

Euro-Mediterranean Security and NATO-EU Cooperation

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The topic I will try to address is the possible linkage between Euro-Mediterranean Security and NATO-EU cooperation.*

Basically, we relate Euro-Mediterranean Security with processes originated both in Northern Africa and in the Middle East.

But the questions that respect to the Middle East go very much beyond the area closer to the Mediterranean, being strongly influenced by issues such as Afghanistan, Irak, Iran, the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Iemen, the Israel-Arab conflict, among others. It is almost impossible to encompass such a diverse range of complex problems in a short presentation as mine will be. For this reason, I made the option to keep them out of my goals for this talk.

Consequently, my primary attention will go to Northern Africa, keeping in mind that many of the problems we can identify in the area are strongly connected with Subsaharan Africa, namely with the Sahel region.

Thus, for the rest of this presentation, while broadly referring to Euro-Mediterranean Security, I will be limiting my considerations to Northern Africa.

My intention is to start by briefly analyzing the capabilities and limitations of the two organizations, NATO and the EU, *vis-a-vis* the security situation existing in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

But of course the focus will be on the possible answers. For that, I will try to identify fundamental criteria and the available tools and mechanisms. Cooperation being the key word. Cooperation involving to the maximum possible extent all relevant partners on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

All of us are well aware of the difficult times and uncertainties that NATO is currently living.

We can perhaps consider that those factors, even if they are relevant, are circumstantial. And many of us hope that to be the case... Anyhow, by themselves, they do not determine the type and intensity of the involvement of the Atlantic Alliance in the context of the necessary answers to the threats and challenges that currently are identifiable in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

On this respect what is decisive, what is really relevant, are two factors, on the one hand, the nature of the problems and, on the other hand, NATO's real capabilities.

As to the nature of those problems, and that is far more than simply the way as they are manifested, I believe that, even if other elements are not to be disregarded, what we have is a situation that in short should be characterized as being essentially rooted on political, economic and social exclusion, on environmental disasters, on failed and very fragile states, and on scenarios of extreme and uncontrolled violence. And, of course, keeping in mind that, apart from the fact that they will not disappear in the near future, all, or almost all, these problems are extensively interlinked.

Thus, the appropriate answers need to be found through an integrated approach combining on a convergent, coherent and coordinated way the political, economic, social and military dimensions of strategic action.

An essential point to be considered is that the Atlantic Alliance has very significant limitations for that.

NATO's military capabilities are indeed exceptional.

But NATO's political and diplomatic dimensions are weak, and nowadays even more weakened, as a consequence of the posture of the current US Administration *vis a vis* NATO, Europe, and Africa, and also *vis a vis* fundamental political criteria, such as multilateralism. And we should add that NATO's potential role is also currently affected by the crisis of the British credibility resulting from the *Brexit*.

But even more important is the fact that NATO doesn't have either an economic or a social dimension.

Since 1994 the Alliance has into play, the cooperative program called "Mediterranean Dialogue". Its aim is to develop a good relationship, and a better common understanding and mutual confidence between NATO member nations and the seven southern and eastern Mediterranean participating countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). The desired outcome to be regional security and stability.

The reality shows that this program is far from the possibility of being considered as a real and effective success story, even if, in more recent years, it has made some positive steps, at least positive indications. But so far we can talk of better prospects, more than

of better substance or better results...

The conclusion that very realistically stems from these considerations is that, acting alone, NATO cannot meet the threats and risks faced in the Euro-Mediterranean area, and, consequently, standing alone, NATO cannot ensure Peace, security and stability to the area.

It is interesting to recall the suggestions, and perhaps we would do better by taking them as more than simple suggestions, that have been made by the US Administrations, at least since the days of George W. Bush, and clearly reiterated during the Obama mandates. The general sense of this American understanding is that the Europeans should assume more and more autonomous responsibility for the security of Europe and of its near abroad, including namely Northern Africa, and, to a certain extent, the Middle East, the case of Israel and its security being subject of a different judgement. The Trump Administration is stating the same, the difference being, and it is not a minor difference, that its speech is aggressive and disruptive.

I don't think that on its fundamental orientation this trend will very much depend on the type of the American Administration. Quite the opposite, it is very likely that, together with the claim for an increase in the European defense expenditures, this trend is not going to disappear. Eventually, it will be emphasized.

I am not implying that the two factors I have mentioned, NATO's structural limitations and the new American orientation, are intertwined. They are not. Certainly not, in my view. But I am highlighting the fact that there is, if not coherence, at least consistency and temporal coincidence between them.

This could suggest that the answers to both questions can be, if not the same, at least looked after together.

Regardless all its serious difficulties and problems the European Union can be a matrix to those answers.

We have to recognize the existing divisions among EU Member States. They generate extended difficulties, delays and even embarrassment. More often than we would like, they also generate bad conscience, if we put together European potential and capabilities, existing problems and suffering, and European concrete actions.

But so far these different perspectives didn't preclude developments such as the agreement on a European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), and on its material implementation over the last three years, and the shared commitment of 25 out of the 28 Member States, on a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the field of Security and Defense.

With that in mind, and refusing, for rationale and not for mere emotion or desire, to subscribe the view of a collapsing European Union, I remain convinced that, on its best interest, the Union will be able to offer a comprehensive political standing point to the

questions that are being addressed on this conference.

And also that, for this purpose, the European Union will use its diplomatic voice, and, in particular, its robust capabilities in the economic, financial, social and cultural fields, which are of extreme value to the management of the problems that are coming from the south and the southeast of its near abroad. In fact, truly indispensable.

Some will rightly recall the lack of unity, or shall we say the difficulties, that we can perceive from the different European views on the fundamental topic of migrants and refugees. We cannot deny them, at the same time that Europe should endeavor to reach a more common view on this issue. At least, on its broad framework and on its key aspects. Something that Europe has to take as mandatory. And sooner, rather than later.

Something, I believe, that long term reality, away from short term views very often linked with national electoral processes, will show as indispensable. Not as a fatality, but as an option, indispensable on the light of the European needs and best interests.

But neither the existing difficulties or this request, should preclude the recognition of the potential and merit of the existing EU tools and policies for the positive development of the Euro-Mediterranean Security.

If there is a priority region, other than Europe itself, to confirm the European Union as a security provider, that region is the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The countries on the two banks of the Mediterranean Sea are geographically very close. And that proximity is also an historical reality. But in contemporary terms the level and intensity of their interchange is quite limited.

In the era of the *Homo Conexus* they need to increase their connectivity, they need to network, building up a relationship of equals, inspired by the idea of cooperation as a two-way street, and guided by a win-win logic.

This requirement is fundamentally based on their common best interests. But we may insert, as an additional and pragmatic consideration, that so far Russia and China, although present and showing increasing interest, are not yet strong enough in the area to challenge the intra Mediterranean relationship, i.e. the role of Europe for that purpose. From this we may extract a sense of timing, if not of urgency.

A particularly interesting, and I would say promising, framework for such approach is the EU Neighbourhood Policy.

A policy that no longer can be shortly structured around “money, markets and assets”, to become, as necessary, an integrated policy based on two fundamental premises.

First, the need to observe the principle of ownership by the receiving states.

Second, the need to understand the political, ideological (including religious) forces and

dynamics of the neighbouring states and societies, their actual and potential leaderships, and their realities and trends.

And also a policy that respects and accommodates the differences, and in particular the specifics, of each one of the neighbouring states.

A policy that doesn't make any concessions on the grounds of the universal value of Human Rights and of the primacy of the Rule of Law, but that doesn't intend to export any models of political, economic, social or military organization.

A policy targeting to increase the level of mutual knowledge, understanding, and confidence between all regional political and institutional players, and also looking for fostering the resilience of the participating states.

A policy that must be perceived as an integral component of the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and of the European Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

A policy encompassing political, diplomatic, economic, financial, social and cultural courses of action and, naturally, as it could be required, also military action.

A military action that, if not too demanding, can be carried out by the EU or, if materially necessary or politically deemed as appropriate, can also be carried out by NATO. Of course under the umbrella of the desirable political and strategic cooperation between the two organizations.

The EU current operation EUNAVFORMED, known as *Sophia*, is fully in line with the EU military capabilities. And, technically wise, the current NATO operation *Sea Guardian* could also be performed by the EU.

What is important is that these various interventions, although carried out by different organizations, remain coordinated.

And a very positive development would be if these ongoing operations or future similar engagements could benefit from the participation of countries from the southern bank, namely in the field of intelligence gathering and intelligence collecting.

In addition to these considerations, the potential of an action guided by this type of principles, will be better served by the adoption of two other fundamental political criteria. The first one, being multilateralism, and the second one, the respect for cooperative regional orders.

Eventually, we could sum up by taking them as one single criteria. In fact, many understand multilateralism and cooperative regional orders as two sides of the same coin. But, for the sake of this talk, I will take them separately.

A preliminary but essential observation is that we should not amalgamate the EU crisis

with the apparent multilateralism crisis. They are different things, with different expressions and different impacts.

To be effective on what concerns multilateralism, the EU needs to act in accordance with the UN established principles and guidance for development and security, and with the trends for its reform and progress.

Key concepts such as investing in, implementing, deepening and creating multilateralism should guide the EU action in the region.

On the topic of cooperative regional orders, it is necessary to take into consideration the regrettable, although real, fact that among the so-called African building blocks, and due to the oppositions and rivalries between local states, the organizations that theoretically should cover Northern Africa lag quite behind others, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS/CEDEAO), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), that respectively cover the Western, Eastern and Southern parts of the African continent.

This explains why, in despite of the existing and so close problems in the North, the EU considers the three African regional organizations I've just mentioned, CEDEAO, IGAD and SADC, as the priority destinations of its cooperation in Africa. It is an unavoidable option resulting from the fact that there is not a credible and effective organization representing the Northern part of Africa.

But even exclusively linked with Africa, our Euro-Mediterranean Security concerns will not be rightly served if we limit our considerations to Northern Africa.

The Sahel must also deserve our best attention. It is a region that, for the aim of this presentation, should be characterized as a big vacuum of power, consequently as a very problematic area, where phenomena such as terrorism, in particular through al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and all sorts of illegal crime and illicit trafficking find shelter and sanctuary.

In the past there were two organizations that could be taken as representing the interests of Northern Africa and the Sahel: the Arab Maghreb Union and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States. Qaddafi's Libya sponsored them extensively, in particular the Community of Sahel-Saharan States.

None of them was disbanded. But, at best, both are now dormant, and cannot offer a counterpart to Europe. And, at least for the moment, it doesn't look that they could be perceived as "sleeping beauties" waiting for a "charming prince" to be rescued and revitalized...

More recently, in 2014, the extreme seriousness of the problems that can emerge from the Sahel region led 5 Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) to establish a cooperation mechanism through an informal entity designated as the G5-Sahel Countries.

Later, in 2017, another initiative, designated as the Sahel Alliance, was launched by the joint efforts of the EU, France and Germany, followed by Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and UK, together with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the UN Development Program.

And, regardless the fact that CEDEAO, IGAD and SADC are priority destinations of the EU cooperation, a considerable effort is also being made in partnership with the G5-Sahel Countries. The EU has funded with 147 Million euros the building up of a Sahel Joint Task Force, whose mission is basically the monitoring of the border areas. And it is also entirely appropriate to mention the existence of 3 ongoing EU Missions in the area: 2 Capacity Building Missions (both civilian; one in Mali and another in Niger) and one Military Training Mission in Mali. There is also an effort aiming to promote coordination between these missions and the very frail EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya.

Therefore, in terms of cooperative regional orders, the possible non-Europeans partners to tackle Euro-Mediterranean security issues are basically five. The African Union, as a whole, the Sahel Alliance, the G5-Sahel Countries, to some extent ECOWAS/CEDEAO (that comprises countries such as Burkina-Faso, Mali and Niger), and the Arab League.

It is with these organizations that political dialogue, agreement in general objectives and a framework for cooperation, including, among others, funding and training programs in different areas, should be outlined and developed.

One interesting factor is that the African Union and the Arab League are also NATO cooperation partners.

Potentially, this coincidence gives NATO and the EU an additional field for mutual cooperation in what concerns the Euro-Mediterranean Security.

And it is always pertinent to have in mind that so far 22 nations belong simultaneously to NATO and the European Union...

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