

Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean

**Genesis, evolution and implications
for Spain's Mediterranean Policy**

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Index

Executive summary	5
Introduction	7
1. Understanding the Union for the Mediterranean	9
1.1 What is the Union for the Mediterranean?	9
1.2 Who would form part of the Union for the Mediterranean?	10
1.3 Who is promoting the Union for the Mediterranean and how?	11
1.4 How will the Union of the Mediterranean be structured?	13
1.5 In what context is the Union for the Mediterranean being developed?	16
2. Genesis and evolution of the Union for the Mediterranean	19
3. The Mediterranean, a sea with too many cooperation frameworks and not enough funds	22
4. Reactions to the Union for the Mediterranean	26
5. Strong and weak points of the Union for the Mediterranean	33
5.1 Before 13 March	33
5.2 After 13 March	35
6. Possible scenarios for Spanish foreign policy	37
7. In conclusion	42

Executive summary

The Union for the Mediterranean has been the subject of debate among government representatives, academics and experts since Nicolas Sarkozy first launched the initiative while still a candidate for the presidency of France. Presented as the star project of the new French foreign policy, it has drawn a fair amount of criticism and triggered reservations which have forced the French leaders to make major changes.

This document charts the transformations the French proposal has undergone with regard to its perimeter (the states that would participate), its goals, its instruments and its synchronization with existing European cooperation frameworks in the Mediterranean. These pages detail how a genuinely French project has become a project of the EU and how we have gone from classifying the 13 years' existence of the Barcelona Process as a failure to placing the Union for the Mediterranean under the umbrella of that process. Proof of that is the new official name adopted in March: "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean".

When the reactions of the main countries and institutions are assessed, it can be seen that Germany has been a key player in the evolution of this proposal. Spain has played a constructive role, but it has been surpassed by Germany in its defence of the Barcelona Process. The countries of the south and the east of the Mediterranean have taken often discreet stances and while in some cases the initiative has been met with enthusiasm, in others it has been met with reluctance or at least a qualified response awaiting more precision.

This document also contains an analysis of the proposal's strong and weak points. It states that the Europeanization of the proposal has been a positive step but that some points of the initial plan (flexibility and mobilization of new funds) must be incorporated into the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean relations. In this respect, it outlines various scenarios for Spanish interests which, it is argued, are closely linked to the general European interest. It recommends a revival of a more active role for Spain in Euro-Mediterranean relations directed at preventing overlapping, at increasing the funds allocated to these policies, at identifying the areas where more interesting contributions can be made and at preventing this new dynamic from weakening a framework such as the 5+5, which is producing results. The Spanish presidency of the EU in 2010 will be a key moment for achieving these goals.

Nevertheless, as a conclusion, it warns that the grandiloquence with which French diplomacy has acted may have created high expectations which the summit on 13 July will not be able to satisfy. However, with more modest and reasonable expectations, the most must be made of this type of cooperation, trusting that it helps to achieve the goals laid down in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995.

Introduction*

On 7 February 2007, in Toulon, the then candidate for the presidency of the Republic of France launched one of the star projects of current French foreign policy: the Union for the Mediterranean. At the time, Nicolas Sarkozy used the term Mediterranean Union, a name which is often still used to refer to this initiative. According to Sarkozy, this Union had to relaunch cooperation among the countries of the Mediterranean, but outside the framework of the European Union. In the opinion of the then candidate for the Elysee, it was about the Mediterranean countries taking the initiative and, on the basis of cooperation in specific areas, advancing at a quicker pace towards the goals of peace, security and prosperity.

With the arrival of Nicolas Sarkozy in the Elysee, the French diplomatic machine set about making the new president's electoral pledge a reality. As details of the proposal emerged, this new initiative was often met with reluctance. What would happen to the cooperation frameworks already in existence, such as the Barcelona Process or the European Neighbourhood Policy? Why hadn't the goals of that the Barcelona Process established in 1995 been achieved? What interest did France have in promoting this proposal? Was it a qualitative leap or step backwards? How should Spain react to the proposal?

* The author wishes to express his gratitude for the support of the Fundació CIDOB and the Fundació Alternativas in the process of writing this report and particularly for the comments and assistance of Laia Mestres, Daniel Shenhar and Rafael Bustos, as well as the contribution of the members of the panel of experts on the Mediterranean of the Observatory of Spanish Foreign Policy (Opex).

These and many other questions triggered an intense political and intellectual debate during the second half of 2007 and continue to inspire debate into 2008. One indisputable merit of Sarkozy's proposal is that since 1995 never had Mediterranean issues occupied such a prominent place on the agenda. Irrespective of the support the Union for the Mediterranean garners, it has succeeded in inspiring major reflection on the scale of the challenges posed by the Mediterranean and on what the best instruments for meeting them are.

Within the context of this climate of reflection and debate, the French proposal had a mixed reception. As we shall see, Germany was among those which reacted most negatively to Nicolas Sarkozy's proposal. The opposition of the German government and of the chancellor was so stiff that they forced the Elysee to modify the initial proposal substantially. That took place in the first half of March 2008 and it was embodied in the presentation of a joint Franco-German proposal which the European Council of 13 March ended up approving. One of the most important decisions of this Council was to request the European Commission to present proposals for how to structure this new type of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The Commission presented these proposals in a Communication on 20 May which while it shed some light on institutional aspects, it did not address other major issues.

We are, then, looking at an initiative which is still deep in the process of definition and which has evolved over the course of the last year. This working document will try to summarize the goals and structure both of the initial proposal and the one that has been taking shape since 13 March. Next, we shall analyse the evolution this proposal has undergone, what pressure it has come under and how it has adapted to new circumstances. Thirdly, we shall put the Union for the Mediterranean proposal in a context characterized by an increasingly widespread sensation that there is an overabundance of cooperation frameworks compared to the limited resources allocated to these ends. As we shall see, that leads to contradictions, overlapping and dilution of efforts. Fourthly, we shall detail what reactions the French proposal has triggered and what lies behind these reactions. Fifthly, we shall assess what the strong and weak points of the initial proposal were and to what extent the modifications made in recent months have affected them. Finally, we shall outline various scenarios for Spanish foreign policy and we shall propose various courses of action directed at preserving European and Spanish credibility and interests in the region.

1. Understanding the Union for the Mediterranean

There is a lot of confusion about the Union for the Mediterranean. Information circulates but this is sometimes contradictory, sometimes the reliability of the sources cannot be guaranteed and, often, we come up against an initiative which is evolving at such a pace that information and analysis on the issue is immediately superseded¹. In this first section we shall try to answer some basic questions about its nature, the members, the leadership, the structure and the context in which the Union for the Mediterranean is being developed. In each case we shall differentiate between the situation prior to and after 13 March as this date is a genuine watershed.

1.1 What is the Union for the Mediterranean?

A) Before 13 March

It was a French project designed to reshape foreign policy and, in particular, France's policy with regard to the Arab world. The initial project was proposed from a purely multilateral, though flexible, point of view, with the aim of revitalizing cooperation in the Mediterranean and achieving the goals of peace, development and human understanding, goals which have not yet been attained within the framework of the Barcelona Process.

¹ In any case, the information gathered here has been extracted from diverse speeches, interviews, parliamentary debates, articles and reports.

However, little was known about the members, goals and structure of this initiative, aspects which, as we shall see in the following pages, were modified due to the need to provide the initial proposal with content and on account of the need to allay the fears that the proposal sparked in different capitals of the Euro-Mediterranean area.

B) After 13 March

From that date on, it has been a French proposal modified because of pressure from different actors and adopted by the European Union. It continues to be considered a multilateral and flexible cooperation framework with the purpose of complementing what is already being done within the framework of the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Although, as we shall see below, it is an initiative which is still in the process of being defined, what is beginning to become clear is that this initiative is not going to replace or compete with the existing Euro-Mediterranean framework, rather it will bring new instruments to this framework.

1.2 Who would form part of the Union for the Mediterranean?

A) Before 13 March

At first, it had been said that only the 22 coastal states, including the Palestinian Authority, would be invited to join this project. Very soon, three states were added which despite not having a Mediterranean coast are usually considered Mediterranean countries: Portugal, Jordan and Mauritania. The European Commission was also added to the group of full members.

Along with the full members, which were to participate with full voting rights in the decision-making processes of the Union for the Mediterranean, the idea was to create the category of observer countries or institutions. The rest of the EU countries which so requested it would have been included within this category. Organizations such as the European Investment Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Arab League or the Arab Maghreb Union would have been offered this option. The observers could be fully involved in the management of specific projects, along with the member states of the Union for the Mediterranean and private companies.

B) After 13 March

The Commission Communication on 20 May confirms that this new initiative is a “multilateral partnership” and that it will focus on regional and trans-national projects

which “increase the potential for regional integration and cohesion”. It also tells us that its objectives are to enhance multilateral relations, increase the sense of co-ownership of the process among the southern partners and make this process more visible to citizens. It also confirms the most important new feature compared to previous proposals: all the member states of the Union will have the same status (all will be, then, full members) and the initiative comes under the umbrella of the EU.

Now that this decision has been taken, it remains to be decided what role the coastal states which do not yet participate in the Barcelona Process (Libya, Monaco, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia) will have, as well as the regional organizations and financial institutions which were to be observers. If, as there is every indication, we advance towards a fusion of the Union for the Mediterranean with the Barcelona Process, or rather, if the Union for the Mediterranean has to become a new instrument of the Barcelona Process, it may be advisable to increase the members of the Barcelona Process to include the five mentioned previously and increase the number of observers which already attend the Euro-Mediterranean conferences.

1.3 Who is promoting the Union for the Mediterranean and how?

A) Before 13 March

Until March 2008, we could speak of an almost absolute monopoly on the part of France in the launch and management of the proposal. Not only that, in the time he has been in the Elysee, the president of the Republic has taken to promoting it directly instead of delegating its management to the Foreign Ministry. Not for nothing is foreign policy one of the powers (*domaine réservé*) of the French president. Thus, Sarkozy himself has personally led the diplomatic offensive to publicize the initiative and garner support.

However, a team halfway between the Elysee and the Foreign Ministry is in charge of the day-to-day running of the proposal. This team comprises, among others, Henri Guaino, an adviser to Nicolas Sarkozy, and the ambassadors Alain Le Roy and Jacques Huntzinger². It is interesting that the special ambassador for Mediterranean affairs who specifically deals with the Barcelona Process is not a member of this team which is preparing the Union for the Mediterranean, though there are indeed

2 Before taking on these duties, Le Roy was the ambassador in Madagascar and Huntzinger was in charge of the atelier culturel méditerranéen.

contacts between the two units³. While he is not a member of this team either, Jean Louis Guigou, president of the IPEMED (Institut de prospective économique du monde méditerranéen), has played an important role in the process of promoting the proposal and providing it with content⁴.

The French authorities never tire of repeating that the Union for the Mediterranean should not be interpreted as a French initiative rather one that belongs to all the countries concerned. However, French political leadership in these months was unquestionable, the motor of the initiative was in Paris alone and structures were not set in motion which allowed decisions to be taken jointly with its European and Mediterranean partners.

In order to tone down this image of unilateralism, both Sarkozy and ambassadors Le Roy and Huntzinger travelled to the main countries concerned to inform people about the initiative, reassure the reluctant, garner support and incorporate new suggestions. In addition, France asked all the states which were to be members of the Union for the Mediterranean to appoint a contact diplomat who the French leaders called sherpas. These diplomats would be informed of the development of the initiative and it was hoped they would make proposals that enriched the Union for the Mediterranean. More than 10 countries did so before 13 March. In some cases, such as that of Spain, this task fell to the same person who was in charge of the Barcelona Process. In other cases, such as that of Italy, a distinction was made between the two posts.

However, external observers bemoaned the lack of information about the criteria that would be used to assess the validity or appropriateness of the projects and who was going to establish these criteria. On such a sensitive issue as this, it was observed with concern how the French team which promoted the initiative had a monopoly on the information which would subsequently be passed on to the rest of the countries and institutions invited.

B) After 13 March

The main thing to emerge from the European Council of 13 March was that the European Commission was asked to come up with proposals on how to structure

3 A post occupied in this period first by François Gouyette (now the ambassador in Tripoli) and subsequently by Serge Telle, until then an adviser in the office of Minister Kouchner.

4 For more information see <http://www.ipemed.coop/>.

this new dimension of Euro-Mediterranean relations. By rendering this new Union for the Mediterranean in a European and community logic, France, the promoter of the initiative and the country which will occupy the presidency in the second half of 2008, must coordinate with the Commission on the preparations for the summit scheduled for 13 July. In principle, the Slovenian presidency should also be more involved in this preparatory stage. The rest of the EU member states can get involved in a more structured way via their participation on the Maghreb-Mashreq Committee and, along with its Euro-Mediterranean partners, in the meetings of the EuroMed Committee of 8-9 April (in Brussels) and 9-10 June (in Protoroz, Slovenia) and in an extraordinary meeting under the French presidency of the EU, shortly before the summit.

In any case, in the months that remain before the July summit it will be the Commission and France which jointly take the helm of the initiative. In other words, they will have to work together to organize the summit, the order of the day, the approval of some possible common conclusions and the go-ahead for certain projects within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean. However, it will not be until after the summit of 13 July when we can assess the results and the quality of this partnership.

1.4 How will the Union of the Mediterranean be structured?

A) Before 13 March

Initially, it was said that a framework of political dialogue at the highest level would be established, to which the members of the Union for the Mediterranean would be invited. These states would be in charge of selecting a series of priority projects. This strictly multilateral forum would be called, formally or informally, G-Med. This name emulates the G8 in which it was inspired as it was hoped that this forum would have a high public profile but also a substantial degree of informality.

At first, the institutionalization of the Union for the Mediterranean was considered, with the creation of structures similar to the European Council and the creation of a secretariat (according to the sources, more or less pared down). However, both because of the reflections on this issue in France and because of the demands of countries such as Spain, they arrived at the conclusion that it was hardly structures that were most lacking in cooperation in the Mediterranean.

In an ironic tone, but in response to that situation, the Union for the Mediterranean was not defined as “a project of union” rather as “a union of projects”⁵. Those states (and private agents) which so desired could participate in these projects and they should be focused on issues such as energy, the environment, transport, security (understood only as civil defence), education and cultural dialogue, the fight against illegal immigration, etc. Not all the members should participate in all the projects rather only those which were ready to commit resources and efforts. It was, then, a flexible model based, in the words of Sarkozy himself, on building on the foundations of concrete solidarities⁶.

As has already been said, one of the criticisms which was levelled in this phase was the lack of transparency regarding how the projects would be presented, assessed and chosen. Who was going to take the decisions? Who would make the initial selection when it came to choosing the projects? What criteria would be established to judge the appropriateness of these projects? Who should one contact to present a project? Above and beyond these doubts, the main concern was how this new initiative was going to be structured within the existing frameworks of multilateral and bilateral cooperation (Barcelona Process, European Neighbourhood Policy, 5+5) and with the EU’s legal, financial and institutional framework. In this respect, French leaders sought analogies with the method of “enhanced cooperation” and with the Council of Baltic Sea States, an area in which not all the members states participate but in which the European Commission does.

B) After 13 March

Before the presentation of the Commission Communication of 20 May, what had emerged is that the Union of the Mediterranean will consist, firstly, of a series of biannual summits. Secondly, that it would have a lightweight institutional structure (the creation of a secretariat with some 20 or 30 workers and two directors, one from a country from the north and another from a country from the south). And, finally, that a rotating and north-south balanced co-presidency would be created. Sarkozy had said that, at least at first, this presidency would be exercised only by the coastal countries⁷. At that time, it was speculated that France and Egypt would be the first countries to hold the co-presidency⁸.

5 See the article by Bichara Khader *L’Union Méditerranéenne: Une Union de projets ou un projet d’Union*, available at www.euromed-marseille.com/blog/Articles/Khader.doc.

6 Discours du Président de la République sur le thème de l’Union de la Méditerranée. Palais Royal Marshan, Tánger, 23 October 2007.

7 Interview with Sarkozy in *Le Figaro*, 6 March 2008.

8 Sarkozy et Moubarak co-présideront l’union pour la Méditerranée in *El Watan*, 2 April 2008.

The Commission Communication sheds some light on the institutional dimension - for example on the subject of the methods of electing the co-presidencies, it rejects the idea that the Mediterranean countries of the EU would have preference over those from Northern, Eastern and Central Europe since it proposes that initially the method of the rotating presidencies should be followed and that after the Lisbon Treaty comes into force it should follow what it stipulates. As for the secretariat, there is no longer talk of two directors rather of a secretary-general and a deputy secretary-general, whose duties are beginning to be detailed: to propose new initiatives and monitor the projects. A new bureaucratic structure is also established, called the Joint Permanent Committee, which is fully integrated into the existing logic of the Barcelona Process and will become a kind of “Coreper” of the EuroMed Committee. Its creation will speed up the EuroMed Committee meetings and increase the involvement of the Mediterranean partners. As well as the institutional dimension, the Communication provides information on matters of financing: the projects of the Union for the Mediterranean will be able to benefit from funds from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), but on a very limited scale (a maximum of 50m euros a year). It is quite clear that that means seeking funding via other public and private channels.

Beyond these details many doubts remain as to the interaction between this new phase of Euro-Mediterranean relations and the structures existing within the framework of the Barcelona Process. An example of that is that it is still not specified whether the co-presidency and the secretariat will have authority over the entire Barcelona Process or only over the Union for the Mediterranean. The most likely thing is that the co-presidency will take in the entire Barcelona Process, but it is not so clear what will happen with the secretariat. In other words, it is not clear whether the secretariat is going to follow up all the programme that are already in operation or only those to emerge from this new type of cooperation. Nor does the Communication clearly define the role of the European Commission when it comes to boosting and evaluating the cooperation programmes. It has also yet to be decided whether, as was leaked before 13 March, sectorial agencies (environment, rural development, etc) are going to be created. Likewise, it must be decided what role institutions such as the Anna Lindh Foundation or the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) will play in this new stage.

The fact that from 13 March the name of the initiative has changed once again to “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” demonstrates that there is a fusion of the two frameworks. However, two doubts remain. The first is whether that means an alteration of the nature, philosophy and the instruments of the Barcelona Process or whether it means the complete subordination of the Union for the Mediterranean

to the Partnership, understanding that this Union is yet another instrument among all those at the Euro-Mediterranean framework's disposal. The second concerns who takes the decisions at the Paris summit and on what aspects are decisions going to be taken. Invited to this summit are countries such as Monaco, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Libya, which do not form part of the Barcelona Process. Are they going to set the course of a Process of which they do not yet form part?

In any case, the European Commission and France are the two actors which must strive to settle these and other issues before the summit of 13 July. A proper synchronization of this new facet of Euro-Mediterranean relations with the institutional, bureaucratic and financial mechanisms already in existence is fundamental. Only then can unnecessary overlapping and duplications be avoided.

1.5 In what context is the Union for the Mediterranean being developed?

A) Before 13 March

The initiative arose at a time when France wanted to win back greater international and European prominence. In addition, Sarkozy was aware that some of his proposals regarding immigration and in other areas of foreign policy (Iran, for example) could spark an adverse reaction among the population of Arab or Muslim origin, as well as in the Arab-Islamic countries themselves. The Union for the Mediterranean would offer a "kinder" image to these sectors and quickly became one of the flagships of Sarkozy's foreign policy. Not only that, it triggered a revitalization of discussions on Mediterranean issues in very diverse spheres (business, associative, academic, political, etc).

At a European level, there were several circumstances that might have led to the conclusion that the French proposal could quickly prosper if, as Sarkozy wanted, it was to be structured outside the European Union. The country which might be most opposed, Germany, had to focus on domestic policy after months devoted to the presidency of the EU. What is more, with the institutional crisis beginning to emerge, it would be very strange for Germany to be able or even wish to spark a crisis over this issue. Finally, on foreign policy the EU was more concerned with the Balkans (independence in Kosovo) than with Mediterranean issues.

Even if an attempt was made to structure the proposal outside the European Union, France needed the support of Italy and Spain. Romano Prodi's Italy had tried to

regain prominence on Mediterranean issues and was, therefore, inclined to this type of proposals. Spain, meanwhile, was more reluctant because of its attachment to the Barcelona Process. However, Madrid was influenced by the need to maintain excellent relations with France. Relations with this country are particularly important, not only in the European dimension (as was demonstrated in the search for a solution to the institutional crisis) but also, and above all, in their bilateral dimension (issues such as cooperation in the fight against terrorism or on electrical interconnections)⁹.

At a Mediterranean level, we must refer to the Annapolis conference. In November 2007, there was a sliver of hope of peace in the region, though hobbled by significant shortcomings of the process. Prominent among these is the absence of some of the representative parties (Hamas and, to a certain extent, Iran), a schedule which is too tight and excessive bias on the part of the country, the United States, which has to act as the arbitrator of the process¹⁰. In any case, the fact that the process had been started made it more feasible to launch the Union for the Mediterranean and to secure the participation of the Middle Eastern countries in the French initiative.

B) After 13 March

In France, there has been a growing decline in the popularity of Nicolas Sarkozy among the French electorate, particularly because of his handling of domestic issues. In this respect, it is even more urgent that all France's Mediterranean activity does not now end in failure. Such an outcome would intensify criticism from the opposition regarding the style and priorities of the French president.

In Europe, there is growing discontent with French unilateralism, a discontent which is particularly deep-rooted in Germany. This has resulted in a cooling of Franco-German relations. However, the fact that France will take over the presidency of the EU in the second half of 2008 forces it to step up its dialogue with other EU member states and to work towards a consensus which forces it to temper its will to act unilaterally.

The need to repair relations with Germany was reinforced by the fact that France's two Mediterranean pivots in the EU, Spain and Italy, have been immersed in elec-

9 On the central importance of Spanish-French relations see Laia Mestres i Camps Veinte años de cooperación entre España y Francia: ¿amigos, socios o aliados? in *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, no. 75, pp. 151-172.

10 See, among others, Ignacio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño, Puede Annapolis resucitar el proceso de paz? *Análisis del Real Instituto Elcano*, no. 133/2007.

tions. This has not favoured Madrid and Rome playing a sufficiently active role in this phase of the process.

As far as the Mediterranean is concerned, it should be said that Annapolis is beginning to look like a process at a dead end. However, in May there were fresh signs of hope: Israeli-Syrian negotiations sponsored by Turkey, talks between Israel and Hamas in Egypt and the election of a president of Lebanon after months of chaos. Nevertheless, the course that the Middle East peace process takes is unpredictable and may be contaminated by the Israeli political crisis following the accusations levelled by Ehud Barak against Ehud Olmert. If one thing is certain, for better or for worse, what is happening and will happen in the Eastern Mediterranean in the coming months, and its repercussions in the region as a whole, will have an impact on the staging of the summit on 13 July. If the Arab-Israeli conflict interferes too much in the summit and some Mediterranean countries, as is beginning to be leaked, decide to stay away in protest at Israel's presence, the sensation of permanent crisis in Euro-Mediterranean relations may spread.

2. Genesis and evolution of the Union for the Mediterranean

We have just seen how the Union for the Mediterranean underwent a substantial change as a result of the Franco-German proposal of 13 March. However, the French proposal had already undergone major modification in the months prior to that. In this section we shall see how the process was conceived and how it evolved, with particular emphasis on six key moments.

Toulon, 7 February 2007: With the election campaign in full swing, Sarkozy outlines the structure of the then named Mediterranean Union and states that the Barcelona Process has failed and that under these circumstances the Mediterranean countries must take the initiative. In other words, he is saying “that the Mediterranean is for the Mediterraneans”. This address is delivered in Toulon, a city where there is great interest in Mediterranean issues but also in the issues of immigration and security. In that speech he also mentions an issue which sparks considerable controversy in France: the membership of Turkey. This country is defined as a “great Mediterranean country”, letting it be understood that in the opinion of the candidate for the presidency of France this prospect of union should be the framework of relations with Ankara instead of membership of the EU¹¹.

Paris, 6 May 2007: Sarkozy reiterates his pledge to launch the then named Mediterranean Union in the speech on the night of the election which makes him president of the Republic¹². From that moment on, European and Mediterranean foreign minis-

11 Nicolas Sarkozy, Discours de Toulon, Toulon, 7 February 2007.

12 In that speech Sarkozy expressed his opinion in the following terms: “I wish to send out a message to all the peoples of the Mediterranean to say to them that it is in the Mediterranean where everything is at stake, that we must overcome hatred to give way to a great dream of peace and civilization. I wish to say that the time has come to build together the Mediterranean Union which will be a point of union between Europe and Africa”.

tries, as well as the Commission, begin to react to the proposal. They express some reservations and call on France to make a clearer and more detailed proposal.

Tangiers, 23 October 2007: In order to defuse some of the criticism and reservations expressed during the previous months, Sarkozy makes a speech which is less harsh on European policies and on the Barcelona Process. He says that the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy must continue, but he also argued that they are not sufficient mechanisms and that it is that void that then Mediterranean Union must fill. The French president commits himself in this speech to what he called “concrete solidarities” and “pragmatic projects in a framework of variable geometries”¹³. According to Sarkozy, in the same way that European construction began around cooperation on coal and steel, Mediterranean construction must be built around sustainable development, energy, transport and water. It is worth remarking that in this speech considerable emphasis is placed on the then Mediterranean Union as the nucleus of enhanced Euro-African cooperation¹⁴.

Rome, 20 December 2007: The leaders of Italy, Spain and France, Romano Prodi, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Nicolas Sarkozy, appear in public to express their support for the initiative, now baptized as the Union for the Mediterranean. This change of name sought to demonstrate that it was not a project of political integration which might compete with the project of European construction¹⁵. In the speeches that the three leaders make in the Italian capital it becomes clear that cooperation in the Mediterranean must begin a new phase but that this renewal has to be carried out with the maximum involvement of the European Union. At the same time, the Italian and Spanish leaders extract the commitment that the Union for the Mediterranean will disassociate itself from the accession processes underway with Turkey and Croatia. From that moment on, the team that leads the project in Paris is confident that joint work will be undertaken with the diplomatic teams of Madrid and Rome. However, in the early months of 2008 they do not get the cooperation they were hoping for and in view of Germany’s outright opposition, the presentation of a document of reflection drawn up by the French officials is put on ice.

Hanover, 3 March 2008: Coinciding with the opening of a fair, Merkel and Sarkozy hold a bilateral meeting on 3 March in the city of Hanover, in which the chancellor

13 Discours du Président de la République sur le thème de l’Union de la Méditerranée. Palais Royal Marshan, Tangiers, 23 October 2007.

14 To be precise, he said “I call on all those who might engage in the Mediterranean Union because it will be the EurAfrica’s best pivot, that great dream capable of mobilizing the entire world”.

15 French officials say, in private, that José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero himself was the architect of the name change.

conveys her discontent with the Union for the Mediterranean proposal. In the words of Sarkozy himself, the chancellor demands that all the EU countries should be able to participate in the project and that it should be done within the framework of the Barcelona Process. The president of the Republic, meanwhile, says he has informed Merkel that this process has come to a standstill¹⁶. Once their respective points of view have been made known, both come to an agreement in principle by which, as we have just seen in the previous section, the nature of the project is changed substantially to accommodate all the members states of the EU. While Sarkozy might say that thanks to him the Mediterranean issue had returned to the top of the agenda and that the Barcelona Process was going to be reactivated, in fact the German opinions ended up prevailing. After the meeting in Hanover, Merkel and Sarkozy's diplomatic advisers, with more or less intense contacts between their foreign ministries, get down to work to be able to present their European counterparts with a new proposal. This is sent on 11 March and is discussed at the European Council on 13 March.

Brussels, 13 March 2008: Germany does not want to swap French unilateralism for Franco-German unilateralism. That is why a proposal is presented for discussion and modification by everyone within the framework of the European Council. Discussion over the Union for the Mediterranean is hurriedly included on the Council's agenda and, in fact, at this meeting little more is decided than support for the content of the Franco-German proposal but with an appeal to the Commission to develop it. In addition, a last-minute decision is made to change the name of the initiative which, from then on, would be given the name: "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean", a change which is attributed to the diplomatic manoeuvres of Spain, which thus manages to maintain the "Barcelona" name and demonstrate that the Union for the Mediterranean complements and under no circumstances replaces the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

Brussels, 20 May 2008: As the European Council had requested, the Commission presents a Communication which outlines the institutional structure of the Union for the Mediterranean and more information is provided on the type of projects that are intended to be launched at the Paris summit. This Communication demonstrates that the Union for the Mediterranean forms part of the Barcelona Process but, as previously stated, it leaves certain matters open to interpretation.

16 Statements gathered in an interview in *Le Figaro* on 6 March 2008.

3. The Mediterranean, a sea with too many cooperation frameworks and not enough funds

The Union for the Mediterranean is the most recent addition to a series of cooperation initiatives in the Mediterranean between the EU, its members states and the countries of the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean. Prominent among these cooperation frameworks is the existence of the Barcelona Process, because it is also the one that could have suffered most had Nicolas Sarkozy's initial proposal prospered.

The Barcelona Process, launched in that city in 1995, contains a multilateral and bilateral dimension and currently comprises 39 members states. It pursues the goals of making the Mediterranean an area of peace and stability committed to democracy and human rights, an area of shared prosperity and a space for cultural dialogue and human exchange. It represents a change of spirit with respect to previous EU policies since, at least at a theoretical level, it seeks to build a partnership in which all parties are on an equal footing. Twelve years on, the balance sheet it offers does not leave much room for optimism. In spite of the fact that at a macroeconomic level some countries have succeeded in benefiting from the wake left by the EU and in spite of the high and continuous level of growth in countries such as Turkey and Egypt, the commitment to commercial liberalization has not attracted enough private investment and the well-being of the societies in the south and east has not improved significantly. In addition, at a political level many of the conflicts of 1995 are still ongoing and some countries have taken a step backwards in terms of democracy and human rights¹⁷.

17 For an assessment see the report from 2005 of EuroMeSCo entitled Barcelona Plus: Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States.

It might be said that the Barcelona Process raised expectations that it has not been able to meet, that the goals it set itself continue to be as or more valid than in 1995 and that the modest progress made has not had sufficient publicity. In 2005, Spain tried to revitalize the process by organizing the first Euro-Mediterranean summit¹⁸. While a work programme containing fresh elements was adopted, the boost given at that meeting fell short of requirements¹⁹.

In addition, the Barcelona Process has had to coexist since 2004 with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which had been initially conceived for the countries of Eastern Europe but which, after pressure from various sides, also embraced the countries of the Mediterranean and the Caucasus. Unlike the Barcelona Process, the ENP is strictly bilateral. Its gradualist, pragmatic and adaptable nature should make this instrument a framework for promoting greater reforms among its members and even harmonization with the EU in both the political and economic spheres. Its results are uneven and none too positive for the time being, to the extent that the Commission has launched a process of reflection on the improvement of the incentives that the ENP offers²⁰.

With the emergence of the ENP there were doubts as to whether it would marginalize or even replace the Barcelona Process, especially as of 2007, when a new financial instrument (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) has combined the funds allocated to the Mediterranean and Eastern European countries. However, the Barcelona Process and the ENP are managing to coexist and in any case the Barcelona Process, in both its bilateral and multilateral dimension, continues on its course. Even so, the division of tasks which we might foresee in the medium and long term would reserve political dialogue, the institutional dimension and the management of multilateral projects for the Barcelona Process²¹.

That is precisely the space which the initial Mediterranean Union project wished to occupy and the modifications introduced in the Rome Declaration of 20 December

18 Esther Barbé and Eduard Soler i Lecha (2005) Barcelona + 10: Spain's relaunch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, *The International Spectator*, vol. XL, no 2, pp. 85–98.

19 See, among others, Richard Gillespie (2006) Onward but not Upward: The Barcelona Conference of 2005. *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2 pp. 271-278; Muriel Asseburg (2005) Barcelona + 10. No Breakthrough in the European Partnership, *SWP Comments*, no. 55; and Eduard Soler i Lecha (2006) El Mediterráneo tras la Cumbre de Barcelona. La necesidad de una voluntad política ampliada. *Documentos CIDOB Mediterráneo*, no. 5.

20 Communication of the European Commission to the European Council and Parliament relating to the Consolidation of the European Neighbourhood Policy, Brussels, 4 December 2006, COM (2006) 726 final.

21 For more details see Eduard Soler i Lecha (2006) El Mediterráneo tras la Cumbre de Barcelona. La necesidad de una voluntad política ampliada. *Documentos CIDOB Mediterráneo*, no. 5.

2007 did not change the situation substantially. Consequently, the way the initial proposal was put forward it posed a threat (whether this is acknowledged or not) to the continuation of the Barcelona Process but not to the ENP. Obviously, some sort of deal could have been struck, placing certain projects under the umbrella of the Union for the Mediterranean and others remaining in the Barcelona Process, but overlapping most likely would have been quick to arise.

Whereas the way the proposal has been presented as of 13 March, not only is it compatible with the Barcelona Process, there is also every indication that it will become part of the Barcelona Process. As we said earlier, it becomes a new method of working of this Process and, therefore, the risks of institutional duplication are beginning to subside.

In addition to all that, it must be said that the Barcelona Process has been coexisting from the outset with the 5+5, an informal cooperation initiative among the countries of the Western Mediterranean which in recent years has been revitalized and reinforced with the dimension of cooperation among interior and defence ministries²². There has been no overlapping or competition between the Barcelona Process and the 5+5 but there certainly could have been between the 5+5 and the initial approach of the Union of the Mediterranean. There could still be some overlapping among specific projects which some which to implement within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean and others which are already in operation within the framework of the 5+5 (for example, in the field of civil defence).

In view of the shortcomings of the Barcelona Process and the verification that the 5+5 framework continued to produce results, some have opted for focusing on subregional cooperation. For instance, the idea of advancing towards a 5+5+1 model has been considered, the last member being the European Commission²³. In the light of the permanent instability in the Middle East, others have suggested the possibility of transforming the initial French proposal into an enlarged 5+5 (extended to Greece and Egypt). It is said that Egypt and Italy would have gone for this option in 2007. In spite of the fact that the Union for the Mediterranean has come to form part of the Barcelona Process, it cannot be ruled out that Paris, Rome, Cairo or perhaps Athens advocate for a 6+6 option, particularly if the situation in the Middle East interferes too much in the summit of 13 July and mars the results and impact of this meeting.

22 The 10 countries which comprise this framework are Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

23 See Martín Ortega (2006) *Cómo España y la UE pueden contribuir a la formación de un Magreb unido* Memorando Opex, no. 24/2006.

However, extending the 5+5 beyond the Western Mediterranean would undermine the importance of the desire of the 5+5 to contribute to regional integration in the Maghreb. Furthermore, if the aim is to have a highly visible cooperation framework with a certain degree of institutionalization, that would eliminate one of the reasons why the 5+5 continues to work: it is its degree of informality and, to a certain extent, opacity which make this framework less vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the international system.

In short, one of the main challenges of Euro-Mediterranean relations will be to find a way of accommodating this combination of initiatives and policies. The proliferation of cooperation initiatives can only happen if they are directed at very specific areas and if they are accompanied by an increase in funds allocated to keep this cooperation on its feet. In both respects, the response which the Union for the Mediterranean offers remains uncertain.

4. Reactions to the Union for the Mediterranean

Since the day of its presentation, the Union for the Mediterranean has caused a considerable stir among the sectors most involved in Mediterranean issues. From unconditional adherence to flat rejection taking in a broad range of qualified stances, all the interested parties have come to define a position. Below is a summary of the reactions of some of the most prominent actors.

The Commission and especially the units which handle the Barcelona Process saw this initiative as a clear competitor and they particularly disliked the harshness with which the 12-year existence of this process was evaluated. However, this discontent has not reached the wider public. What is more, for fear of being marginalized in the process and instead of openly criticizing Sarkozy's initiative, Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner was quick to request that the Commission be associated at the highest level in the new initiative. In any case, as we have just seen, the Commission was fully integrated into the preparation of the Union for the Mediterranean after the decision of 13 March.

As they were not coastal, the best the countries of Northern, Central and Eastern Europe could hope for was to be observers in the Union for the Mediterranean and to be involved in the execution of some of the projects. As we have already seen, that situation changed as of 13 March. Within this group of countries, either those which were more committed to pro-European ideas or which felt unfairly excluded from Euro-Mediterranean cooperation after having worked in this area, looked upon the French proposal with considerable suspicion.

This was the case of Germany, which via both Chancellor Merkel and via her partners in the SPD expressed these reservations very clearly indeed. Unlike other European or Mediterranean partners, who in the presence of Sarkozy displayed their adherence to the project and in more reduced circles expressed their reservations, the chancellor let Sarkozy know she did not agree²⁴. This opposition came from a combination of a feeling of exclusion, discontent with the style of the new French president, the deterioration of Franco-German relations or disagreement with some aspects of the French initiative (such as the absence of political conditionality). However, neither in France nor in other capitals did anyone think German discontent would go so far as to bring about a radical change in the nature of the project²⁵.

The Scandinavian countries shared the German point of view although, obviously, their capacity to exert pressure was not as great as that of Berlin. Within this group it would be worth highlighting the discontent of Sweden and Finland, two countries which in spite of being far from the Mediterranean have played an active role in the launch of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation initiatives (Sweden, in the educational and cultural field²⁶) and have ensured the continuation of the Process at particularly tense times (during the last Finnish presidency of the EU)²⁷.

The countries of the East have kept a low profile in their reaction to the Union for the Mediterranean, both in the initial phase and in the one which emerged from 13 March. The exception is Poland, where it has been studied how to make the most of the current situation in order to strengthen policy towards Eastern Europe, and towards Ukraine to be precise²⁸. Warsaw is not well-disposed to more money being spent on the Mediterranean if more funds are not allocated to the EU's eastern border too²⁹. At the same time, Poland has presented a proposal together with Sweden for the creation of a multilateral cooperation framework for Eastern Europe³⁰. In addition, it would be only natural to think that Poland and other countries from Central and Eastern Europe will

24 Merkel rebuffs Sarkozy on Mediterranean Union plan, in *Financial Times*, 30 January 2008.

25 As some French diplomats acknowledge in private.

26 It is worth highlighting its boost to the extension of the Tempus programme to the Mediterranean and also its contribution to the creation of the Anna Lindh Foundation.

27 Finland took over the presidency in the second half of 2006, at a particularly difficult time in Gaza and very especially in Lebanon. Even so, it succeeded in staging a Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Tampere with conclusions that even tackled security issues.

28 Paper by Lena Korslanka-Bobinska at the seminar Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean Relations-Emerging Dynamics, Problems and their Potential Implications for the Magreb, organized by EuroMeSCo and la Association d'Études Internationales in Tunisia (21-22 April 2008).

29 See Paris transmet aux Vingt-Sept un compromis franco-allemand sur l'Union pour la Méditerranée in *Le Monde*, 12 March 2008.

30 A proposal gathered in *CEPS European Neighbourhood Watch*, no. 38, pp. 6-7, May 2008.

end up hinging their support and involvement in the Union for the Mediterranean on positive signs being sent out to Ukraine, in relation to both its relations with the EU and in the framework of NATO.

However, within the EU the countries of Southern Europe are those which can play a more prominent role in the success or failure of the initiative. Spain is perhaps the country where the Union for the Mediterranean triggered the most negative reaction for fear that it might jeopardize the Barcelona Process (and eclipse the important role of Spain in the Mediterranean). This was the mood among diplomats, members of the government, academics and activists alike³¹.

Spain could only welcome the “return” of France to Mediterranean issues but it would also try to transform the French proposals, transform them either towards a 5+5 model with some modifications or towards a model of Euro-Mediterranean Union³². That is to say, that it should include all the members of the Barcelona Process and among these all the members of the EU and that, as the word Union suggests, it should strengthen the political integration aspect of the project. Subsequently, it would be referred to as the Union for the Mediterranean, understood as a nucleus of the Barcelona Process and the name “Barcelona Plus” was also recovered³³.

At the end of December, as we have already seen, Spain gave its public support to the French proposal, although it was trying to include the EU as much as possible in this new project. In addition, as we have seen, Spanish diplomatic pressure was considered responsible for the name change introduced after 13 March which for the first time confirms the name “Barcelona Process” and places the Union for the Mediterranean under its umbrella. However, throughout this process we can see that Spain has taken a more defensive and reactive stance rather than making proposals, something which, to a certain extent, has characterized Euro-Mediterranean policy since 2006³⁴. It is a tendency which has intensified in the run up to an election in which, understandably, the priorities of the government leaders have lain elsewhere.

31 A good example of that are some of the sessions organized in which voices of the different sectors could be heard, such as the working lunch at the Real Instituto Elcano in Madrid on 12 de June or the seminar at the Fundació Rafael Campalans and at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on 30 November and 1 December.

32 A name used by Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos in his article, *Del Proceso de Barcelona a la Unión Euromediterránea*, *El País*, 2 August 2007.

33 The concept “Barcelona plus” was proposed in 2005 by EuroMeSCo “Barcelona Plus: Towards a Euro-Mediterranean Community of Democratic States”, EuroMeSCo Report, April 2005 and, as can be seen in the title of this report it did not refer to a union rather a community.

34 For a more detailed analysis see Eduard Soler i Lecha (2008), *España y el Mediterráneo: en defensa del Proceso de Barcelona* in Esther Barbé (coord) *España en Europa: 2004-2008*, monograph of the Observatory of European Foreign Policy, no. 4, Bellaterra: Instituto Universitario de Estudios Europeos.

Following the elections of March 2008, we can see signs that Spain may have taken on a more active role again, to be precise, promoting along with Italy the creation of a European Agency of Investment for the Mediterranean. This could come under the umbrella of the Union for the Mediterranean and is linked to the traditional proposal of creating a Euro-Mediterranean Bank. However, signs in the opposite direction can also be observed and in Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos' first appearance in the Congress a surprising lack of precision regarding Euro-Mediterranean policy could be appreciated, especially if compared to the Latin American dimension³⁵.

In spite of agreeing on the financial issue, Italy's position on the Union for the Mediterranean has been somewhat different to that of Spain. Rome was much more favourable to the initial approach than Madrid though it did suggest choosing a sub-regional framework (leaving aside the Middle East). Nevertheless, Italy, like Spain, hoped the new proposal could sit as comfortably as possible with the political, legal and institutional framework of the European Union. In the case of Italy it should also be pointed out that the political crisis in which Italy was immersed in the early months of 2008 reduced the impact of Italian diplomatic activity.

Portugal, during its presidency of the EU (second half of 2007), focused its diplomatic efforts on being included in the project in spite of not being a coastal country in the strict sense and when it achieved that, part of the suspicions it had about the French proposal disappeared. Finally, Greece has played a rather discreet role in all this process although it is worth pointing out that some strategic sectors of the country's economy (especially the shipping sector) have expressed an interest in view of the opportunities that this new framework of cooperation might present.

As far as the Arab countries are concerned, the proposal has aroused greater interest in the Maghreb than in the Middle East. However, generally speaking no-one has expressed particular enthusiasm for the proposal for various reasons. On the one hand, it is seen as a gesture of unilateralism with colonial overtones on the part of France and on the other, most of these countries want to have a framework of relations with the entire EU and not just with the Mediterranean countries of the EU. In addition, it is in the EU where there is funding set aside and in the vast majority of cases the contractual framework of relations with the EU (association agreement) is still in the process of development. In this respect, it has been seen that the fact the Germany

35 Comparecencia del señor Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación para informar sobre las líneas generales de su departamento, in Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados, IX legislatura, no. 27, pp. 2-30.

was reluctant to the initiative made many Arab countries wait until the Europeans came to an agreement first before becoming thoroughly involved in the initiative.

Nevertheless, we can observe different attitudes in each of the countries of the Maghreb. Libya and Tunisia, for example, expressed greater interest in the initiative, especially in the initial phase. In the case of Libya, it forms part of its international rehabilitation process and is a way of avoiding the adoption of what has come to be called the Barcelona heritage (free trade, a formal commitment to representative democracy, etc.). In the case of Tunisia, it is linked, on the one hand, to the dependence on France and, on the other, to the absence of issues related to democracy and human rights in the Union for the Mediterranean project, something which proves particularly attractive to Ben Ali's regime³⁶. It shall be worth seeing whether Tripoli and Tunis maintain their enthusiasm for the initiative once it has been fully incorporated into the Barcelona Process. The reaction of Rabat and Algiers has been more important. Relations between Morocco and France have maintained and even improved upon the already excellent ties from the Chirac period. Announcements of major investments and official visits have illustrated this good understanding. In view of this situation, it was unlikely that Morocco would directly oppose the French proposal and the Moroccan king himself described it as "a visionary and bold project". Beyond fine words, Morocco's strategy continues being to take full advantage of all the projects of strategic interest but without this involvement relegating Morocco's main interest: obtaining the "Advanced Status of Morocco with the EU" which is something more than an association without arriving at membership³⁷.

The case of Algeria is more complex. In spite of strategic interests in the field of energy, relations with France are not as smooth as those of its neighbour and are often tinged with resentment from the colonial age. In spite of the interest shown by some business sectors, it cannot be said that the Union for the Mediterranean proposal has had a particularly warm welcome in Algiers. On the one hand, Algerian authorities explicitly asked for the priorities of the Union for the Mediterranean to be reoriented towards the construction of "a Mediterranean Schengen" and they expressed their discontent over the inclusion of Israel in the project³⁸. Some have gone

36 Ben Ali is pleased to be one of the first leaders to support Sarkozy's initiative. See, for example, his interview in *Figaro* magazine, 10 November 2007.

37 With regard to the advanced status see Afkar-Ideas, to be precise the interview with Alberto Navarro, Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Menuar Alem and the article by Larbi Jaïdi.

38 See *Projet de l'Union pour la Méditerranée, la vision discordante de l'Algérie*, in *El Watan*, 30 March 2008 and *L'Algérie marque sa différence sur le projet d'union pour la Méditerranée*, in *La Tribune*, 30 March 2008.

further and even considered that the French diplomatic strategy seeks to isolate Algeria³⁹. More recently, some reports indicate that Bouteflika may stay away from the summit though this has not been officially confirmed. This reaction is justified on the basis of the presence of Israel but, in fact, it is a way of expressing Algiers' disagreement with current French foreign policy, particularly towards the Maghreb⁴⁰.

In the Middle East there has been rather little interest shown in the proposal. It is a minor issue for Israel though Shimon Peres was quick to show a liking for the initiative and his Israeli government appointed a diplomat to the project. It is an attitude which contrasts with that of Syria and Lebanon, which are the two Mediterranean countries to have most clearly opposed the proposal⁴¹.

Egypt deserves a special mention. This country's political authorities expressed reservations at first⁴². However, after intense diplomatic contacts, Mubarak chose to support the French proposal. That became public on 30 December, in a joint press conference with Sarkozy, and they even announced they were going to work on a joint working document prior to the summit⁴³. Egypt hopes to play a central role, aspiring for example to occupy the first co-presidency in this new development of Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Turkey, lastly, is one of the countries where the proposal has been received with most misgivings. It has a lot to do with the fact that Sarkozy's initial speeches mention the important role which Turkey could play in the Union for the Mediterranean as "a great Mediterranean country" at the same time as questions are raised about its Europeanness and spokes are placed in the wheel of the entry negotiations. It is only natural that Ankara should have seen the initial proposals of the Union for the Mediterranean as a consolation prize for its European ambitions, a substitute which Turkey was not willing to accept⁴⁴. However, when the project was disassociated from Turkey's candidacy after the agreement of Rome and, above all, after the Franco-German agreement, Turkey has felt much more comfortable and is even ready to become

39 Rachid Mechtras L'union pour la Méditerranée, Sarkozy veut isoler Alger, in *Le Midi Libre*, 29 April 2008.

40 Carla Fibla, Argelia se desmarca de la Unión del Mediterráneo, *La Vanguardia*, 28 May 2008.

41 This is what can be gathered from the interview with Alain le Roy in *La Croix*, 19 February 2008.

42 The Egyptian foreign minister, Ahmed Abu al-Ghaith bemoaned the fact that the proposal had been launched without prior consultation. According to Euractiv, *Le projet français d'Union méditerranéenne fait face à un vent de scepticisme*, 8 November 2007.

43 This is what is reflected in the transcription of the press conference of 30 January 2008 (www.elysee.fr).

44 See Schmid, Dorothée *La Turquie et l'Union pour la Méditerranée: un partenariat calculé*, in *Politique étrangère*, 2008:1, pp. 65-76.

involved in the initiative⁴⁵. Nevertheless, Turkey has still to disclose the rank of authority with which it will attend the summit since it will presumably use this issue to obtain a more favourable attitude from the French presidency towards the opening of fresh rounds of talks.

45 See Turkey, reassured on EU, backs “Club Med” plan, in *Today's Zaman*, 5 March 2008.

5. Strong and weak points of the Union for the Mediterranean

5.1 Before 13 March

Although it can also be seen as a problem, one of the strong points of the initial Union for the Mediterranean proposal is that it was a project promoted by France, and by the presidency of the Republic in particular. As it came from a European and Mediterranean power, the cost of opposing the proposal would be considerable. In addition, the fact that it was proposed directly by the presidency of the Republic and that it sought agreements with other heads of state and government also meant it has more chances of success, much greater than if the project had arisen in the Quai d'Orsay and had been led by the French Foreign Ministry.

In any case, this proposal had virtues and added values in Mediterranean cooperation beyond having revived interest and discussion over Mediterranean issues. Firstly, it is worth mentioning the logic of flexibility, flexibility in terms of the involvement of the members (they could become involved in more or less projects and choose those that most interest them or those in which they are most competent); this would facilitate working at a multilateral level without having to wait for the agreement of all the members. Flexibility too as far as the execution of the projects is concerned since even if the Commission took part, it was to be supposed that there would be less red tape than in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and other community funds.

Secondly, and closely linked to funding issues, another virtue of the proposal was that it tried to mobilize the funds of large companies for the execution of these pro-

jects. The public-private partnership was an interesting way of implementing general interest projects in which companies could obtain legitimate and reasonable profits.

Finally, one of the main added values of the model proposed by Sarkozy was that it prioritized areas of cooperation in which issues of geographical proximity were a fundamental element. It is undeniable that cooperation in aspects such as the reaction to natural disasters, electrical infrastructures or interconnections made sense if they were addressed by neighbouring countries or those which shared the same sea basin.

If we move on now to the weak points of the initial proposal, we can see that the fact that it was a French project was also one of its disadvantages. Rather than seeing it as representing the general interest, most of the potential members perceived it as an instrument of French foreign policy and in the service of French interests. As we have just seen, it aroused suspicions among both France's European partners and in some countries of the southern Mediterranean.

The way the proposal was initially put forward, there was the risk that by incorporating a field of political dialogue the Union for the Mediterranean could stand in contradiction with the policies of the EU. Judging by the speeches of the French leaders, democratic and human rights issues were going to have a minor and even non-existent presence in the Union for the Mediterranean. As we have seen, this might interest countries such as Libya or Tunisia but it was a severe blow to the consistency of European foreign policy, which is not only of the EU rather the sum of those which its members states conduct.

Equally concerning was that it should lead to unnecessary overlapping, both within the framework of political dialogue and in the field of concrete projects, something which would mean an unnecessary diversification of human and financial efforts. In some cases, there might even be contradictions and incompatibilities with the legal, financial and institutional framework of the EU.

Nor did it bode well that it should be advancing towards a model of European foreign policy which, far from considering the common interest and acting in a coordinated manner, was operating according to a logic of distribution of zones of influence of the traditional powers. If in France it could be argued that the Mediterranean is for the Mediterraneans, it will not be long before we hear that Central and Eastern Europe is for the Europeans of that area. This dynamic could prompt "imperialist" whims and reactions to these whims.

Finally, the promoters of the proposal appeared to be overlooking the fact that if the progress of the Euro-Mediterranean process had experienced difficulties, some of the partners in the south and east of the Mediterranean were more responsible for this than the non-Mediterranean countries of the EU. The contrast between the overwhelming presence of European leaders and the discreet Mediterranean presence at the summit in 2005 is proof of that. Therefore, there was no evidence to suggest that political dialogue could bear more fruit among the coastal states than on a Euro-Mediterranean scale.

5.2 After 13 March

At the time of writing it is still difficult to say for sure what the design, instruments and goals of the Union for the Mediterranean will be and how, finally, it will mesh with other regional cooperation initiatives. The Commission Communication provides quite a lot of information about the institutional structure but it is less explicit on other aspects linked to the relationship between this new type of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and the structures existing in the Barcelona Process. For the first time, the Commission has presented a list with the criteria that the projects must fulfil and it also include four examples of projects which could be funded. Nevertheless, on this point too there is considerable ambiguity with regard to how the projects will be executed and evaluated.

In any case, there is every indication that in spite of the changes made to the proposal following the intervention of Merkel in March and the Commission in May, some of the positive points mentioned in the previous section will be maintained. We are referring above all to the subject of flexibility, in other words, to the fact that various states can become involved in the execution of a project without the need for all the members of the Euro-Mediterranean area to be involved in said project. The will to mobilize private capital to join forces with public funds and thus increase the impact of these projects also appears to be maintained.

The decision of 13 March and the Commission Communication also correct some of the negative points mentioned earlier: the unnecessary exclusion of the Central, Eastern and Northern European countries, the risk of unnecessary overlapping and, worse still, of inconsistency with the principles and action of European foreign policy. It also clarifies somewhat the possible institutional structure with a commendable will to improve the visibility and the sense of belonging of all the countries which participate in the Barcelona Process. Furthermore, as it recognizes the validity

of the principles expressed in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995, we take it that the commitment to the promotion of democratic values and respect for human rights is maintained.

So the turn the initiative has taken after 13 March is positive in comparison with many of the aspects contained in the initial French proposal, which was subsequently modified and supported by Italy and Spain. There are, however, some issues which must not be overlooked. Firstly, the fact that the calendar is extremely tight and that that might give rise both to a certain haste and to a lack of transparency when it comes to gathering, evaluating and approving cooperation projects for the coming years.

Likewise, it is worth pointing out that the optimism is not general in the countries of the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean. While they are happy to see that the Europeans have settled their differences, there are aspects which disturb them. The way the Union for the Mediterranean is presented now, it may have lost some of its appeal for some countries from the south and east of the Mediterranean, which had been seduced both by the rhetoric regarding political integration contained in the initial speeches and by the absence of democratic conditions. It must also be remembered that under the current circumstances the risk remains –or it has even increased– of the situation in the Middle East “contaminating” the relaunch of Euro-Mediterranean relations which is to take place at the summit of 13 July. In fact, under the current circumstances many Arab leaders may feel enormously uncomfortable about sharing a “family photo” with their Israeli counterpart.

6. Possible scenarios for Spanish foreign policy

When evaluating the possible scenarios for Spanish foreign policy, we must take into consideration that the interests of Spain are closely linked to the general European and even Euro-Mediterranean interest. In other words, it is in Spain's interest that the EU's foreign policy should be as consistent, credible and effective as possible, largely because Spain does not carry enough weight on the international stage to do without the European Union and act alone. Consequently, any scenario which reduces the consistency, credibility and effectiveness of European foreign policy is negative for Spanish interests.

The worst-case scenario for Spanish diplomacy appears to have passed after the decision of 13 March. It would be one in which the Barcelona Process was eclipsed by the Union for the Mediterranean and in which, in a few years, the Barcelona Process would be reduced to a minimum expression in such a way that what had been developed would go on to be handled within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean, this last initiative being outside the framework of the European Union. This would have destroyed years of work to Europeanize Euro-Mediterranean relations and ensure they were multilateral.

This scenario, which may well have materialized had it not been for German pressure, would have been negative for Spanish interests for two main reasons. Firstly, because it would mean a regression in relation to the construction of a common European and Euro-Mediterranean policy and interest. Secondly, because Spain would have lost prominence on Mediterranean matters in favour of France and it would have discredited the work carried out by the Spanish governments and diplomatic corps on the launch and maintenance of the Barcelona Process.

If this scenario would have been so negative, we must wonder why Spain did not react more energetically to some of the aspects of Nicolas Sarkozy's initial proposal. It was mainly because Spanish interests and those of the government are not focused solely on the Mediterranean. After the French elections, the maintenance and if possible even an improvement of Franco-Spanish relations became a priority issue due to the impact of these relations on the interests of Spain in the EU and, above all, on matters of a bilateral nature (terrorism, infrastructures, energy, etc.).

The best and still possible scenario, not just for Spain but for the entire EU, would be one in which the Union for the Mediterranean becomes a successful facet of an improved Barcelona Process. That would enable a reorientation of the political momentum of this period to bolster the framework of political and institutional dialogue of the Barcelona Process. We would be heading for a kind of Euro-Mediterranean Union (or Community, to be more modest), a project which would take over from the Barcelona Process and with said name change would indicate that the members are committed to greater integration than that which has taken place within the framework of the European Partnership.

This "Barcelona Plus" would involve the creation of common structures (a reinforced secretariat, a parliamentary assembly with powers, an executive presidency, a collection of sectorial agencies, etc). In that scenario an attempt would be made to reach a consensus on the Charter for Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean, commercial liberalization would be truly completed with any accompanying measures that were necessary and it would also involve south-south integration.

The design of this deepening of the Barcelona Process should not be an obstacle to bilateral relations being managed within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, a policy which should offer more incentives for political and economic reform and which should be given a greater budget.

Between this ideal situation and the scenario described initially, there is a series of intermediate scenarios, characterized, on the one hand, by a certain disappointment with the prospects of the summit of July 2008, a disappointment which could be due to both the interference of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the resulting loss of political strength of a summit of these characteristics, as well as to the fact that the projects which might finally be approved within this framework would prove incapable of providing a qualitative leap in the region's level of economic growth.

As has often been the case in European foreign policy, we would be once more witnessing a capability-expectations gap. In other words, the stir caused by Sarkozy's

proposal would have generated expectations which are excessively optimistic compared to the political impetus and funds which the EU and its Mediterranean partners are prepared to give and unfortunate in view of the regional context in which the proposal is being promoted.

Furthermore, it is easy that the need to do political and institutional balancing acts - that is to say, the fact that the preservation of the European Commission's role, recognition of the prominence of France and greater involvement of the members from the south must be made compatible, could end up causing some dysfunctions. Some of the doubts raised at the beginning of this document about the synchronization of this new form of the Barcelona Process with the structures already in existence could remain unsettled even after the summit. In addition, the haste with which the summit in July is being prepared could mean that some of the projects that are approved are already being carried out, totally or partially, within the framework of the Barcelona Process, the 5+5 or even the United Nations' programmes for the environment⁴⁶.

Now that the first of the scenarios has been ruled out and after the elections of March, the Spanish government faces the task of getting as close as possible to the best of the scenarios, working to reduce or eliminate some of the dysfunctions we have just underscored. In order to do that we advise carrying out the following action.

- Make proposals to improve the Barcelona Process: With a view to the moment when Spain will occupy the presidency of the EU (2010) but also to the two years before then, the Spanish government should launch proposals to improve the instruments and areas of action of the Barcelona Process. Research centres and think tanks alert to this subject must do their part and Spain must join forces both with the countries which are known for their commitment to the Euro-Mediterranean framework and those with which it will have to coordinate under the new system of presidencies (Belgium and Hungary).
- Place people at the top of the Euro-Mediterranean agenda: Within the framework of this effort to revitalize the Barcelona Process, Spain should remember that the target of this cooperation are the citizens on both rims of the Mediterranean. To compensate for the business drift towards which the French government has steered the Barcelona Process, Spain should pressure to increase action in social policy, education and respect for fundamental freedoms. Issues such as employment,

46 On the environmental issue see Oriol Costa (2008), *Dos Barcelonas para un mar, la transformación de la cooperación ambiental en el Mediterráneo*, in *Documentos CIDOB Mediterráneo*, no. 10.

rural development, primary and secondary education, vocational training, respect for human rights, among other things, must occupy the place they deserve on the Euro-Mediterranean agenda.

- Increase the resources allocated to the Mediterranean countries: Both in terms of quantity of money (additional funds to those allocated in the financial perspectives) and in terms of more effective use of existing funds. In this respect, it is important on the one hand to increase the resources of the FEMIP (Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership) and to encourage the creation of capital-risk funds. Spain should also remain committed to the inclusion of the Mediterranean Investment Promotion Agency on the agenda of the Paris summit. On the other, it is important to solve some of the problems observed in the management of MEDA I and MEDA II in the execution of the projects financed by the ENPI. Thinking long term, it is important that Spain should begin to raise and debate with its European and Mediterranean partners how to take a greater leap in the financial perspectives to be approved in 2014. In that respect, it will be particularly important not to present the Mediterranean as competing for priority with Eastern Europe rather seek a financial reinforcement of both dimensions of the European Neighbourhood Policy.
- Avoid overlapping where possible: Spain must coordinate with other countries and with the European Commission to prevent the projects and the political dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean from overlapping with the projects and structure of the Barcelona Process. In that respect, it should aim towards a single political forum and for that to happen it is necessary that all the members of the Union for the Mediterranean are also members of the Barcelona Process. Spain, then, should support the full membership of Libya, Monaco, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership so as to avoid dysfunctions. As far as projects are concerned, it must be clear that this is a new form of cooperation at the heart of the Barcelona Process and beginning projects in this new form which are already being successfully carried out within the framework of Barcelona must be avoided. Finally, as a country which has always believed in the institutional reinforcement of the Barcelona Process, concrete proposals must be made on the operation and structuring of the co-presidency and secretariat. Spain must fully support the idea of creating the Joint Permanent Committee and that this should be an agile, decisive and inclusive structure.
- Make the most of the new form of cooperation which the Union for the Mediterranean might represent. Spain must analyse what type of projects have a strategic interest and which actors in Spain might become involved in this type of project.

After this reflection, talks with the Commission chiefs and those in charge of the future French presidency must be stepped up and if possible joint projects with a country from the south or east of the Mediterranean presented. Some writers have already indicated areas in which Spain might play an important role, such as in the promotion of industrial clusters, rural development, the environment, energy or administrative reform and the reform of the financial sector⁴⁷. It must be taken into account that in 2008 only a first batch of projects will be approved and in subsequent years some of these will be renewed and new initiatives will be passed. There is every sign that the Investment Promotion Agency project is sufficiently ripe and Spain should make every diplomatic effort to have said project included in the first round. However, Spain should also be thinking about how to structure new projects two years from now, to be precise, when Madrid exercises the EU presidency. As we said previously, within these projects Spain should commit to those which have the most direct impact on the welfare of the citizens of both rims.

- Avoid lack of transparency in the adjudication of projects. The haste with which the summit is being prepared and the control which France has exercised over the information to date raises doubts about the transparency and objectivity with which these projects are adjudicated. If that were the case, it could end up tarnishing the image not only of the Union for the Mediterranean but also the entire Barcelona Process. What is more, if a crisis broke out it could lead to a tightening of the already strict adjudication procedures of European aid. Consequently, the Spanish government must make this transparency a priority, an aspect on which it is sure to find allies in the Commission, Germany and many other countries.
- Keep the 5+5 alive: The 5+5 is a useful tool in itself and its virtues as a forum where the Maghrebi countries participate with a high degree of informality must be preserved. Since the Union for the Mediterranean does not wish to work on issues of defence (except in the field of civil defence), maintaining the 5+5 structure could involve, among other measures, the reinforcement of the 5+5 defence ministers.

47 Gonzalo Escribano and Alejandro Lorca (2008), *La Unión Mediterránea: una unión en busca de proyecto*, *Documento de Trabajo* no. 13, Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano.

7. In conclusion

As we have seen, the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean has had a significant impact on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. A good part of government attention and the attention of academics and experts too has been turned to this issue. The reactions triggered by its launch, in relation to both its form and its content, have led to substantial modifications to the proposal. However, it appears increasingly clear that the Union for the Mediterranean does not replace or compete with the Barcelona Process, rather it comes under its umbrella. It will be a new form of cooperation which will seek, above all, to be more flexible and mobilize new resources and which will be accompanied by a renewal of the institutional and operational structures of the Barcelona Process.

Following these modifications, the proposal may be positive for the revitalization of Euro-Mediterranean relations and there is no reason why the members of the Barcelona Process, and Spain among them, should not be fully involved in this new stage. However, it would be rash to think that this new form of cooperation will achieve very different results to those achieved by the Barcelona Process to date. This new form of cooperation will run into many of the same obstacles which the Barcelona Process has come up against since its inception, particularly the paralysing effects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this respect, if hopes are raised too high as a result of grandiloquent speeches by some French authorities, it is easy to fall into a fresh phase of disappointment and frustration.

However, if expectations remain a little more humble and an effort is made to make full use of the instruments of this new form, not forgetting, of course, existing methods of cooperation, we can obtain concrete results in fields such as electrical inter-

connections or in environmental projects. It is difficult to think that it will be via these projects that the ambitious and still valid goals of the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 will be accomplished. However, it is no less true that any boost to cooperation among Mediterranean countries is positive and that it will contribute in the medium and long term to creating conditions for an extension of cooperation to fields which are as yet too sensitive and to going more deeply into areas where cooperation is already taking place.

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