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Conference report

The Union for the Mediterranean: The History of an Idea, from January 2007 to June 2008

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The two-day conference was convened by St Antony's College, represented by the European Studies Centre (ESC) and the Middle East Centre (MEC), in partnership with Maison Francaise d'Oxford. Its goal was to explore the recent French initiative for creating a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) by locating the issues confronted by present-day policymakers in the larger political and historical context. The conference was co-sponsored by the RAMSES2 Consortium of Mediterranean Studies (6th Framework Programme of the European Commission) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was coordinated by a committee including Dimitar Bechev, Raffaella Del Sarto, Kalypso Nicolaidis, Kerem Oktem, Alexis Tadie, Leila Vignal and Michael Willis. The event formed part of the RAMSES2 workpackage entitled Agents of Change in the Mediterranean co-piloted by St Antony's College and the Free University of Berlin.

The conference opened with an overview of the tortuous development of the UfM as a diplomatic initiative. **Leila Vignal**, a post-doctoral fellow at the MEC and author of the background report, listed the most significant institutional features of the project, notably the co-presidency headed by an EU member and a southern partner. For her part, **Kalypso Nicolaidis**, director of the ESC, pointed at the various readings of the various readings of the UfM as a continuation of the hitherto European policies, a cacophonous bargain between powerful member states such as France and Germany, or indeed an opportunistic move aimed at creating new sources of income for the north. **Michael Willis**, Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies Fellow at the MEC, stressed that it is very important to bring in southern perspectives as the UfM has been, first and foremost, an initiative launched by the Europeans rather than the southern and eastern rim countries. These theme was further developed by **Kerem Oktem**, fellow at the ESC, who raised questions related to the imperialist memories that underlie today's diplomatic endeavours and the role of Turkey in the north-south mapping of the Mediterranean. **Raffaella Del Sarto**, Research Fellow in Israel Studies at the MEC, argued that while the flaws in Euro-Mediterranean relations are well-documented what is interesting is the EU's quasi-imperial, 'soft' expansion into the south through co-optation of local elites in the interest of the Union's security and economic welfare. This process is of direct relevance to the issue of joint ownership which is at the centre of all discussions. Finally, **Thierry Fabre** of the

Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme in Aix-en-Provence, academic coordinator of the RAMSES2 Consortium, reflected the forms of sharing and hybridisation in the Mediterranean manifest in historical antecedents of *lingua franca* or the contemporary artifacts such as the films by the German-Turkish director Fatih Akin.

The focus on the Mediterranean's past was the main theme in the first panel chaired by **Eugene Rogan**, director of the MEC. The first speaker was **Nicholas Purcell**, a Tutor in Classics at St John's College, Oxford and co-author of the celebrated *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. In his rich presentation going back to the times of Strabo and Emperor Augustus, Purcell remarked that the Mediterranean can be understood as a product of its layered edges and social actors based there engaged in 'becoming maritime' as they would approach the rim. Though populated with memories going back far into the past, the 'great void' of the sea was mapped out by European geographers of the modern imperial age as a core of a region to make sense of the expansion into what Purcell called West Asia and North Africa following Napoleon's *Expedition d'Égypte*. At the same time, the Mediterranean has always been a space of competition and contestation, in no small part reflecting its fragmented geography and the economic structures it produced in various historical times. **Jean-Frederic Schaub**, a historian affiliated with Maison Française and the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, reflected on the place of the Mediterranean in Europe's history. He drew attention to the paradox that the Mediterranean has been marginalised in the construction of a shared European past where in fact the littoral areas have been at the centre of momentous events and processes such as the split between Eastern and Western Christianity, the crusades, the Ottoman synthesis, the Holocaust. He concluded with a reference to the work of the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk calling into question the facile distinction between East and West underpinning popular narratives of the clash of civilisations. Finally, **Driss Magraoui**, Al-Akawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, observed that more time has been spent on how to think about the Mediterranean than on why it is important to think about it, what the political stakes and epistemological implications are. Invoking Benedict Anderson's work on the nation-state, Maghraoui suggested that any geographical space is delineated within the realm of construction and imagining. Invoking the insights of postcolonial studies, he called into question the Euro-centric definitions of modernity, present also in the work of Fernand Braudel, to plea for a world history perspective which would locate the Mediterranean as part of general interregional interaction, and cross-cultural contact.

The second roundtable dealt specifically with the UfM project. **Richard Gillespie**, University of Liverpool, argued that it is animated by a spirit of self-criticism within the EU linked with the failure of the Barcelona Process as well as alarming developments in North Africa such as the recent

food riots. From the outset, the plan suffered from the absence of an adequate consultation and coalition-building effort. What remains from the UfM now is concentrated primarily in the economic field, that is Barcelona's second basket. Gillespie raised questions related to the functioning of the institutional structure of the UfM, the issue of membership, and also the role of the European Commission in the process. **Thierry Fabre** started off his presentation by saying that the engagement with the Mediterranean was long overdue as the current status quo is not tenable. However, he noted that a proper policy should be based on a critical reappraisal of the colonial past, a *travail de memoire* as discussed within the RAMSES2 Consortium, as the Mediterranean is a repository of many divisive memories shaping today's politics. Fabre also questioned the French diplomacy ambiguous approach to Turkey's bid to become an EU member as well as the tension between the rhetoric of integration and cooperation and the reality of closure and exclusion manifest in institutions such as the French Ministry of Immigration and National Identity. He also argued that Europe should support initiatives for democratisation coming from within the southern partners, such as the *Kifaya* ('Enough') movement in Egypt. In response, some participants observed that the UfM plan was presented to France as a chance for the Southern countries to set the Mediterranean agenda together with the Europeans and benefit from economic integration. Looking at the cultural sphere, she noted that France, and the UfM, will capitalise on links at the level of civil society and the university sector that exist with the Mediterranean. **Mohamed Selim**, Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stressed several points relative to the southern partners' position, notably the need for co-ownership of the UfM.

The sessions on Saturday, 7 June explored various aspects of the UfM, including its institutional features and place within the architecture of the EU's external relations, the functional and economic contents of the plan, as well as its place within the cross-Mediterranean politics of identity.

Speaking on the panel on *Mediterranean Initiatives: Clash or Synergies?*, **Raffaella Del Sarto** distinguished between the region-building logic of the Barcelona Process and the logic of bilateralism and differentiation through conditionality exemplified by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) inaugurated in 2003. She aptly summed up the UfM with the phrase 'the Barcelona Process is dead, long live the Barcelona Process.' At the same time, the UfM draws on the ENP's model: it is an intergovernmental project, democracy and human rights are out, security and stability are paramount, a buffer zone is being created. Del Sarto argued that the critical flaws of Barcelona, such as the issue of trade access, are not addressed. Furthermore, she believed that leaving off democracy and human rights would backfire. **Federica Bicchì**, London School of Economics, compared and contrasted the role of France in launching the so-called Global Mediterranean Policy in the 1970s and the UfM in 2007-2008. On both occasions, Paris used its power within Europe to push an initiative

and present itself as an advocate of North African countries. However, in the enlarged EU of today, French influence is much more circumscribed, not least because of the emergence of Spain as a factor in Euro-Mediterranean affairs. Despite the obvious tension between the regionalist discourse pushed forward by the UfM and the bilateralism enshrined in the ENP, there are potential synergies related to the UfM approach of variable geometry and the 'decoupling' from the Middle East Peace process and US foreign policy which have previously held hostage the Barcelona Process. The ensuing discussion touched on issues such as the relationship between the promotion of change and the quest of security, the roles and perspectives of various groups of EU member states in Euro-Med affairs, the tensions between Euro-centrism or even hegemonic projection and local ownership, the role of civil society, including Islamists, in a diplomatic initiative shaped by governments and supranational bureaucracies, the involvement of non-Mediterranean countries from regions such as the Gulf.

The following panel dealt with substantive issues related to the contents of the UfM, sold as a 'Union of Projects'. **Alfred Tovias**, Hebrew University, listed the obstacles encountered by the Barcelona Process, notably the modest openings in agriculture and labour-intensive services. He commented that Sarkozy's vision, though ostensibly focused on functional integration, is not identical with that of Jean Monnet in the 1950s, which prioritised sectoral integration funded by governments which followed the end of a major conflict, a condition which is not present in the Middle East and North Africa. Speaking about the Israeli perspective, Tovias explained that President Peres' reaction towards the French plan was positive. At the same time, Israel sees the UfM as a side show insofar as really important issues of market access and integration are still dealt by Brussels and can be negotiated on a bilateral, Israel-EU basis. **Hakim Darbouche**, affiliated with the University of Liverpool and the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels, discussed cooperation in the field of energy. He looked at the development of relations between the EU and Algeria, a major gas exporter, and traced the evolution of the Algerian position from passive resistance to Brussels initiatives such as the ENP to engagement in the shape of the Strategic Energy Partnership. However, short-term, sectoral interests – including the energy industry in both Algeria and member states such as Spain – have put a brake on the deepening of the relationship between the two sides of the Mediterranean. In addition, there is resistance in the South towards the EU attempts at exporting its regulatory framework using the condition of interdependence. UfM has prioritised renewable energy projects but in actual fact there is little interest among the energy companies while the respective technologies are still underdeveloped to be able to generate profit and become politically significant. The discussion which followed concentrated on the complex links between business and politics, the responses by the southern partners to the incentives extended by the UfM and the ENP, the role of

the banking sector in fostering cooperation, the relationship between trust and business in the integration game, the pros and cons of the economic liberalisation promoted by the EU in the south.

The last panel of the conference was entitled *Power, Identity and Recognition: Overcoming Cleavages?*. It kicked off with a presentation by **Isabel Schaefer**, Free University of Berlin, dedicated to the EU's cultural policy in the Mediterranean. Since 9/11, the Mohammed cartoon etc, there has been a renewed fear about cultural divides. Common cultural policy (internal) is now increasing prominent, e.g bilateral cultural agreements and talk of setting up a European cultural institute. The Barcelona Process brought in culture too. Numerous transnational networks have emerged and been reinforced by the EMP. There has been a revival in the protection of heritage and in facing American army presence, but the UfM pays no attention. **Robert Howse**, a legal scholar and philosopher at the New York University, referred to the ideas of Alexandre Kojève, an influential French thinker from the 1940s and 1950s, whose proposals for a Latin Union can be seen as a precedent of Sarkozy's UfM. Kojève framed the Muslim 'problem' not in terms of Self vs. Other, but as a positive encounter between civilisations generating mutual benefits. To Howse, the ill-defined nature of the UfM is its strength and can appeal to different actors due to its fluidity. He also pointed out that Israel provides an interesting model for the countries in the southern rim by balancing secularism and religion in a democratic setting. He also referred to the Israeli experience in minority rights protection, a point which led to a heated discussion. **Jean-Pierre Filiu**, Sciences Po, reflected on the knowledge gap in the Mediterranean. He observed that the South knows much more about the North than vice-versa, which results in a paternalistic attitude of the EU countries vis-à-vis their Arab neighbours on the southern shore. The UfM is also constrained by the Palestinian issue. The EU is the main donor for Palestine but this aid is not visible. Palestinians see Europe as upholding the intolerable status quo and consider that the international community has a responsibility towards Palestine. Persian Gulf and how it should be involved in the UfM process. Filiu also noted that the Mediterranean is a bridge between the EU and the Gulf. The Gulf States, which hold great financial power, want to be part of the UfM, but will not fund it unless they are part of the decision-making process.

The conference ended with concluding remarks by **Dimitar Bechev** and **Kalypso Nicolaidis**. Bechev outlined a series of dilemmas informing the UfM plans and reflected in the participants' presentations: the tensions between inclusion and exclusion, the quest for stability vs. the promotion of change in the EU's policies, the technocratic approach of the UfM vs. the grand political rhetoric of Sarkozy and his entourage, the focus on identity politics vs. the functionalist philosophy of integration, the question of EU norms, institutions and routines vs. the bold visions of individual leaders. Nicolaidis asked whether it was necessary to resolve these tensions, or just manage them

effectively, as is done in democracy. The participants pinned down three particular policy recommendations regarding the future development of the UfM:

1. Enhance the role of civil society in the initiative;
2. Experiment with a mix of big and small projects, keeping in mind their advantages and disadvantages of both;
3. Decentre the UfM's institutions away from Brussels to the South in order to strengthen the sense of co-ownership and symmetry.

Background paper

The Union for the Mediterranean: The History of an Idea, from January 2007 to June 2008

Leïla Vignal, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College

On Sunday, 6 May 2007, a few minutes after his election as President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy took the stage of the Salle Gaveau in Paris to give his reception speech in front of a huge crowd and millions of TV viewers. Acknowledging his victory, he then addressed various partners around the world, notably “all the people of the Mediterranean” who were urged to unite in a “Union Méditerranéenne” - a Mediterranean Union, a “dream of peace and civilization” and “a hyphen between Europe and Africa”. The model he invoked was the European experience of the 1950s¹. In putting forward the initiative at the very start of his Presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy flagged it out as an important political priority.

At the threshold the French presidency of the EU Council, poised to launch the latest version of this grand project, the so-called Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), at a Euro-Mediterranean Summit in Paris on the 13th of July, it is worthwhile to look back and trace the genesis of the idea as well as the different stages of its evolution.

The “Mediterranean Union”: a slogan in the French presidential campaign (January-autumn 2007)

The Mediterranean Union was officially mentioned for the first time a few months earlier, on 14 January 2007, in a speech given by Nicolas Sarkozy in front of the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire's convention which nominated him as its candidate for the presidential election. Sarkozy sketched out his vision of a united Mediterranean. In his opinion, the relations between EU and Turkey as well as between the EU and the Arab World, would take place within this framework. It would also offer a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to tackle issues as different as immigration (conceived as “chosen immigration”), co-development, trade and cultural diversity.

A month later, on 7 February, in a speech given in the Mediterranean port of Toulon², these vague guidelines were developed: the Mediterranean Union would overcome what Sarkozy saw as the failures of the Euromed process initiated in Barcelona in 1995. For –Sarkozy, these failures were related to the EU's recent “priority towards the East” s and to the precedence given to “trade over cooperation” in the Euromed framework.

He suggested that the future Mediterranean Union would provide a completely new institutional and political framework, apart from Euromed. Sarkozy announced that membership would only encompass Mediterranean countries which, on the EU side, meant France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and

¹http://www.u-m-p.org/site/index.php/s_informer/discours/je_serai_le_president_de_tous_les_francais: « Je veux lancer un appel à tous les peuples de la Méditerranée pour leur dire que c'est en Méditerranée que tout se joue, et que nous devons surmonter toutes les haines pour laisser la place à un grand rêve de paix et de civilisation. Je veux leur dire que le temps est venu de bâtir ensemble une Union Méditerranéenne qui sera un trait d'union entre l'Europe et l'Afrique. Ce qui a été fait pour l'Union de l'Europe il y a 60 ans, nous allons le faire aujourd'hui pour l'union de la Méditerranée ».

² http://www.u-m-p.org/site/index.php/s_informer/discours/nicolas_sarkozy_a_toulon

Cyprus (Malta, strangely, was forgotten). No further details were given regarding the other Mediterranean members of this Union.

A first organisational charter was drafted: the Mediterranean Union would work as a G8-like meeting of Heads of States and governments, with a Council of the Mediterranean modelled on the Council of Europe. Its political priorities would be fourfold: security (collective security and 'chosen immigration'); environment (which includes policies supporting nuclear energy and the cleaning of the Mediterranean sea); co-development shared by Africa and Europe; fight against corruption, organized crime and terrorism, on the basis of a common judiciary space.

Consistent with Nicolas Sarkozy's public opposition to Turkish membership of the EU, the speech made clear that the Mediterranean Union would be the framework for EU-Turkey relations, Turkey being a "great Mediterranean" country, rather than a European one. In this speech, there was no mention of the EU.

The Mediterranean Union) concept

The idea was first proposed by Henri Guaino, a close adviser and main speech writer of Sarkozy. Guaino's vision of France's foreign policy is starkly neo-Gaullist and focused on independence and grandeur. To him, Europe and the Mediterranean are two different political spaces. This idea is reflected in the way the UfM has been conceived: an organisation outside the European Union, outside the Euromed framework, and in which France could be a "bridge"³ between Europe and the south shore. At the time of the *Discours de Toulon*, three main analytical points were made in support of this extra-EU structure:

A political judgement: the Euromed had failed. Though no detailed explanation as to the symptoms and the origins of the failure was given, the failure was presented as a starting point. The new project was animated by a *tabula rasa* spirit.

Geographical scope: the Mediterranean countries have specific Mediterranean issues and interests that should therefore be dealt with by the interested countries only.

Political ambition: high political goals can be fulfilled by avoiding the bureaucratic shackles of the EU. Criticism of European bureaucracy is one of Henri Guaino's long-standing themes, which reflects his euro-scepticism.⁴

In addition, at the time of the presidential campaign, the UfM provided Sarkozy with a silver bullet to address domestic issues, especially immigration and security. The rationale was that if instability were to develop further in the South, it would affect France. Presented in the wider framework of a co-development project, the Mediterranean Union could therefore sustain Nicolas Sarkozy's two core political themes.

A double organisation

This mixture of mistrust and of ambition is reflected in the double structure that was developed internally in the French administration after the election.

Indeed, after the victory speech, not much flesh was on the bones of what appeared as mainly campaign rhetoric. But if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was formally asked to include this initiative in its working programme, the responsibility of the project remained with the French Presidency, and in particular Henri Guaino.⁵

³ Interview with an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France

⁴ As developed in: Cohn-Bendit D., Guaino H., 1999, *La France est-elle soluble dans l'Europe?*, Albin Michel (Paris).

⁵ Speech of the President, XVth Conference of the Ambassadors, 27 August 2007

In the autumn, an eight-person taskforce was set up under the President's office with Guaino at the lead. Two ambassadors were appointed, Alain Le Roy as the principal negotiator and Jacques Huntzinger as responsible for cultural affairs. Since then, the taskforce has been the real driver of the process. It directly interacts with the French Representation in Brussels and the different partners countries, bypassing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This double structure, with the obvious internal frictions it generates, has been the cause of many difficulties in the negotiation of Mediterranean Union within the EU as well as with the Mediterranean partners.

Unveiling of the project

At the time the concrete details of the Med. A short and official mention of the Mediterranean Union was made by Nicolas Sarkozy the ambassadorial conference at the end of August 2007⁶. This short presentation, as well as the speech at Tangiers⁷, on October 23 2007, remained vague, but it indicated some evolutions: the Mediterranean Union would be an open-ended process rather than a new institutional framework; it would come on top of the Barcelona Process and other previous Mediterranean initiatives; it would be based on concrete projects, implemented through ad-hoc partnerships. This speech made it nonetheless clear that it was an initiative for the Mediterranean countries only.

A European reality test for Nicolas Sarkozy's grand project (2007- March 2008)

The mention of the Mediterranean Union initiative in the presidential campaign took France, Europe and the Arab countries by surprise, as it was prepared neither by debates nor through former consultations with the potential partners.

A bumpy European ride

More problematic was the fact that no consultations with the potential partners had been previously conducted. Even after the announcement of the Mediterranean Union it took several months before France launched proper consultations in the autumn of 2007.

From May to October, no further details were given by the French government and various rumours circulated. The European Commission and the Member States therefore wondered how this

⁶ « Il ne s'agit pas d'ignorer ce qui a déjà été accompli : le processus de Barcelone, le 5 + 5 ou le Forum Méditerranéen. Il s'agit au contraire d'aller au-delà, entre pays riverains de notre mer commune, en partant de la démarche qui fut celle de Jean Monnet à propos de l'Europe : celle des solidarités concrètes. Bâtissons autour de quatre piliers : l'environnement et le développement durable ; le dialogue des cultures ; la croissance économique et le développement social ; l'espace de sécurité méditerranéen. Imaginons ensemble, dans chacun de ces domaines, quelques projets ambitieux mais réalistes, mobilisant des Etats, les entreprises, les associations, tous ceux qui souhaiteront participer à ce grand projet. Montrons ainsi à nos peuples que nous pouvons ensemble bâtir pour nos enfants un avenir partagé de prospérité et de sécurité ! Naturellement, l'Union européenne, à travers ses institutions, en particulier la Commission, devrait être acteur de plein droit de l'Union méditerranéenne. Un dialogue informel a déjà été engagé avec les pays riverains, y compris la Libye que je souhaite, maintenant que le dossier de l'équipe médicale est réglé, encourager à rejoindre le concert des nations ».

http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais/interventions/2007/aout/allocation_a_l_occasion_de_la_conference_des_ambassadeurs.79272.html

⁷http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/maroc_410/france-maroc_1185/visites_5538/discours-m.-nicolas-sarkozy-president-republique-tanger-23-octobre-2007_55551.html

new project would be articulated to the current institutional and political framework which regulates the relations of the EU with the southern Mediterranean countries - the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP or Barcelona Process) and the recently launched European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), aiming at the reinforcement of bilateral links between the EU and its neighbours states. EU members states were divided into three camps:

1. *Ambiguous supporters.* France sought to patch up an alliance with Spain and Italy, whose support for the initiative was crucial. The two Mediterranean countries agreed to support France in exchange of amendments to the original project. The agreement, encapsulated in the *Appel de Rome*⁸ of 20 December 2007, removed two main European roadblocks. First, the EMP and the ENP would remain intact, and would not be side-lined. This was a core issue for Spain, under whose presidency the Barcelona Process was launched. Second, it was clearly stated that the Mediterranean Union would not interfere with the accession bids by Croatia and, above all, Turkey⁹. Finally, the name of the project was to be changed to “Union for the Mediterranean” (UfM). This label was seen as less threatening than the Mediterranean Union which appeared as a competing integration project, not compatible with the pursuit of EU membership.
2. *Fierce opponents led by Germany.* The main opposition came from Germany which, contrary to the tradition of 60 year-long tradition of Franco-German relationship, had been totally slighted by France in the elaboration of the project. In December, Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her concerns regarding the exclusion of the non-Med member states. For her, there was a high risk that such a provision would threaten cohesion in Europe. Such an initiative could pave the way for ‘specialisations’ based on geography: the Southern members would care for the Mediterranean, the Northern and Eastern ones for the Eastern neighbours. It could therefore lead to a progressive disunity in Europe. In addition, the Med-only club conception considered the geographical criteria as paramount. Germany underlined that most of the EU countries, as well as the EU, have interests in the Mediterranean area. Indeed, the presence of southern migrant communities all over Europe, the economic and trade links of many European countries with the southern shore of the sea, or the political involvement of countries like Finland or Sweden in Middle Eastern peace initiatives are examples of the shared interests of non-Mediterranean EU Member States in the Mediterranean region. Finally, Germany suspected that France would seek to highjack additional European funds for the UfM. In expressing this position, Germany was also acting as the spokesperson of many old and new member states from outside the “Club Med”. In its discussion with Paris, Berlin sought therefore to mainstream the French initiative into a European framework.
3. *Onlookers.* Some member states such as Great-Britain waited for the internal diplomatic game to develop. Others, from northern and eastern Europe, remained silent, but hid behind Germany. Both were banking on the prospect of French ambitions’ being diluted.

⁸http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/afrique-du-nord-mediterranee_1062/appel-rome-pour-union-pour-mediterranee-france-italie-espagne-20.12.07_57998.html

⁹ « L’Union n’a pas vocation à se substituer aux procédures de coopération et de dialogue qui réunissent déjà les pays de la Méditerranée, mais à les compléter, et à leur donner une impulsion supplémentaire dans un esprit de complémentarité et de coopération avec toutes les institutions existantes. (...) Le Processus de Barcelone et la politique européenne de voisinage resteront, donc, centraux dans le partenariat entre l’Union Européenne dans son ensemble et ses partenaires de la Méditerranée. L’Union pour la Méditerranée n’interférera ni dans le processus de stabilisation et d’association pour les pays concernés, ni dans le processus de négociation en cours entre l’Union européenne et la Croatie, d’une part, entre l’Union européenne et la Turquie, d’autre part ».

The European Commission's reluctance

The relative silence of the European Commission was more surprising. Indeed, Brussels had the legitimacy to remind France of its commitment to a very integrated body such as the EU, to the centrality of the Euromed framework in the Mediterranean region, and to the Commission's responsibility for engaging European funds. Different reasons can explain the relative discretion of the institution. One of them is the difficulty to react on a "non-project". Another is linked to the impending negotiations for the next phase of the Financial Perspectives – and no one wants to see the big member states at odds when budget discussions are at stake.

Another reason might be that the Commission certainly lost a good opportunity in 2005 to learn from the lessons from the decade the Barcelona Process had been in operation and to relaunch it going beyond the reach of the ENP¹⁰. In a way, Nicolas Sarkozy seized an opportunity left unexplored. This move therefore weakened the Commission.

As a result, the Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, whose core policy in the Mediterranean could be undermined by the French initiative, opposed the project and sought to bring it into the Euromed framework.

The Franco-German agreement of March 2008

During the winter 2007/2008, French negotiators were frantically travelling from one European capital to another, and especially to Berlin.

The first outcomes of the behind-the-scene negotiations became clear at the beginning of 2008, when the French Secretary for European Affairs, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, indicated that the project was back into the mainstream of EU policies. In February, he stated that the Mediterranean Union would include all the members, that it would complement, and not compete with, the existing policies, nor pre-empt European funds. It will focus on "three to five projects", conceived as very concrete¹¹.

On 3 March, a compromise was eventually found between Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel, in Hanover. Germany arranged for a face-saving operation for France: it rescued the project in exchange of profound amendments to it. The compromise found was encapsulated a few days later in the conclusions of the European Council Summit of the 13-14 March 2008. The main elements of the compromise were the following:

- The UfM would open a new phase of the Barcelona Process.
- It was to be extended to all EU Member States.
- It would include all the Mediterranean countries: the 10 partners of the Barcelona Process but also all the countries which have access to the sea. It remains unclear until now how the four Mediterranean countries which belong neither to the EU nor to Euromed will fit in this framework.
- The UfM projects will receive Euromed funds as long as they fit into its working program, but they will be able to be funded by additional resources (from private or public origin).
- Partnership will prevail between Member States of the European Union and non-EU Mediterranean countries: a shared co-presidency, a shared Secretariat of the UfM (two directors), a shared structure of the 20-strong Secretariat.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the weaknesses of the Mediterranean side of the ENP, see Bechev, D. and Nicolaidis, K. (dirs.) (2007), *Integration Without Accession: the EU's Special Relationship with the Countries in its Neighbourhood, Report for the European Parliament*, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 37 pages.

¹¹ Jouyet's declarations in February 2008 : <http://www.rpfrance.eu/spip.php?article840>

- Biennial summits of Heads of States and Governments will be organized.

The Council asked the European Commission to prepare a proposal for the organisational modalities of the UfM, proposal to be presented at the next European Summit, in June.

A European Compromise? (Spring 2008).

On 20 May, the European Commission released a 13-page communication to “revisit and give greater political prominence” to the Euro-med Partnership and to the Mediterranean area.

“Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”: presentation of the Communication of the Commission¹²

In its political assessment of “a decade of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation”, the communication analyses the successes and the failures of Euromed. On the success side, it mainly points out the existence of the only multilateral forum of dialogue in the region, through which foes can meet and exchange; the support provided to civil society organisations; the promotion of education and culture through programmes and foundations; progress towards the completion of a free-trade area in 2010. As for failures, it mainly acknowledges that the regional political dialogue has been more than often undermined by the persistent conflict in the Middle East; and that the wealth gap has widened between the two shores of the Mediterranean, partially due to an insufficient pace in economic reforms to allow sufficient development in the South. The worsening political situation in the Mediterranean countries is not addressed as a failure.

The paper recognizes the necessity to address a number of shortcomings of the Euromed framework. It also puts the emphasis on the necessity to draw a more equal partnership and, through a more balanced institutional setting, develop the co-ownership of Barcelona. Its main points are as follows:

- Political momentum will be achieved through biennial *Summits of Heads of States and Governments*, to take place alternately in the EU and in the Mediterranean partners.

- The strengthening of the role of the *Euro-med Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA)*.

- The establishment of a co-presidency as the rule (on the EU Side, the President of the European Council; on the Mediterranean partners’ side, designated by consensus) and therefore replicated to all the Euromed settings. On the EU side, the rotating EU presidency will hold the Presidency for the first Summit, but from January 2009 the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty will apply (the EU will be represented at the Summits by the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission).

- The establishment of a *Secretariat*, whose task would be mainly to gather the proposals for projects, to assess them, to present projects to the Summit (after the approval of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee “which will act as a clearing house”), and to follow-up the funding and implementation of the projects. The Secretariat will be headed by a Secretary General from one side and a Deputy-Secretary general from the other side to be selected by consensus. It will report to the Euro-Mediterranean Committee. The Communication indicates that the location of the Secretariat will be decided by consensus.

¹² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”, Comm(2008) 319, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/com08_319_en.pdf

- The creation of a Brussels-based *Joint Permanent Committee*, composed of permanent representatives of every country involved, which will assist the co-presidencies in the preparation of the Summits and ministerial meetings, prepare the meetings of the senior officials and Euro-Mediterranean Committee meetings; meet regularly and therefore lead to less frequent senior officials and Euro-Mediterranean Committee meetings; be able to consult rapidly the Euro-Mediterranean partners in case of a crisis.

The UfM should focus on projects that are concrete (“enhancing regional cohesion and economic integration”, “developing infrastructures”), “relevant and visible”, “regional, sub-regional or trans-national” in scope but also ‘including the possibility of cooperation among a limited number of countries’.

The Communication proposes four projects:

- Maritime highways
- De-pollution of the Mediterranean
- Civil protection
- Solar Plan (renewable energy)

The Commission indicates that Euromed funding will apply only if the projects are in line with the previously approved priorities of the regional programs of Euromed. Nonetheless, it opens the door to external financial resources coming from: the private sector; bilateral cooperation from EU Member States; contributions from Mediterranean partners; institutional financial institutions, regional banks, other bilateral funds; the Euro-med Investment and Partnership Facility (FEMIP); the ENP budgets.

Has the French initiative been watered down?

Commentators and journalists have written extensively on the watering-down of the French initiative by the Commission communication. Indeed, if the text reflects broadly the main terms of the Franco-German agreement, a number of France’s more ambitious proposals have disappeared. One should nonetheless remember that the main amendments to the original project took place earlier, in Rome in December and in Hanover in March. Therefore if the Communication is unsatisfactory on several points, France also has reasons to be satisfied on other ones.

On the negative side, France can be disappointed because of the lack of autonomy regarding the UfM structure. This is demonstrated by the proposed governance mechanism within the secretariat (no large Mandate, mainly executive tasks); second, the narrowing of the areas where the projects are to be developed (even if the selected projects have been drafted by Paris): economy and infrastructure whereas French proposed cultural, educational and research projects. The Commission has selected four projects that are already part of its work programme. Southern states were also more reluctant towards social and cultural projects. The third point is directly linked to the French President’s political visibility. Nicolas Sarkozy’s expected France to co-preside the UfM for the first two-year period. France argues that, as the UfM is not a pure EU process, it should have its own rules, whereas the Commission states that now the UfM is a pure European process, and the EU rules should therefore apply (enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty provisions for external representation of the EU from January 2009).

The first positive point is that the project still exists despite that bickering inside the EU, and even if the fact that it is now endorsed by the Union might not be to the French’ taste. A second positive point for Sarkozy is that many new elements of governance have been introduced: the co-presidency is now to be the rule in all Euro-Mediterranean arenas; The political visibility and support is improved by the biennial summits; A Secretary will drive the process; The project-based approach is

maintained; Even if the EU-27 is on board, the “most interested” countries will be able to work out ad-hoc coalitions. On the financial aspects, if no extra European money is available for the UfM, the possibility exists to vary financial resources from different origins. The last positive point, from a French point of view, is the inclusion of all Mediterranean states.

As a whole, the intergovernmental element is reinforced in the UfM, which is certainly an element of satisfaction for the creators of the project. If France has not managed to get rid of the past, it can congratulate itself to have put the Mediterranean at the centre of the European debate (with even the involvement of previous opponents to Mediterranean specific policies like Germany) and to have launched what has now the ambition to “inject further momentum into the Barcelona Process”¹³.

Perceptions and reactions by the non-EU Mediterranean partners

During the spring and the summer 2007, the southern partners remained publicly silent and waited to see what would be the concrete outcomes of Nicolas Sarkozy’s announcement.

Indeed, if Southern countries express criticism of the EMP (as the poor attendance of Heads of States and Governments at the 10th anniversary of Barcelona showed), they are also globally satisfied with their relationship with Brussels: the EU is the source of financial flows, and it does not exert any real pressure on political conditionality. In this perspective, the UfM might potentially be interesting, as it might provide more money (at least at the regional level), with no political conditionality at all. In addition, the Mediterranean arena for dialogue provided by Barcelona is valued by the Arab countries, as has shown their defence of it in the context of the implementation of the ENP¹⁴.

Therefore, no southern state has been promoting the project. Even for Morocco, has been in favour (and hosted the Tangiers public speech of Nicolas Sarkozy in October 2007), the relationship with Brussels is paramount: it is the long-term strategy of Rabat to get an upgraded partnership with the EU. Egypt, which has been approached late by the French team, saw potential in it: with the co-presidency, some of the southern countries claims would be more likely to be put on the agenda, like the liberalisation of trade in agricultural products. From the moment where it has been made clear that the UfM would not impede the Partnership, more and more bilateral since the ENP, nor exclude their relation with the European Commission, the general spirit was of mellow complacency. As one Egyptian official put it “as it is going to exist, it is better to be on board. And if there is no added value, there will at least be no harm”.

Arab countries started to coordinate themselves. On 24 May they met in Cairo to prepare common positions against the background of the Paris Summit. They are willing to reflect both on the governance of the UfM and on the projects. This move reflects indeed the satisfaction of the Arab countries regarding the co-presidency, which opens the way to the equal partnership with the EU which they have been seeking for years. Arab countries also appointed Egypt to hold the first co-presidency of the UfM.

But the intra-EU squabbles, the UfM might encounter more difficulties than expected on the Arab side. Demands of “clarifications about the consequences” of the entry of Israel in the future Union were expressed in a mini Arab summit in Algiers, on 16 June. This reminds the promoters of the UfM that they cannot, indeed, ignore the underlying conflicts of the region. Some Arab countries have declined the French invitation to attend the Paris Summit (Libya). At the beginning of June, some countries have still to reply (Syria and Lebanon), or display reluctance (Algeria) due to the presence

¹³ Communication of the Commission (op.cit).

¹⁴ Bechev, D. and Nicolaidis, K. (dirs.) (2007), *Integration Without Accession: the EU’s Special Relationship with the Countries in its Neighbourhood*, Report for the European Parliament, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford, 37 pages.

of Israel. They fear that the meeting (and the UfM as a whole) could give a false sense of normalisation to the relations with Israel. The diplomatic game has resumed, this time in the direction of the southern countries. The difficulties for France are not in Europe anymore: the Arab countries want to see their own preoccupations acknowledged and addressed.

Turkey, first opposed to the very notion of any alternative membership, has sought guarantees that the UfM would not pre-empt its EU-accession negotiations. It is therefore less reluctant than in 2007, but does not want to support more than necessary the French initiative, in a context particularly strained as the French Parliament voted in June 2008 an amendment to the reform of the French Constitution imposing a national referendum for the accession of countries representing more than 5% of the population of the Union, a disposition which is tailored-made for Turkey. The participation of the Prime minister to the Paris Summit was still pending .

Israel, in line with its long-standing scepticism towards Barcelona, did not show any particular interest in the scheme but did not voice opposition as long as it does not interfere with its main political objective towards the EU: an upgraded partnership in the wider framework of the ENP.

Next steps: Summer 2008 and beyond

The European Summit (19-20 June 2008)

The communication of the commission will be discussed. The main points will concern the UfM governance mainly, the mandate, the competence, and the institutional organisation of the Secretariat, the list of projects, and the delicate point of the duration of the French co-presidency of the UfM.

The Final act? The UfM Summit – 13 July 2008

For France, attendance at the July Summit is crucial to the success or to the failure of the UfM. It is also very important to get the best final political statement possible. At the beginning of June, the Commission, France and the Arab States were working on separate texts. The Summit will also be the final stage for the approval of the first list of projects, with meetings in the meantime between the future partners of the UM to negotiate as much as possible beforehand.

At the beginning of June 2008, the UfM is still unborn but has already caused collateral damages and strong political divides. But the fierce debates in the political arena and in the press, the production of many informed analyses, the organisation of numerous conferences, and the mobilisation of many organisations of the civil society have proved the importance of the Mediterranean region for Europe, and the feeling of political urgency to address its challenges. In the coming weeks and months, one will see if the UfM is capable of addressing, at least in part, the issues of political importance in the Mediterranean.

Questions for the Conference

For the present, a (non exhaustive) set of questions can be put forward:

1) Governance: will the UfM expand the Euromed framework or will it become one of its numerous programs, adding another layer to the already complex structure of the Barcelona Process? Will the Secretariat be a genuine agenda-setter or will it rather be a project manager?

2) Barcelona/UfM: First, as the failures of the Barcelona Process have not been addressed thoroughly, how will this new organisation avoid the same traps? Second, what is the added-value of the UfM compared to the EMP?

3) The geostrategic context: does the UfM provide a diversion from core issues that require massive political will to solve (the Israeli-Arab conflict, the freedom of movement, the protection of human rights, or the rule of law)? When Nicolas Sarkozy makes the analogy between the UMed and the beginnings of the EC he is wrong. The EC started when peace was already there. Investment and cross-borders projects will not happen if the region is still explosive. Therefore, if one is to make a difference, it would be in putting the priority in a genuine effort in bringing about political solutions to the conflicts. The UfM cannot as such tackle this issue, but what about the European Council chaired by the France in the second half of 2008?

4) One of the ambiguities of the Barcelona Process is that it promotes in the same time stability and democracy. Is the UfM a way to remove this ambiguity, with its clear promotion of stability over any political ambition?

5) What are the consequences of the UfM difficult political process, which has caused many collateral damages?

- Damages on France's European credentials. France appeared as a dividing state and its handling of the issue was perceived as a lack of grasp of the European dimension of France, a lack of understanding of the importance of the German-French relationship, and an inability to play the new politics of a 27-Member States EU. It unnecessarily harmed France and its new President's European credibility. It gave the feeling that French arrogance was back, and it wasted a precious political capital.

- Potential damages to the credibility of the future common external policy of the EU – maybe to the satisfaction of some. The UfM corresponds certainly to the return of intergovernmental preferences, at least in France.

- The relationship with the Mediterranean countries, once again ignored in the discussions of policies that Europe direct towards them.

- Could the Mediterranean be a collateral victim of the French strategy, at a time when the region needs more political input than ever? What would be the cost of a "failure" of the UfM?

- And the EU itself? As the EU faces a crisis, Poland and Sweden have announced in May an "Eastern initiative", a move to strengthen the links between the EU and its Eastern neighbours.

Turkish Perspectives on the Union for the Mediterranean

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Turkish official perspectives on the Mediterranean Union initiative and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which replaced the former, have evolved from categorical refusal in May 2007 to the current attitude of reluctant, if cautious involvement. This change in perspective resounds, to a large extent, with the project's transformation from a French initiative that, at least in Turkey, was seen as essentially anti-Turkish and personified with Nicholas Sarkozy, into a consensus-based, wider EU effort. A central factor that explains Turkey's suspicious outlook, and the distinctive position it has taken, is the country's contested EU accession process and its troubled relationship with France's president Nicholas Sarkozy, who has been on record repeatedly dismissing the notion of a Turkish future as full EU - member. Until very recently, therefore, both Turkish public debate and the government perceived the discussions on the new Mediterranean initiative through the prism of Turkish EU membership.

The following brief discusses the three stages through which Turkish perceptions were formed between May 2007 and today.

Club Med instead of EU membership? [May 2007 – February 2008]

When the idea of a Mediterranean Union first appeared during the French presidential election campaign, and again in early May 2007, when President-elect Nicholas Sarkozy suggested that 'Turkey should be the backbone of a Mediterranean Union' instead of a full EU member, Turkish rejection was pre-determined. Already enervated by Sarkozy's attempts to undermine Turkey's EU accession and fob her off with a 'privileged partnership', then Foreign Minister Gul categorically refused the idea of Turkish membership in a non-descript Union instead of full EU membership:

Turkey is one of the countries of the Mediterranean; however cooperation in the Mediterranean is one thing, cooperation within Europe is another. Turkey has begun its negotiations, it is a negotiating country.¹⁵

The official position remarked that Turkey was a committed member of the Barcelona process and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, yet, that it would not accept any proposal that downgraded its current candidate status or harm its bid for membership. Interestingly, Sarkozy's early initiative united both pro-European and anti-EU camps in Turkey: Pro-Europeans were shocked at Sarkozy's aggressive stance against Turkey's membership, while anti-EU movements in the right-wing establishment accused France of acting with old-style "grandeur" in a hegemonic project of a seemingly more ethical and less violent form of colonialism.¹⁶

Mainstream media coverage in this period between May 2007 and February 2008 was almost uniformly dismissive, and the initiative seen as a red herring. It was in this time that the term 'Club Med' was used mockingly and generously, especially in tabloid newspapers.

¹⁵ Haber 7.com, Gul: Akdeniz birligi ayri sey, 17/5/2007

¹⁶ Deniz Altinbas, ASAM (Centre for Eurasian Strategic Research), 6/2/2008.

Downscaling and decentring the Union [March 2008 – May 2008]

The downscaling and decentring of the Mediterranean Union project –i.e. the dismissal of a French-led exclusive parallel structure to the EU– began towards the end of February 2008, when France’s Secretary of State for European Affairs, Jean Pierre Jouyet, stated that "there is no Mediterranean Union" but rather a "Union for the Mediterranean". With the UK and Italy backing Turkey over its concerns regarding its membership status and the increasingly heated discussions within the European Union, public debate in Turkey became more interested in the details of the proposal and more differentiated in its appraisal, yet in general stuck to a negative evaluation. With the approval of the Union for the Mediterranean by the EU Summit in March 2008, and its re-definition as a European project, a softening in the mood of the debate occurred, in part also due to a sense of *Schadenfreude* at Sarkozy’s arguable humiliation by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Concurrently, a number of lower-level diplomatic contacts between France and Turkey led the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan to the conclusion that the initiative was not directed at altering Turkey’s membership status, despite Sarkozy’s clear position to this effect. By mid-April, the Turkish mainstream press and to a large extent also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were content that

The “Mediterranean Union”, which was a French project opposed by Turkey has changed beyond recognition and is now a European project. ... There is no reason why Turkey, as a leading country in the Mediterranean and EU candidate should be absent from such a project.¹⁷

Pledges from the French government that the UfM will not be an alternative to membership intensified after a rather unsuccessful attempt to address ‘misunderstandings’ between the two countries, when, in March, Sarkozy sent his envoy Alain Le Roy to Ankara. Written assurances from Italy and Spain that Turkey’s accession process would not be affected by membership in the UfM and Secretary of State Jean Pierre Jouyet’s visit to Ankara in May, however, were effective in allaying the Turkish government’s suspicions and marked a gradual change in perception. After Jouyet’s visit, a Turkish diplomat summarized the position of the government in a rather dry fashion:

The EU’s Barcelona process, which had nearly the same objectives, has been replaced by the Union for the Mediterranean framework ... Since we are part of the Barcelona project, it is only natural for us to take part in the Union for the Mediterranean.¹⁸

Reluctant onlooker or active member? Turkey and the UfM

With the Commission taking over the initiative from France and stating clearly that this project “is not directed against Turkey”, nor aimed at diverting the focus away from Turkey’s EU accession,¹⁹ the Turkish government’s categorical refusal has dissipated.

The government is now satisfied that the UfM is not a threat to Turkey’s accession negotiations and its future membership status.²⁰ There is a sense that under certain conditions, the cost of non-involvement might actually be higher than that of involvement, so there is a cautious openness to

¹⁷ Sami Kohen, *Milliyet*, 15/5/2008

¹⁸ *Turkish Daily News*, 6/5/2008

¹⁹ *EurActiv, Commission further waters down Med Union proposal*, 21/5/2008

²⁰ The following summary is based on interviews with members of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic service, conducted 4/6/2008.

cooperation. However, diplomats do not hide their lack of conviction that the initiative has much potential to develop a dynamics of its own, let alone achieve any of the more important political and economic goals of the initiative. They also hint at the high number of countries involved and at the numerous regional conflicts that obstruct and can easily lead to a suspension of cooperation (Israel-Palestine, Algeria-Morocco, Lebanon and most importantly, from a Turkish perspective, Cyprus). There is also scepticism as to whether the initiative will indeed revive and strengthen the Barcelona process.

According to members of the Turkish diplomatic service, regional squabbles between some countries will further complicate the process, especially in the absence of progress on the Arab-Israeli front. Hence, they believe that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's enthusiasm for the UfM is motivated mostly by domestic politics.

In conclusion, Turkey is now on board as reluctant and unenthusiastic member of the Union for the Mediterranean. This ambivalence also extends to her decision how to participate in the launch event on July 13 in Paris. A Turkish delegation is likely to attend, yet whether a member of the cabinet or the Prime Minister flies in will be decided closer to the event and on an ad-hoc basis.

Concluding remarks

In many ways, Nicholas Sarkozy had gotten it right when he described Turkey as the 'pivotal country' in the Mediterranean basin. It is the region's fourth-largest economy, it is the most populous country and the only Mediterranean riparian that engenders a 'hinge' function -geographically, politically and economically- between the Northern and Southern rim. It is the only Mediterranean country that has very good relations with all Arab Mediterranean countries and Israel and it is the only Muslim Mediterranean country that is economically active in all Arab Mediterranean neighbours, not the least through major infrastructure projects such as airports built by Turkish contractors e.g. in Tunisia and Egypt.²¹

In fact, Turkey's recent visibility in the region is in part driven by the AKP government's new foreign policy doctrine developed by its chief IR advisor Ahmet Davutoglu. Developing the notion of strategic depth based on historical patterns of regional interaction in the Ottoman empire,²² the AKP's foreign policy has been based on developing good neighbourly relations *inter alia* in the Mediterranean region, driven first and foremost by increased economic cooperation and Turkish investment.

Ironically, the only two countries in the Mediterranean basin with which Turkey has seriously strained relations currently are France and the Republic of Cyprus, both countries known to be opposed to Turkey's EU entry. Under these conditions, a negative response from Turkey to the idea of a Mediterranean Union with French leadership was a foregone conclusion. Even though Turkey's suspicions are now allayed by reassurances from the EU and a number of member states, and as importantly, by the substantial watering down of the initiative, Turkey remains in the position of a reluctant onlooker. A Union for the Mediterranean that goes beyond a mere North-South dialogue over security and migration issues and selected infrastructure and environmental projects, however,

²¹ To give a crude indicator of Turkey's levels of interaction in the region: Turkish Airlines, the national carrier is the only 'Southern' country that has high frequency flights to all southern Mediterranean capitals including Tel Aviv and the Maghreb countries, and one of the few 'northern' countries.

²² Geographical depth is a part of historical depth. For instance, Turkey is not just any old Mediterranean country. One important characteristic that distinguishes Turkey from say Romania or Greece is that Turkey is at the same time a Middle East and Caucasus country. Unlike Germany, Turkey is as much a European country as it is an Asian one. Indeed, Turkey is as much a Black Sea country as it is a Mediterranean one. This geographical depth places Turkey right at the center of many geopolitical areas of influence (Turkish Daily News, Interview with Ahmet Davutoglu 14/6/2001).

is unlikely to succeed without Turkey's full commitment. It would not be unreasonable to expect that the European Union will be trying hard to bring Turkey fully on board of the new initiative. To what extent it will succeed, however, is next to impossible to predict at this particular junction. The equation of the Union for the Mediterranean still contains too many unknowns to allow for sensible predictions.