

Policy Brief

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“20th Anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration. Challenges to opportunities: a common development agenda for the Mediterranean”¹

By Youssef Amrani

Summary

The geopolitical situation currently prevailing in the Mediterranean region is difficult and complex, notably due to the emergence of a new strategic equation raising fears about a new outbreak of violence. In this troubled context, Morocco, under the leadership of HM King Mohammed VI, has been engaged in a democratic process, based on an inclusive approach that he leads with faith and determination. The Mediterranean indeed retains a triple vocation of being an intercultural reference, an area for exchange, and a communication channel. However, if twenty years after the Barcelona Declaration, the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are still valid and relevant, despite some progress made by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), a stable and prosperous area has yet to be achieved due to the unsuitability of certain instruments and profound political changes in the Mediterranean region. Given this situation, the establishment of a genuine European Neighbourhood Policy with a clearly articulated contractual political and economic framework, along with resources to match the legitimate expectations and priorities of the European neighborhood partners, are now more necessary than ever.

Twenty years after the signing of the Barcelona Declaration, the principles of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are still valid and relevant. While it is true that the ENP and the UfM achieved certain progress, we are still far from this area of shared peace, stability and prosperity mainly due to the inconsistent priorities, unsuitability of certain instruments and profound political changes in the Mediterranean.

« Today, current conditions and recent painful events are marked by «volatility» and «violence,» key words that define the new international order that is emerging.»

Within this new order, the Mediterranean region must remain the common area for exchange and not become a new iron curtain between the two shores.

In a context between oscillating crisis and recovery, signs

of economic improvement are emerging in Europe. With the decisions taken and the firewall installed, there has been a shift towards growth that no one can question.

However, the crisis has left deep scars. It has only been partially overcome with time, with measures that have been very costly in terms of growth and living standards for the population.

The new realities, including the rise of populist and eurosceptic parties, as well as new urgent issues require a unifying initiative conducive to peace and stability in the southern Mediterranean.

Faced with this situation, what can we collectively do? The answer lies in a return to the “spirit of Barcelona” to revitalize the Mediterranean aspect of institutions and exchanges.

The fervent supporters of Europe should indeed consider

1. Speech by Mr. Youssef Amrani, Chargé de Mission at the Royal Cabinet. “November 27, 2015, Barcelona.”

giving the European model a new perspective, because Europe:

- a. Should not just be an economic area, with minimum rules.
- b. Must assert itself beyond its borders and regain its capabilities to act and its strength to emulate in its regional environment, particularly in a multipolar world in turmoil.
- c. Must find the way to hope, as it has always done, and not be resigned to abandoning the principles of solidarity, justice and progress embodied in this model.

« Morocco has understood it well because it is at the junction of all these regions and more than ever, we must move towards a revitalized spirit of Barcelona and a new Mediterranean order that takes into account the complexity of the collective threats and challenges that we are all facing.»

History has taught us that the gathering and the community of values in the face of adversity can collectively address the challenges. It is therefore clear that we need a vision that unites instead of divides both sides of the Mediterranean and beyond, particularly in the Sahel.

The European, Maghreb, Mashreq and Sahel subsets are intimately linked because of the indivisibility of security. Europe will not succeed on its own because its stability depends on the stability of the Mediterranean's southern shore, which itself depends on the security in the Sahel-Saharan area.

The upheavals affecting the Arab world in general and the Mediterranean in particular are far from over. They serve as a catalyst to deeper structural changes. They depict a new geopolitical reading that results in risks as well as opportunities.

It must be noted the emergence of a new strategic equation in the Mediterranean, at a time when the civil war is ravaging Syria and Iraq, when other Arab countries like Libya and Yemen sink into instability fearing the contagion of revolt, when the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process raises fears of a new outbreak of violence, when the evolution of the situation in the Sahel-Saharan zone has become worrisome for both the South and the North.

Given this situation, optimistic elements suggest a glimmer of hope, provided that reason and pragmatism prevail.

Indeed, the review calls for more “local ownership” and “differentiation” between “partner” countries as well as a new approach.

For Morocco, the principle of differentiation should take into account the achievements of the neighboring countries with regard to their respective relations with the EU. That is why the new ENP must support the development of “pioneer countries” that have opted for a strong partnership and acting with Europe, like Morocco, which has concretely reflected this choice by concluding an advanced status with the European Union.

In this respect, it will be appropriate for the EU and its neighbors, to offer through the revised ENP, the most engaged countries political and strategic perspectives that will be satisfactory to their legitimate ambitions and allows other neighbors to engage in an overall dynamic of implementation of the entire objectives of the ENP.

The EU and the neighborhood will benefit as to how these countries act as a progress engine towards a euro-Mediterranean space with common destiny.

To be able to meet both the expectations, the ambitions and the priorities of its neighbors, the new ENP needs to demonstrate that it can at least be a useful toolbox. Few objectives should be identified, around which EU institutions should seek to build support to pursue them through additional support under the ENP and other instruments inspired enlargement.

« Indeed, is it not time for the ENP to offer promising and virtuous prospects to partners who have chosen a qualitative rapprochement with the EU? »

Europe must seek a more “pragmatic” approach to foreign policy, which might bear some fruit if and when an overall approach materializes. There is no doubt that the effectiveness and relevance of North/South relations hinge, to a certain extent, on Europe's ability to come up with a clear strategy and make tangible efforts with respect to the external security and defense policy.

In fact, besides taking into account the security objective, on either side of the two shores, the future ENP should adhere to other strategic objectives that could help achieve some progress in crisis management and conflict prevention, in particular.

The divisions within the EU and the lack of coherence resulted in EU's inaction on major developments and the price for inaction was sometimes greater than making mistakes. There is a lack of a single institutional framework for foreign policy on the European side. This

is the reason why I believe that one of the main lessons to be learned by partners on both sides of the Mediterranean is the need to be more proactive and realistic. By proactive, an overhaul of the accompanying development strategy for the countries of the southern Mediterranean. This is fundamental. As for realism, it concerns the time and pace needed to complete transitions, which can sometimes involve lengthy periods and eventful circumstances, as they depend on the internal dynamics and changes specific to each country in the region. This is a fact.

« The role the EU will play in the global arena will be determined by its action in the Mediterranean considering that other international players are interested more and more in this region (Russia, USA, China...) »

The southern shore of the Mediterranean can provide Europe with new growth opportunities as the economic borders of Europe are gradually transferred to the southern part of the Mediterranean. The integration of the neighbors to the European internal market based on the four liberties (goods, services, capital and people) will be an asset to this inclusive growth.

Today, each side of the two shores should lay the foundations of those future assets. In this respect, the European Union and its member countries have a crucial role to play as a partner to forge a common destiny, particularly through strategic solidarity, for the implementation of the four common spaces namely : the « Common Economic Space », the « space of shared values,» the « Common Security Space» and « shared knowledge space » are the only way to ensure a life of dignity and prosperity to the people of the Mediterranean rims and stem the spread of international terrorism.

That is why we must work together to make the most of the synergies that will help build a common, cohesive, integrated and reassured space, based on shared universal, clear-cut and incontrovertible values. To achieve this objective, it is important to create new platforms for dialogue and cooperation, particularly by providing the Union for the Mediterranean with effective tools and clear mechanisms in tune with the new regional context in the southern Mediterranean.

Indeed, the UfM can play a key role in the dynamic of regional and sub-regional integration and thus promote economic and social development, ensuring a brighter future for the citizens of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The UfM can serve as a catalyst, supporting and accompanying the process of reconstruction and change in the region. Indeed, the Union for the

Mediterranean is the appropriate partnership framework for accelerated regional integration between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The UfM could be this receptacle that would develop and promote dialogue in the diversity of religions, cultures and civilizations, at the time of identitarian closure and exclusion.

This means taking a further step towards one another by developing a new culture of mutual understanding and acceptance of differences because, as pointed out His Majesty King Mohammed VI, “shock only exists within ignorance.”

Standing up against isolationism and confronting poverty, are inevitable approaches in order to appease and reconcile, while generating a sufficiently broad international consensus to mitigate tendencies for aggression or domination.

« The initiatives with political, economic, security and military dimensions certainly play a major role mitigating extremism and terrorism, but they are by themselves insufficient.»

The social dimension and multidimensional development, in addition to cultural and religious components, with the major role they have in spreading the culture of tolerance and moderation, are also important to effectively curb intolerance and obscurantism.

In this regard, the efforts made by Morocco under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, enabled a process of bold reforms to be conducted in all sectors in order to ensure comprehensive human development.

Aware of its pivotal role between the North and the South, Morocco works relentlessly to build a prosperous, united, and strong Maghreb that can be Europe’s counterpart.

Nevertheless developing countries must promote dialogue, ensure complementarity and provide the means for an overall recovery in the region, by making internal efforts and mobilizing all synergies as part of a multifaceted approach, which would be based on three fundamental pillars:

- The security dimension through coordinated mitigation of the threat of terrorism, trans-national and trans-regional crime, etc.;
- The economic dimension: by enhancing the diversity of Southern countries’ resources for a better economic integration and creation of jobs and income-generating activities to catalyze equitable human development;
- The human dimension: through the development of

education and promotion of religious and cultural values;

Assuming its African roots, Morocco has also adopted South-South cooperation solidarity, committed and ambitious in terms of objectives and projects. Morocco's role in benefitting its continent results in realistic and concrete actions to promote comprehensive development, human and sustainable, which aim to establish a of South-South solidarity cooperation model that is complementary, multidimensional and able to meet the growing needs of Africans.

Africa is certainly emerging in many aspects and at different speeds, but it also remains a vulnerable continent as demonstrated in the Sahel regional situation.

Europe cannot ignore this essential region among Europe's neighboring countries. The general insecurity that prevails, due to migration, illegal trafficking or terrorism, threatens the stability of states in the region and calls for building a strong partnership based on dialogue, cooperation and solidarity to stem security threats and trafficking of all kinds in the Sahel, North Africa, and the Mediterranean.

In this respect, Morocco is currently training about one hundred Imams, through religious training programs to help and provide them with an education consistent with

genuine precepts of moderate and tolerant Islam shared by all countries adhering to the Maliki rite.

The Moroccan approach and experience demonstrate that Islam is perfectly compatible with democracy, human rights and freedom, and certifies that change without bloodshed and without violence is possible.

« Lastly, the Mediterranean indeed retains a triple vocation of being an intercultural reference, an area for exchange, and a communication channel.»

This region is now at a historic turning point where it is imperative to show courage, determination and commitment to make strategic decisions that could usher the region to a better future and remedy the dangers that have never before threatened it as much.

The European Neighbourhood Policy, which is the broader policy framework for the region, today deserves an unwavering commitment by all parties to finally achieve the dream of an area for peace, stability and shared prosperity as desired by the people and for future generations.

About the author, Youssef Amrani

Youssef Amrani is currently Chargé de Mission at the Royal Cabinet for His Majesty King Mohammed VI. He previously held the position of Minister Delegate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation since January 2012. In November 2008 he was appointed Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and then held the position of Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) starting in July 2011.

Youssef Amrani also served as Ambassador for His Majesty the King in Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Chile, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Belize. After having served as Chief of Cabinet for the Secretary of State in charge of the Maghreb Arab Union from 1989 to 1992, he served as Consul General of the Kingdom of Morocco in Barcelona, Spain.

Youssef Amrani obtained a degree in economics from the Mohammed V University in Rabat (1978) and in Management from the Boston University School of Management.

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The views expressed in this publication are the views of the author.



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