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The Euro-Mediterranean Space as an Imagined (Geo-)political, Economic and Cultural Entity

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Thomas Demmelhuber

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1. Introduction

The anger of Islamic societies world-wide that arose from the publication of caricatures featuring Prophet Muhammad has tempted various editors and scholars alike to declare the current situation as further evidence of Huntington's thesis of the *The Clash of Civilizations*, predicted in 1993.¹ In this context the Mediterranean symbolizes a frontier between the secular-liberal part on the Northern shore (Christian civilization) and the illiberal-authoritarian part on the Southern shore (Islamic civilization) of the Mediterranean. The great legacy of the Mediterranean throughout history remains undervalued. For centuries the Mediterranean has been the bridge between the actors on both sides, acting as a historic crossroads for various ethnic, cultural and religious traditions. It is more than odd "that only in modern times the Mediterranean clogged the flow of ideas" and stopped to act as "a vehicle for philosophies and cultures."² Thus the aim of the fol-

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- 1 Huntington, Samuel P. (1993): "The Clash of Civilizations". In: *Foreign Affairs*, 3/1993.
- 2 Arishie, Mohssen (2005): "Clash of labour – immigrants' struggle in Europe". In: *The Egyptian Gazette*, # 40,850, 126th year. December 6, 2005.

lowing paper is to discuss the notion of the Euro-Mediterranean space³ as a vivid and vibrant entity⁴ in (geo-) political, economic and cultural terms. After the introductory remarks on the Mediterranean itself, the Euro-Mediterranean space shall be evaluated as an imagined entity embodying historical, (geo-) political, economic and cultural dimensions. What were the constituting factors of this imagined entity? Additionally, the Barcelona Process (i.e. the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership – EMP), which has shaped and defined the latter space, shall be reviewed in order to verify the crucial importance of the Euro-Mediterranean entity for the further development of the EMP.

1.1. *The Mediterranean*

The Mediterranean was not only the epicenter for the gamble of power throughout history⁵, but it has also been the reference point from which to consider the world around and where to base transcending theories of mankind. The epicenter of civilization and its cradle was seen to be located in the Mediterranean for a very long time. In other words, the Mediterranean,

- 3 Throughout this paper the author makes a difference between a *Mediterranean* space, embodying the littoral states of the Mediterranean sea basin and the much larger *Euro-Mediterranean* space, including the 25 EU members and the partner countries of the Southern Mediterranean within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. Both spaces are labeled as *regions* with *sub-regions* as integral parts of them. *Sub-regions* are considered as conceptual units which derive from a larger defined region.
- 4 Besides further evaluations in the text, the term *entity* is generally defined as an area of common interests, experiences and legacies. There is diversity within one entity, signifying that there are several sub-structures within an “umbrella”. Though acknowledging these sub-structures, they are inter-connected through the mutual recognition of common interests, experiences and legacies that may go beyond political, ethnic or religious boundaries. There may be a variety of different types of entities depending on the nature of the common sense.
- 5 The author follows the argumentation of Karla Mallette as delivered in her fifth lecture (“Translations, Counterfeits, and Modern Mediterranean Literature”) in the Makdisi Literature Program in West Hall, cf. *AUB Bulletin*. August 2004, vol. 5, no. 5. Beirut.

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as a practically closed lake, was the world arena in those days.⁶ The Mediterranean image as a whole is neither completely occidental nor oriental. Moreover scholarly work in this field should avoid classifying the region in these terms. The terms *Orient* and *Occident* are both overloaded with stereotypes and false perceptions.⁷ Despite its conflict-woven environment, the Mediterranean has not been a frontier. Since the Hellenic era the Mediterranean has been the medium to bridge the gap between other regions, different cultures and diverse tribes. In particular, the Eastern Mediterranean must be seen as the historic crossroads for various ethnic, cultural and religious traditions.⁸ Bridging a gap implies the existence of transitional areas. The latter have been midpoints of reference since the Hellenic era or the Roman Empire penetrated the Mediterranean region or at least large parts of it.⁹

If one looks at the term *Mediterranean*, which derives from the Latin word *mediterraneus* (“inland”), it tells us something about the importance of the region despite its different meanings in certain languages. The Mediterranean experiences a variety of different names and meanings. Besides the Turkish and Arabic language that call the Mediterranean the *White Sea*¹⁰,

6 The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 marked the final end of this impression. It made the Mediterranean Sea a transit area for ships going from the West to the Far East and vice versa.

7 Edward Said was one of the first to make explicit connections between Western colonization and images of the Muslim world. E. Said explains how apparently “objective” scholars from Europe or the Western hemisphere determined and taught academic dogmas about the so-called “inferior East”. These academic doctrines acquired a certain aura of authority on the basis of their vast knowledge, and thus acquired the power to misrepresent the Oriental world (with the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean as an integral part) to the Occidental audience and the power to speak for the Orient. Through those and other stereotypes, such dogmas found their way into academic circles which can have the power to guide and direct national policies (Said, Edward W. (1978): *Orientalism*. London).

8 Cf. Calleya, Stephen C. (2000): “Is the Barcelona Process Working?” In: *ZEI Discussion Papers C75*, 2000. Bonn, p. 35.

9 The author considers the latter as “Roman Rule”. The Romans penetrated the region with their imperial representatives and taxation more efficiently than ever before.

10 Interestingly, Arabic adds the expression *al-Mutawassit* (“the Middle”) after *bahr al-abyad* (“White Sea”). The Turkish expression is *Akdeniz*. *Ak* stands for “white” and *deniz* for “sea”.

the Romans referred to it as the *Mare Nostrum*, claiming the explicit ownership of the sea. In the Bible, it is titled the *Great Sea* or the *Western Sea* and modern Hebrew considers it as the *Middle Sea*, in relation to the German equivalent *Mittelmeer*. The state of the art in literature provides definitions about the Mediterranean space only in terms of a specific academic or thematic field. One may easily find the geographic definition of the Mediterranean as an entity for the passage of ships entering the area via the Isthmus of Suez and leaving it through the Strait of Gibraltar. The same accounts for tourism, a driving force for foreign direct investment (FDI) in most of the Mediterranean littoral states. In this context the Mediterranean is widely seen as one single entity covering a variety of destinations. Thus it seems that geography and some (cultural) stereotypes emanating from climate sustain the notion of the Mediterranean as a distinct cultural and ecological space.¹¹

1.2. *Inclusion & Exclusion*

The Mediterranean, as laid down before, is rather a bridge than a frontier. From a pluralist point of view, any political, economic or cultural approach to this transitional space (here: on behalf of the EU) implies to embark on the concepts of *Inclusion* and *Exclusion*.¹² The consequence is the development of a contemporary Euro-Mediterranean peculiarity. There is some kind of a “contamination” between separated but interdependent (sub-) worlds in the region resulting in parts from *Inclusion* and *Exclusion*. Any negotiation on the definition of a common area implies to define the limits of this process (*Exclusion*). In other words, to define the area of a common entity, no matter in which term, means to define who will not be part of the game. In times of regionalism, with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership¹³

11 The author remembers people saying that the Mediterranean stands for the region where olives are growing. Visual perception becomes a point of reference in these cases.

12 This shall be a defining moment throughout this paper.

13 EMP is the official name of the Barcelona Process. The EMP is a unique approach of the EU to the political, economic and social problems on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. The partnership consists of three interdependent baskets (pillars) standing for a political & security, economic & financial and social, cultural & hu-

as one result of it, the dichotomy of *Inclusion* and *Exclusion* has not vanished at all. For instance, the two documents of the EMP¹⁴ emphasize the need for free markets and the creation of a common area of peace and prosperity (*Inclusion*), but eventually curb labor mobility. *Exclusion* is therefore a blueprint for drafting bilateral agreements in order to shunt foreign workers or asylum seekers from the Southern Mediterranean and across Africa back home. The latter sustains the notion of separated but somehow interdependent (sub-) worlds.¹⁵

1.3. *Entity rather than Identity*

The currently perceived strategic and (geo-) political reality of the Euro-Mediterranean space is one of structural fragmentation. Although it would be a far-fetched invention to speak of a Euro-Mediterranean identity, there is no reason to reject it completely.¹⁶ Further fragmentation would only result in constructing the Euro-Mediterranean as no more than a space of sub-regions without any unified reference of identity. People can have different and varying identities that have influence on them in different ways. Generating identities is somehow a psychological necessity of mankind. What does the term *identity* imply? There is a variety of identities which may re-

man partnership. This new regional approach of the 1990s resulted among others from geographic proximity, the new role of the EU as a global actor, a new stage of world politics after the end of the Cold War and from the misperception that the Middle East Conflict between the Arab World and Israel is on a one-way path towards peace.

- 14 External Relations DG: “Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, 27-28/11/95”. In: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/bd.htm, (March 19, 2006).
- 15 The EU has recently begun to acknowledge the complexity of migration: “The European Council notes the increasing importance of migration issues for the EU and its Member States and the fact that recent developments have led to mounting public concern in some Member States. It underlines the need for a balanced, global and coherent approach, covering policies to combat illegal immigration and, in cooperation with third countries, harnessing the benefits of legal migration.” (Presidency Conclusions: “Brussels European Council 15/16 December 2005”. In: EuropeAid Cooperation Office DG (ed.; 2005): *Euromed Report*. Issue 93. Brussels).
- 16 Aliboni, Robert (2004): “Inventing a cooperative identity”. In: *Middle East Roundtable*, ed. 4, vol. 2/2004, p. 2.

fer to ethnic, class or religious identities. Identity can be understood as the consciousness of certain groups of people to separate themselves from one another and to follow this pattern over a period of time. Identity is therefore deeply influenced by notions of individuality, continuity and consistency. National identity is still something completely different as it goes beyond the latter notions. It may evolve on the basis of the identities just mentioned. This distinctiveness of national identity must be kept in mind.¹⁷

Certainly, the Mediterranean does not constitute a truly common identity. The same accounts for the much larger Euro-Mediterranean space. Its members do not share one cultural tradition, language, religion or recent history of administrative unity. Its political systems cover a wide range from liberal democracy to authoritarian rule.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the latter shall not be the defining moment for the Euro-Mediterranean space. Keeping in mind that the Euro-Mediterranean identity still has to be invented, to be established based on an existing small common denominator, the feeling, the idea and the awareness of a specific *Euro-Mediterranean entity* (to be evaluated later) is existent. The idea of such an entity was an absolute prerequisite from the EU's perspective to launch a common approach to the Mediterranean in the early 1990s.¹⁹

Looking at the EU's partner countries on the Southern shore and in particular in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Euro-Mediterranean idea²⁰ implies an indirect perception that contrasts with the nationalist idea because it underscores common denominators across political, ethnic or religious bounda-

17 Greenfeld, Liah (1992): *Nationalism - five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass., p. 12-14.

18 Heller, Mark A. (2004): "The Mediterranean of the imagination". In: *Middle East Roundtable*, ed. 4, vol. 2/2004, p. 4.

19 In the 1990s, fear was one of the defining moments for both sides to embark on this new concept. For the EU countries the fear of so-called soft risks such as migration, Islamic fundamentalism and drug trafficking was of high importance. For the countries on the Southern shore it was the fear of a fortress Europe after the initial decision for the Eastern enlargement that made the governments of the region agree on the EU's proposal for a partnership and embark on the Euro-Mediterranean project (cf. FN 34).

20 Understood as an awareness of a Euro-Mediterranean common denominator e.g. in terms of common matters of concern.

ries. These patterns supporting the Euro-Mediterranean idea exist though not being officially recognized as they directly challenge the ideology of Arab unity or any single state-nationalism.²¹ Since the adoption of the European model of nationalism as the most successful tool of political mobilization, any confession to Arab unity is outweighed by the practical political behaviour, which defends individual national interests.²² Therefore, the notion of Arab unity and the local specifics of state-nationalism challenge the notion of a Euro-Mediterranean entity.

Existing Euro-Mediterranean ideas do not imply that there is a Euro-Mediterranean identity, but interdependent constellations of sub-regions connecting EU-Europe with the Mediterranean do mean a common entity that make them areas of common approach.²³ The entity is existent. It may be girded by the framework of common institutions, the feeling of co-ownership for common problems of the Euro-Mediterranean region. The notion of identity is still something stronger that may develop in the future.²⁴ Insofar, to avoid misperceptions on both sides, one should refer to a substantial Mediterranean entity which is a historical and cultural *acquis* and in case of the EMP to a virtually (new) political, economic and cultural entity that converted the Euro-Mediterranean idea into reality. The Mediterranean entity remains an integral part of the larger Euro-Mediterranean entity.

21 Further information on the dichotomy of state-nationalism and pan-Arab unity cf. Philipp, Thomas (1994): „Nationale Einheit und politische Mehrstaatlichkeit der Araber in der Gegenwart.“ In: Lüsebrink, Hans-Jürgen (ed.; 1994): *Nationalismus im Mittelmeerraum*. Baden-Baden, p. 114-129.

22 Even the great advocate of Arab Nationalism, the former Egyptian president Nasser, was a hidden Egyptian nationalist who supported the idea of Arab unity insofar that Egypt played the leading role in it. In other words, the verbal notions of Arab unity only served as a tool to enhance and increase its legitimacy in domestic and regional politics.

23 Cf. FN 3 & 4.

24 Constructivist approach to International Relations, cf. Wendt, Alexander (1992): “Anarchy is what States make of it. The Social Construction of Power in World Politics”. In: *International Organisations*, vol. 46 (3), p. 393-404.

2. Genesis and Opportunities of the Euro-Mediterranean Space as an Imagined Entity

2.1. Imagined Communities – Theorizing the Euro-Mediterranean Entity

Looking at various works of well-known scholars in the field of nationalism, it is easy to find a theoretical background for the idea of a Euro-Mediterranean entity. The Euro-Mediterranean entity and the principal idea of the nation (though leading to different results) have much in common. Following the esteemed works of Benedict Anderson²⁵, every nation, i.e. every entity larger than a village, is based on imagination. Thus, Anderson considers each nation as an imagined society. This idea may be used as founding principle for any further evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean entity as well. The latter is an imagined but limited community with well defined boundaries in which the *construction of the entity* is primarily dependent on the work of political elites. The driving forces behind the *fostering of entities* are political, socioeconomic and cultural features. These thoughts apply for the evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean entity and shall lay a theoretical foundation.

2.2 The Mediterranean Entity– a Transnational Creature throughout History

The main thesis of the Mediterranean entity is that it has been a transnational phenomenon throughout history. One must also remember that it has been in parts a unified political entity through empires.²⁶ It has implied a reordering of the binary cultural, social and epistemological distinctions of the modern period. Since the early beginning, there have been types of entities that were not constrained by national, ethnic or religious boundaries, such as transnational corporation, scientific interactions or migration in both directions. This does not say that it was a static entity. The awareness

25 Anderson, Benedict (1996): *The imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London.

26 E.g.: Alexandrine, Roman or Byzantine Empire.

of an entity was adapted to the *Zeitgeist* of each era. Real entities – not enforced ones – are vibrant and vivid.²⁷ They appear and may disappear again. Entities are assigned and accepted, withheld and rejected. This is the opportunity of the larger Euro-Mediterranean entity to evolve and to develop further with the legacy of the Mediterranean entity as an integral part. The next sections shall work out the distinctions between the historical Mediterranean entity and the larger, unprecedented Euro-Mediterranean entity with the 25 EU members being an integral part in it.

2.3. *Policy Making on the Mediterranean*

In order to say more about the genesis and opportunities of the Euro-Mediterranean space as an imagined entity in terms of history, (geo-) politics and culture, one has to clarify that the “power game” for the Mediterranean has marked the development of a Mediterranean entity and its diverse sub-entities for centuries. Since 1798 the major player in this “power game” had been Europe with Napoleon Bonaparte claiming to bring revolutionary values and civilization to the Egyptian people.²⁸ Throughout the 19th century until the waging of World War II, the European powers were the defining external actors in the whole Mediterranean giving the Ottoman Empire just the role of a regional puppet. After World War II, the US and the Soviet Union emerged as the new powerful actors in the “power game” for the Mediterranean with the US being the remaining one in this position until now. After Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the US-brokered peace process between Israel and its neighbouring countries, American policymakers were actively engaged in Middle East diplomacy. Despite the essential part played by Norwegian interlocutors in Oslo I & II and the role that the EU played (financial support of the MEPP), the US State Department remained uncomfortable with the idea of a more balanced, transatlantic approach to the peace process. This discomfort reflected a natural desire for control and concentration of effort in Middle

27 The author follows the constructivist approach to international relations, cf. FN 24.

28 Not to forget that the European gambling for the Western Mediterranean had begun 100 years earlier culminating in the seizure of Gibraltar as a unique strategic asset by the Royal Navy of Great Britain.

East diplomacy together with a widely shared American unease about a larger and presumably more pro-Arab role for the EU.

Through its geographic vicinity the EU was forced to adapt to its neighbouring countries in the South in a different and more multi-dimensional way than, e.g. the US was willing to. Geographic proximity has equipped European strategies with a more sensitive, more complete and more long-term approach to security and socio-economic issues in the Middle East. Beginning with the Global Mediterranean Policy in the 1970s and the Euro-Arab-Dialogue, the EU (EC at that time) attempted to develop the capability of a coherent foreign policy actor to operate independently from the US in the region. It still took years to make a change in this situation and to advance from the “payer” to the “player”, i.e. from an observer status (Madrid Conference in 1991) to an equal partner in the so-called Quartet promoting the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP).²⁹ The fall of the iron curtain marked the beginning of a new step in world politics enabling the EU to advance to a more independent actor on the international stage and to embark on the effort to fill the institutional vacuum in the Mediterranean by creating the EMP in 1995.³⁰ In accordance with the enhanced foreign and security policy dimension (CFSP) contemplated in the treaty of Amsterdam 1997³¹, the Vienna European Council in December 1998 decided to devise a common strategy for four areas, which ranked high in the Union’s foreign policy priorities.³² In the case of the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean (June 2000)³³, the EU reiterates the *acquis* of the EMP

29 The four parties in the Quartet are: USA, Russia, the EU & the UN.

30 The EU simply had no institutional framework to tackle the region as a whole. There were numerous bilateral agreements that were still marked by preferential relations between the former colonies and France and Great Britain, respectively. The EU had its difficulties to get involved into regional dynamics. The almost 20-year-old Euro-Arab Dialogue failed. In particular Spain, France and Italy pushed hard for a new unprecedented and innovative approach to the region.

31 The initial beginning of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (second pillar of TEU) took place with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992.

32 Cf. Presidency Conclusions: “Vienna European Council, 12-13 December 1998”. In: http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00300-R1.EN8.htm, (November 10, 2005).

33 Cf. EU-CFSP Document (2000/458/CFSP): “Common Strategy of the European Council of 19 June 2000 on the Mediterranean region”. In: <http://europa.eu.int>

and the furtherance of the Barcelona process. It shall form the basis of its more long-term approach in order to create an area of peace, stability and wealth.

In sum, policy making on certain regions has a substantial influence on the genesis of entities. The policy of the EU on the Mediterranean has had a defining impact on the formation of a Euro-Mediterranean entity.³⁴ In case of the latter entity, (geo-) political, economic and cultural settings had a substantial influence on the formation of a Euro-Mediterranean entity.

2.4. *Geo-political Settings*

There is a clear distinction between the Mediterranean as a whole and the newly constructed Euro-Mediterranean entity including the 25 EU member states and Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Palestinian Authority, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan of the partner countries in the Mediterranean.³⁵ Mauritania has an observer status as well as Libya, although the latter is supposed to become a EMP member soon if it accepts the *acquis* of the Barcelona Declaration.

It is somehow difficult to consider the Euro-Mediterranean entity from a geo-political point of view as a coherent whole without mentioning the fractures which divide it. Looking at the Euro-Mediterranean region from the stage of international politics, two outstanding prominent international regions are seen outside of those EU member states that are no littoral states of the Mediterranean. On the one hand, the North-Western sector of the Mediterranean as part of the EU and on the other hand the South-Eastern flank of the basin, which is labeled the Near East. Both regions should be further subdivided into four sub-regions, namely: Southern Europe, the Balkan (both North-Western sector), the Maghrib and the

/comm/external_relations/euomed/common_strategy_med_en.pdf , (November 10, 2005).

34 The heterogeneous structure of the Arab counterparts in the Southern Mediterranean has made it difficult for the latter to advance to an equal actor, compared to the more unified, more institutionalized and in financial terms more powerful foreign policy actor on the Northern shore (EU).

35 Cf. FN 3.

Mashriq (both South-Eastern (Western) sector). They all have regional specifics that make it necessary to implement a Mediterranean policy based on sub-regional findings.³⁶

Primarily, this does not explain why the EU decided to exclude countries like Albania or Croatia from the partnership. Indeed there is a political consensus to declare, e.g., Albania as a Mediterranean country but that has its primary roots in the Balkan. In the mid-1990s the Balkan itself was a region of severe crisis leading to a different EU, i.e. transatlantic approach. Geo-political as the term says has not only a geographic dimension but also a political dimension that may alter the geographic definition. This explains the inclusion of Jordan in the EMP. It is not a Mediterranean country but its important role in the Near East and hereby especially in the Middle East Peace Process made Jordan part of a Euro-Mediterranean entity. Jordan was supposed to play a constructive part in the genesis of the evolving Euro-Mediterranean entity. In sum, geographic regions, however fractured they may be, are altered by politics. New geo-political entities appear and new identities may emerge in the long run.

2.5. *Economic Dimensions: Geo-economic Realities*

By 2010 the EU shall be the biggest single market and the world's most concentrated area of economic prosperity and internal stability with an estimated 500 million people. This coincides with the declared aim to finalize the Mediterranean Free-Trade Area (MFTA) by 2010. The majority of Mediterranean countries on the Southern shore are dependent on European markets and foreign direct investments. If they want to increase their ability to penetrate the global market with competitive products they must diversify and improve their export capabilities. The bilateral trade between Mediterranean countries and the EU shall open the way for free trade among the Mediterranean countries themselves, as the latest promising achievements with the Agadir Agreement³⁷ have shown. Hereby, infra-

36 Ibid.

37 Free trade agreement between Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. It includes customs, services, certificates of origin, government purchases, financial dealings, preventive measures, intellectual property, standards and specifications, anti-dumping

structure development constitutes the key factor in increasing the economic competitiveness of the Euro-Mediterranean entity as a whole but in particular of the countries on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. In the sectors of transport, energy and telecommunications, regional programmes under the EMP, i.e. financed by MEDA³⁸, bring together policymakers and experts to exchange and co-ordinate strategies and may ease regulatory environments.

Indeed, there are economic reasons for the EU and the partner countries in the Southern Mediterranean to embark on this concept. The Euro-Mediterranean entity as an arena of common trade can be essential in improving the economic indicators across the region. The prospective free trade area might be a promising milestone for the Euro-Mediterranean entity to develop further. At present, with the bilateral association agreements between the EU and the partner countries signed and ratified (except Syria), there is still an overwhelming lack of intraregional trade.³⁹ More-

and mechanisms to resolve conflicts. The Free Trade Zone will make up a market of more than 100 million people and a combined domestic product of nearly € 150 billion (for full details: Jordan Embassy to the US (2004): "Agreement for the Establishment of a Free Trade Zone between the Arabic Mediterranean Nations". In: <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/new/commercial/fta/agadir.pdf> , December 11, 2005)

- 38 MEDA stands for *Mésures d'accompagnement financiers et techniques*. It is the main financial tool in the Barcelona Process under the auspice of the European Investment Bank (EIB).
- 39 Besides the low intraregional integration we see a resurrection of national values, national integrity and local nationalism. Intraregional co-operation such as the Arab League reveals only minor actors showing hardly any impact on matters of decisive political, strategic and economic importance. There is an overwhelming need to boost South-South integration. This is a prerequisite for any free trade to succeed and to avoid the so-called "hub and spokes"-effect between the EU and its bilateral dominated economic ties with the partner countries. There are positive signs. After a long estrangement, some Arab economies are currently rediscovering the lucrative asset of intraregional trade. Commercial ties and performance within the Middle East, the most sluggish among the world's trading blocs, are showing signs of steady revival (cf. Glain, Stephen (2006): "Selling to the Neighbors". In: *Newsweek*, February 27, 2006, p. 44 p.; Zorob, Anja (2005): „Die Euro-Mediterrane Partnerschaft und die Süd-Süd-Integration". In: *Orient*, 46. Jg., 3/2005. Hamburg, p. 492-508).

over, these opportunities are definitely dependent on the successful furtherance of the (geo-) political entity.

2.6. *Cultural Stage – Mediterranean vs. Euro-Mediterranean Entity*

The Mediterranean entity has been a defining centre of world history for many centuries. Scholars of nationalism tell us that a common basis for a nation, a unity of people or any other entity may be a common history or experience. As the great French 19th century scholar on nationalism Ernest Renan emphasized, they must have much in common so that they may also include a common approach to forget certain aspects.⁴⁰ In other words there have to be one or several defining moments in history that bind those people together. Regarding the Mediterranean entity, these values have been developed basically through trade and exchange across the sea but also religion, language and customs (e.g.: urban organization & food culture). The Mediterranean has been the birthplace of cities and urban cultures. It is acknowledged that the history of the region was vibrant and has witnessed extensive cultural exchange. The Mediterranean is the basin of multiple civilizations. The historic achievements, the interaction between various leading actors in which Arab scholars translated Greek works and created the possibility for Europe's era of Enlightenment. It took centuries for Europe to finally realize and recognize the importance of Greek works and to keep up pace with Arab scholars in all fields of science.⁴¹

This great legacy⁴² of the Mediterranean as a whole, even if it is subject to different actors, stands for a common heritage.⁴³ Through this exchange –

40 Renan, Ernest (1882): «Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?» In: *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. I, 1947-61. Paris, p. 892.

41 A great insight in the areas of interaction in the Middle Ages through the translation of Greek works by Arab scholars and the later adoption of European scholars can be read in: Endreß, Gerhard (2002): „Der Islam und die Einheit des mediterranen Kulturraums im Mittelalter“. In: Masala, Carlo (ed.; 2002): *Der Mittelmeerraum – Brücke oder Grenze?* Baden-Baden, p. 9-31.

42 Braudel, Fernand: „Mediterrane Welt“. In: Braudel, Fernand (ed; 1987): *Die Welt des Mittelmeers*. Frankfurt am Main, p. 7-10.

43 Thousands of Greeks and Italians were living in Alexandria (Egypt). Arabs conquered Spain and stayed there for a very long time, which had sustainable influence on Spanish culture, still visible in contemporary times. The Ottomans were every-

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no matter for what reason – certain values became common and this had a defining impact on the development of the region at the macro and micro scales. For centuries, the Mediterranean was the bridge between the actors on both sides of it. It is more than curious “that only in modern times the Mediterranean clogged the flow of ideas” and stopped to act as “a vehicle for philosophies and cultures.”⁴⁴ Some defining moments changed the situation and developed the impression of a bipolar Mediterranean.

For a long time European history evolved from the Mediterranean. With the discovery of North America, European penetration of far-away regions began and the consequences of industrial modernization surfaced, and soon the Mediterranean was left behind. It just became another region subject to European influence. To follow the thoughts of Carlo Masala, the former cosmopolitan Mediterranean, once seen as the bridge between cultures and civilizations, was transformed into a bipolar region, in which the North separated itself from the South in political, economic and cultural terms. The Mediterranean was seen as frontier⁴⁵ not as an original unity with differing faces as described by Fernand Braudel. Despite this bipolar notion, the cultural stage – being the dimension that may give us a sense of a common past – remained a bridge between Europe and the Mediterranean and has been used regularly in order to create legitimacy. Long before the birth of the EMP, academic circles in Israel embarked on the idea of the Euro-Mediterranean entity as a way of resolving Israel’s isolation that was imposed (but often self-imposed as well) from the Arab world. In order to create the virtual connection to European cultural affinities, one had to face geographic obstacles, but the idea of the Euro-Mediterranean created opportunities for allowing the Jewish state to be “of Europe”. It was one attempt to bridge the Sephardic-Ashkenazi cultural gap. Despite the bipolar notion of the Mediterranean, the idea of a Euro-Mediterranean entity did not vanish. Due to the existence of a common Mediterranean sensitivity or

where in the Eastern Mediterranean. France penetrated the Levant. The rest of the Near East and North Africa experienced colonial penetration by the United Kingdom or Italy.

44 Arishie: “Clash of labour – immigrants’ struggle in Europe”.

45 The rich and highly developed North and the impoverished South.

culture and its existence with local variations and particularities, the idea of the Euro-Mediterranean entity can be described as a re-emerging idea. With the EMP, the EU and the partner countries in the South have adopted this idea. The idea became reality as integral part of a political, economic and cultural concept. The next step works out the objectives of the EMP in terms of the Euro-Mediterranean entity.

2.7. Objectives of the Barcelona Process

2.7.1. Ten Years of Partnership – an Assessment

Starting with the Barcelona Process in 1995, the EU and its Mediterranean partners have embarked on an ambitious project, in order to improve mutual understanding by promoting political, cultural exchanges and fostering trade. The ambition was to create a greater understanding among the major religions present in the region. It was hoped to bring greater mutual tolerance, co-operation and enhance the awareness of a common heritage. The Mediterranean was seen as the symbol of coexistence between cultures and traditions. Besides the priority given to the first and second pillar of the EMP (political & economic issues), the third pillar (social, cultural & human affairs) remains crucial for the task to create an area of mutual understanding. At the beginning, any approach comprising the third pillar had to face severe obstacles. Especially during the first decade of the Barcelona Process, the third pillar was widely seen in critical terms. Scholars claimed that the third pillar was not a panacea and stressed the danger of giving impetus to neo-colonial reactions by the partner countries in the South.⁴⁶ Many claimed that it was only included in the EMP to follow the experience of the CSCE process launched in Helsinki 1975.

The year 2001, with its lasting impact of terrorist attacks on US mainland, changed world politics substantially. Regarding the EMP, the events of the year 2001 boosted the third pillar as it was soon a common perception in EU-Europe and the Mediterranean that it must be a major task to avoid any

46 Philipp Morris Institute for Public Policy Research (1998): *Is the Barcelona Process working? EU policy in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Conference Proceedings Athens, April 2-3, 1998, p. 26-29.

clash of civilization. Why is the third pillar of the EMP so crucial for the Euro-Mediterranean entity to thrive? As laid down in the last few pages, the (geo-) political and economic reasons to embark on this new concept rallied around interests, intentions and objectives with hardly any reference to a common legacy in the past. The third pillar, embracing social, human and cultural affairs, is substantially built on the Euro-Mediterranean entity as an awareness of a common past and legacy. Euro-Mediterranean cultures, religions, sciences and traditions evolved from the Mediterranean. This is the common denominator on which to build on, to base interaction, to foster the Euro-Mediterranean entity and eventually to realize the (geo-) political and economic objectives. The intended interaction, especially referring to social, human and cultural affairs within the Euro-Mediterranean entity, is getting visible. Euro-Mediterranean affairs are not only on the agenda of politics and economics. Parallel events take place in academic circles. Mediterranean centres are established, conferences on Mediterranean identity are held and scientific interaction is enhanced. The latest achievement in this respect is the launching of a Master Programme in Euro-Mediterranean Affairs by the network of Mediterranean universities and other academic institutions.⁴⁷

2.7.2. Looking Ahead

Despite the failures and problems of the EMP, the Euro-Mediterranean entity is the only and the most suitable bi- and multilateral forum that can tackle the most pressing problems in the region. There is simply no alternative on behalf of the EU. The EU has to overcome the misfits of the Barcelona Process in order to create the basis for the Euro-Mediterranean entity to strengthen further. The same is valid vice versa. With a strengthened Euro-Mediterranean entity the problems and conflicts of the region may be tackled and eased in the short run. A strengthened Euro-Mediterranean entity builds confidence which in the long run can have a decisive impact on conflict solution. As mentioned before, (id-) entities are not static. There is a steady development. Each (id-) entity, however imagined it is, is subject

47 For further information cf. EuropeAid Cooperation Office DG (ed.): *Euromed Synopsis. A Weekly Newsletter on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the MEDA Programme*. No. 345, 2 March 2006. Brussels.

to change. (Id-) entity can be written and rewritten. It is a constant progress, vital and vibrant. Starting in 1995 and with many scholars giving the third pillar only a minor importance, it is now among the most crucial patterns of the EMP as it can foster the Euro-Mediterranean entity, which is indispensable for a successful development of the first and second pillar of the EMP.

3. Summary of Arguments

The Euro-Mediterranean entity - defined by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as a new political, economic and cultural concept - is not only a single reference of correspondence such as the sea basin. It is a dialectical notion of an intercultural approach between EU-Europe and the Mediterranean. One has to differentiate between identity and entity. In terms of the EMP it is appropriate to speak of a Euro-Mediterranean entity in order to avoid the stronger notion of identity, which may evolve in the future. Currently, it is difficult to back the argument of a Mediterranean identity and even more difficult to outline the argument of a Euro-Mediterranean identity.

The cultural and historical *acquis* of the Mediterranean entity is an integral part of the Euro-Mediterranean entity. Following the theory of nationalism any (id-) entity people are referring to is imagined. Entities cover common spaces where *Inclusion* and *Exclusion* are defining aspects in shaping the space. There is diversity within one entity, signifying that there are several sub-structures within an “umbrella”. Therefore the Euro-Mediterranean specificity of a “contamination” of different but interdependent worlds could develop. Policy making on certain regions has a substantial impact on the genesis of (id-) entities. The policy of the EU on the Mediterranean has had a defining impact on the formation of a Euro-Mediterranean entity with the whole EU being an integral part of it. Thus, it was the EU and to a lesser degree the partner countries in the South who re-defined the Mediterranean and converted the pre-existing idea of a Euro-Mediterranean entity following (geo-) political, (socio-) economic and cultural reasons into reality. The Euro-Mediterranean entity is beneficial as an opportunity for in-

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creased understanding among peoples and cultural exchange. The third pillar provides the most promising tools to foster the Euro-Mediterranean entity because it builds on a common past and heritage. A fostered entity is indispensable for the first and second pillar. The Report by the High-Level Advisory Group (established by the President of the EU Commission Romano Prodi in 2002) emphasizes the last argument:

“If, on the other hand, we all resolve to meet this challenge head on, in 25 years the people of both shores of the Mediterranean will form a human and economic community united by their common destiny and capable of making a lasting mark on history. Globalisation would not then breed marginalization and the frustration and loss of identity this can engender.”⁴⁸

In other words, history of a certain entity does not simply happen. It is something that has to be made by the people and their representatives which constitute the latter.

48 High-Level Advisory Group (2003): “Dialogue Between People and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area”. In: EuropeAid Cooperation Office DG (ed.; 2003): *Euro-med Report*. Issue no. 68. Brussels.

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