible for producing the new global terrorism. The conclusion has to be that the life span of Model 1 has come to an end.
- *Model 2: Passive engagement*, with political, but without significant incentive measures or pressures over democratic values and human rights. Economic development is seen as forerunner to democratisation. This has so far been the EU's

approach under the Barcelona Process, which has had some merits, but has not seen impressive results.

- *Model 3: Active engagement*, in a more holistic approach, calling for parallel political, economic and human development, and strengthening the emphasis on democratic values and human rights, with more significant incentives. This may be the model for the period ahead, but so far it has not been really tested in the region.
- *Model 4: Hostile engagement*, against objectionable regimes. This includes sanctions but can introduce a wider arsenal of diplomatic measures. The worldwide track record of sanctions policies is uneven to say the least, and the reverse logic of counterproductive effects is well known. However the pre-war sanctions against Saddam Hussein's regime had some success as containment policy.
- *Model 5: Forceful regime change*, meaning war in an extreme case, or political pressures backed by credible threats of force. Bombing, invasion and military occupation are the models set by Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. But the workings of this model with the aim of establishing sustainable democracy and modernisation remain uncertain and hazardous. Even today the military occupation of Afghanistan is judged so perilous that it is largely confined to the capital, while in Iraq resistance to the occupation has become ominous.

The EU could plausibly recalibrate its Barcelona policy from Model 2 to Model 3. Commissioner Patten is suggesting that this should be the path to follow, but also that a consensus has not yet been reached within the EU to implement any real action rather than just dialogue.

The US, under the shadow of the war with Iraq, is developing a Middle East Partnership Initiative, which is similar to the Barcelona Process in that it combines technical assistance (for education, business development and democratisation) with trade policy initiatives (bilateral free trade agreements). Yet the financing and trade flows on the US side remain very insignificant in comparison with the EU. In this sense, US policies are switching from Model 1 to Model 3, while its main action has been the switch in the Iraq situation from Model 4 to Model 5, with threats of the same change for Iran. The EU has also implicitly shifted its position

on Iran closer to the US position, in acknowledging the possible legitimacy of the use of force in order to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (and thus moving to a stance somewhere between Models 3 and 4).

The prospects for EU and US coherence at the strategic level are not therefore non-existent,¹ yet they depend on two highly uncertain conditions: the resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and the peaceful outcome of the Iraq war. For the US these two scenarios of operation seem to be linked by the US's need to salvage its public reputation in the Arab world, which has reached a disastrous state, public opinion approval ratings having fallen virtually to zero in some cases. For the EU, the belated turn of the US administration's attention to the Israel-Palestinian conflict with the aid of the Quartet's Roadmap in early 2003 was highly welcome. However, with the resignation of Abu Mazen from the post of Prime Minister and the onward construction of the Israeli version of the «Berlin wall» around the West Bank, the outlook for peace has once again sunk to rock bottom level. For Iraq the current risk is that conflict between the people and the occupying powers degenerate to the point that this scene of operations may take over from the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories as the touchstone for Arab resentment toward the West.

In the (unlikely) event of some breakthrough regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the road would be open to renew the impulse in favour of regional co-operation. While the Barcelona Process embraces the whole Mediterranean basin, a possible next stage would be that the EU cultivate deeper sub-regional cooperation of the Mashreq and Maghreb regions. This could offer the perspective of institutional developments that would be more equally shared, and correct to some degree the highly asymmetric Barcelona Process, which has no organisation of its own and relies entirely on the institutions of the EU. The ideas of the formation of a Euro-Mashreq Community and a Euro-Maghreb Community could be sketched. With the accession of Cyprus and Malta, the enlargement of the EU deep into the Mediterranean region opens new perspectives. The EU

could for example propose that a new Euro-Mashreq Community have headquarter facilities (secretariat etc.) based in Cyprus, and the Euro-Maghreb Community similar facilities in Malta. The EU-Gulf Cooperation Council relationship would also hope for prospects of further development.

Israel is of course a special case among partner states of the Barcelona Process, possessing an advanced economy and a democracy that is certainly vibrant, highly imperfect when it comes to the place of Arab citizens of Israel. As and when decisive progress is made in the Middle East peace process, Israel could be offered advanced association possibilities. Official discussions between Israel and the EU over possible accession to the European Economic Area have apparently already begun, after an interesting initiative in 2002 by European and Knesset parliamentarians to raise the issue of Israel's possible accession to the EU as a long-term perspective. While at a political level, only Prime Minister Berlusconi has endorsed this idea in public statements, which are not taken seriously, the Wider Europe concept may well open up new opportunities for closer association that could prove both politically realistic and interesting for the EU and Israel.

This recalibration of the Barcelona Process, with increasingly important sub-regional components regarding Maghreb and Mashreq, would be intended to strengthen EU relations, to the point of becoming models for the Greater Middle East. The Barcelona Process would then become the leading element of EU policy toward the Greater Middle East, rather than a lagging and somewhat incongruous element of the Wider Europe policies.

Bibliography

European Commission, «*Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*», COM (2003) 104 final, 11.3.2003.

«*Securing Europe in a Better World*», document submitted by J. Solana to the European Council, Thessaloniki, 19-21 June 2003.

¹ Obvious opportunities for coordination exist between the EU's Barcelona Process and the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative launched by Powell, Secretary of State, in December 2002, with the intention of supporting a wide range of educational, governance and private sector developments. The initial budget of \$20 million, which can only support pilot schemes, is to be increased to \$145 million next year, though this remains only a small contribution.

Fares AL-BRAIZAT, «The EU and Democracy Promotion in the Southern Mediterranean - is it working?», Middle East working paper no 5, 2003, CEPS, forthcoming.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP), «Arab Human Development Report», 2002, UN, New York

Chris PATTEN, «Democracy doesn't flow from the barrel of a Gun», *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2003

R. YOUNG, «The European Union and democracy in the Arab-Muslim World», CEPS Middle East working paper no 2, 2002

A. TOVIAS, «Mapping Israel's Policy Options regarding its Future Institutionalised Relations with the European Union», Middle East working paper no. 3, March 2003

M. EMERSON and N. TOCCI, op cit. See also *Financial Times*, 18 June 2003, «EU seeks closer Israel partnership».