

Enhancing Security Cooperation Among Mediterranean Countries through Security Dialogues



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Abstract:

The present study aims to explore the role of security dialogues in enhancing security cooperation among Mediterranean nations. It delved into key security challenges in the Mediterranean, including terrorism, organized crime, and illegal immigration, and examined the role of regional security dialogues in bolstering collaborative security efforts. Thus, the current study aims to answer the following question: How do security dialogues bolster security cooperation among Mediterranean countries? The hypothesis posited that the efficacy of security dialogues in augmenting security collaboration in the Mediterranean hinges upon a shared perception of threats and the presence of a comprehensive security outlook. However, the study revealed challenges to the success of security dialogues, notably due to the dominance of European-centric security policies in the Mediterranean region.

Keywords: security, security cooperation, Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

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Introduction:

The end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in the security landscape, particularly in the Mediterranean region. Security threats intensified, prompting a heightened focus on understanding human security, regional security cooperation, and comprehensive security. Consequently, there emerged a pressing need to explore the dynamics of European cooperation within this context, underscoring the interconnectedness of regional developments.

In the Mediterranean, the focus lies on the contributions of regional actors towards advancing an all-encompassing security approach, encapsulated by the motto "The Mediterranean is a safe region in a better world." Security and stability in the region are of paramount importance to Mediterranean nations, underscoring the significance of the security dimension in scholarly research and academic discourse.

The field of international relations, particularly Mediterranean studies, acknowledges the Mediterranean Sea's geostrategic significance, which is fraught with asymmetric security threats transcending temporal and spatial confines. These threats imperil the collective national security of nations rather than individual countries alone.

In light of this, the restructuring of cooperative relationships in the Mediterranean became intertwined with the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean system to align with the international landscape shaped by the post-Cold War era and the influences of globalization. It became imperative to reassess past models of cooperation and partnership, amplifying their successful dimensions while mitigating their deficiencies. Consequently, there arose a quest for more pragmatic approaches to realize a region characterized by peace and prosperity.

To address these security challenges, the adoption of a security approach rooted in soft power has become imperative. This approach emphasizes cooperation among Mediterranean countries, facilitated through the establishment of dialogues and security blocs. Such initiatives serve to bolster security cooperation aimed at addressing the diverse array of security threats and issues prevalent in the Mediterranean region.

In light of these findings and to achieve the study's goals, we put forward the following problem at hand:

How did security dialogues contribute to strengthening security cooperation between Mediterranean countries?

To address this issue, we put out the following hypothesis:

"The success of security dialogues in enhancing security cooperation in the Mediterranean depends on the extent of common awareness of threats and the availability of a comprehensive vision for security."

The following structure represents the way we planned the division of this paper:

1-Security threats in the Mediterranean

A- Organized crime.

B- Illegal immigration.

C- International terrorism.

2-Security dialogues in the Mediterranean.

A- Barcelona Track - Euro-Mediterranean Partnership -.

B- European Neighborhood Policy.

C- Union for the Mediterranean.

D- Dialogue 5+ 5.

This study combines a descriptive and analytical approach by identifying the risks that the Mediterranean countries face, the factors that contributed to their creation, and the strategies these countries have used to combat these threats.

1- Security threats in the Mediterranean

New asymmetric threats that were not tied to a particular location or time surfaced with the end of the Cold War and the changes that followed in the international order. Because there are so many players involved in this arena and so many different security-related problems and occurrences there, the Mediterranean region is not immune to these challenges.

A- Organized crime

Jean Conklin's definition of organized crime delineates it as "criminal activity orchestrated by a formal entity primarily driven by illicit profits" (Al Bachari, 2008, p. 82).

With advancements in communication and technology, organized crime has transcended national boundaries, becoming transnational. Its impacts extend beyond individual states' borders, affecting multiple countries simultaneously (Al-Bacha, 2002, p. 69).

In the Mediterranean region, organized crime manifests in various forms, prominently in the drug trade. Recently, the region has experienced a surge in drug-related activities, including trafficking. The Mediterranean serves as a transit point for hard drugs like cocaine and crack, trafficked from South America to

Europe through Africa. Moreover, the southern Mediterranean region, particularly Morocco, stands out as a significant producer of drugs, with annual production reaching an estimated 38,000 tons, making it the world's leading producer.

The second prominent form of organized crime in the Mediterranean region is arms trafficking, which has become a lucrative enterprise for its perpetrators. The aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings contributed to Libya becoming a largely unregulated market for arms. With no export licenses, minimal customs enforcement, and an extensive coastline, the country became a hub for the illicit trade in weapons. Reports indicate a proliferation of various weapons in the region, including rocket-propelled grenades, Scud missiles, and anti-tank missiles, making it a transit point for arms of diverse types.

B- Illegal immigration

Illegal immigration is viewed by the European Commission as "the phenomenon of a group of individuals of different nationalities entering the territory of another country illegally, whether by land, sea or air. They go by forging documents or with the help of smugglers and merchants. This is on the one hand, and on the other hand, there are "People who enter other countries legally or with a valid visa but remain despite the expiration of their visas and without obtaining the approval of the authorities" (Bashir 2010, p. 170).

When examining the phenomenon of illegal immigration in the Mediterranean basin, we can delineate two primary regions: Firstly, the destination region, encompassing the European Union countries, renowned for their economic prosperity and social stability, underpinned by effective governance and sustainable development. Conversely, the second region comprises the southern Mediterranean countries, acting as the origin of immigrants due to subpar living conditions and limited opportunities for a dignified livelihood (Dakhala 2014, p. 134).

One of the factors contributing to the escalating rates of illegal immigration in the Mediterranean pertains to economic disparities between its two shores. Individuals often migrate from regions with lower standards of living, income, employment opportunities, and social amenities such as education and housing, to areas where these aspects are notably more affluent. This movement is driven by a desire to enhance one's quality of life and seek refuge from the persistent pressures and crises prevalent in the southern Mediterranean basin. While there are political reasons represented in the fact that the African continent is always characterized by the phenomenon of political instability in addition to the fact that the countries of the southern bank of the Mediterranean do not It is still witnessing a significant delay in democracy and rationality in managing its resources, as well as weak political participation and the widespread phenomenon of wasting public money and bureaucracy. All of this is reflected in the level of economic development in those countries (Dakhla, 2014, pp. 135-137).

C- International terrorism

The events of September 11, 2001, significantly strained security stability in the Mediterranean basin, posing substantial threats due to the ensuing insecurity and the challenged capacities of targeted governments to counter such attacks. Responding to these challenges, countries in the Mediterranean basin implemented various measures. These included heightened security protocols in key tourist destinations, embassies, airports, and transportation systems. Additionally, they engaged in collaborative efforts with the United States, participating in initiatives such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. Furthermore, countries in the region entered into international treaties with the United States and fostered cooperation with North African counterparts to address the evolving security landscape.

The intersection of Interpol and international terrorism presents significant economic challenges for Mediterranean countries. The allocation of resources towards security measures and counterterrorism efforts impedes economic development initiatives. Additionally, terrorist attacks often target economic infrastructure, resulting in substantial financial losses. Terrorism in the Mediterranean basin is closely associated with groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, originating in the region and posing a collective threat due to its ties to organized crime. This nexus is marked by its expansive and evolving nature, further complicating efforts to address security concerns (Halal, 2021, pp. 169-172).

2- Security dialogues in the Mediterranean

Since the end of the Cold War, European nations have worked to forge security cooperation among the nations bordering the southern Mediterranean to combat the security threats that surfaced at the end of this phase. As a result, they developed several initiatives aimed at achieving stability and security in the area.

A-Barcelona Process - Euro-Mediterranean Partnership-

Since the outset of 1995, the European Union has actively pursued the establishment of new relations with Mediterranean countries, manifested in what is termed the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This initiative emerged in response to post-Cold War international shifts and the emergence of new security threats, particularly from southern Mediterranean nations. Motivated by these challenges, European nations endeavored to foster cooperation among southern Mediterranean countries, culminating in a conference held on November 27-28, 1995. The conference brought together representatives from 15 European Union states and 12 southern Mediterranean nations (Abu El-Ainain 2000, p. 19).

This partnership has been marked by significant economic disparities among its participating countries, a contrast most evident in the economic preeminence of European nations juxtaposed with the economic fragility and stagnation experienced by southern Mediterranean countries. This economic asymmetry has

raised security concerns for European countries. Consequently, an agreement was reached between European Union member states and other participating nations, outlining several principles for adherence. These principles encompassed the respect for national sovereignty, the freedom of countries to determine their political systems, the promotion of the rule of law and democratic governance, and the protection of human rights. In exchange for these commitments, security considerations assumed a pivotal role within this partnership (Nafia, 2004, p. 494).

All of these principles can only be achieved through a set of procedures, which are represented in the following paragraphs:



The first paragraph: Work to establish and deepen a comprehensive dialogue and bring the parties of the Mediterranean together to reach the pinnacle of partnership, which is cooperation. The Barcelona Process seeks to achieve cultural and humanitarian exchange between the Mediterranean countries through:

- ✓ MEDA Democracy Program: Its goal is to establish democratic governance systems in the region by presenting a group of projects.
- ✓ Ormad Youth Program: To integrate young people into professional and youth life.
- ✓ MEDA Audiovisual Program: It aims to enhance cooperation in the field of audiovisual.



The second paragraph: This partnership embodies the acceptance of others rather than their rejection, fostering a spirit of inclusivity. Without the integration of the human dimension, this partnership would lose its essence and significance.



-The third paragraph: It represents bridging the gap between the two countries of the Mediterranean. To achieve this part, the region must be made safe and stable, and this, in turn, reflects that the cultural variable plays an important role compared to the political and economic fields, in terms of transferring democracy to the countries of the Southern Bank and bringing about basic changes through society. Civil society by establishing effective human and social relations (Filali, 2009, pp. 56-62).

As part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, European Union countries aim to offer economic assistance to Southern Mediterranean countries within a strategic framework that extends beyond security, political, and social issues. However, this vision, emblematic of the Barcelona process, has recently waned due to the rise of two primary security threats:

- The rise of terrorist groups in the southern Mediterranean.
- Increasing rates of illegal immigration from south to north.

This is what led to security policy and the fight against terrorism taking an important place on the agenda of dialogues between Mediterranean countries (Amro, 2021).

B- European Neighborhood Policy

The concept of the European Neighborhood emerged during the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in December 2002. It was articulated in this context: "The Union must capitalize on the opportunities presented by enlargement to enhance relations with neighboring countries." The Council emphasized the establishment of relations based on shared values with countries in the southern and eastern Mediterranean regions. The Neighborhood Policy became an official policy of the European Union in 2004, reflecting the EU's efforts to prevent further division in Europe following its expansion and consolidation of power. The Union engages in negotiations with countries under the Neighborhood Policy, crafting individual action plans with each country. These plans serve as foundational documents outlining overarching goals, strategies, and priorities aimed at reinforcing commitments to collaborative efforts. Key values emphasized in these plans include international federation rights, minority rights, and children's rights. (Tawil, 2012, p. 217).

The following fundamental components are the center of the Mediterranean countries listed under the European Neighborhood Policy's strategic significance:

- ❖ **Immigration:** Europe attracts a large number of immigrants, whether legally or illegally.
- ❖ **Energy dependency:** The European Union's attempt to meet its energy needs, depends on what the southern Mediterranean countries produce.
- ❖ **Security and combating terrorism:** Terrorism is among the security issues that the European Neighborhood Policy seeks to address.

The following are the principal goals of the Mediterranean countries' European Neighborhood Policy:

- encouraging development in the southern areas in all spheres—economic, political,, and social.
- Securing borders.
- The following are a few of the topics covered by the European Neighborhood Policy:
- aiming to strengthen border security cooperation while simultaneously assisting the South Bank's member nations in promoting development.

- Joint work to confront security threats.
- Securing borders.
- Creating interaction between civil society actors (Tawil, 2012, pp. 218-219)

C- Union for the Mediterranean

The Rome Conference, convened on December 20, 2007, brought together France, Spain,, and Italy, resulting in the issuance of the Rome Call, advocating for a Mediterranean summit. French President Sarkozy emerged as a prominent critic of the Barcelona project dating back to his tenure as Minister of the Interior. The concept of a Mediterranean union was deliberated upon during the European Union meeting in Brussels in 2008, with France presenting a proposal outlining the objectives of this envisioned union:

- ✓ Developing energy sources to ensure energy supply.
- ✓ Nationalization of the southern Mediterranean belt as it is a source of threats and a sensitive region (Al-Makhadmi, 2010, pp. 32-33).

Additionally, this project has a wide range of characteristics, such as:

- ✓ The return of interest in Mediterranean issues, and here the Mediterranean bet emerges, especially concerning France and its situation with the Maghreb. This is not only a bet for French foreign policy, but rather a bet on the formation of French society.
- ✓ The European Union emerged from its stagnation and questioned the effectiveness of previous projects in the Mediterranean. This led to the division of these projects, especially about the cultural and humanitarian aspects, which has deteriorated since the announcement of the Barcelona path.
- ✓ According to Huber Wieden, it is impossible to cover all of the difficulties that a country has, thus it is important to avoid starting with a small number of countries and then growing the union. It is also important to avoid combining different factors, particularly those related to culture, economy, and politics (Khadar, 2010, pp. 234-235).

At the European Council meeting held on March 13 and 14, 2008, the leaders of the meeting insisted on calling the Union the "Barcelona Process...a Union for the Mediterranean," indicating that the Union is part of the Barcelona Process and will not be a substitute for it, but rather a complement to it. The Union for the Mediterranean project was officially launched at the Paris Summit held on July 13,

2008, in the presence of representatives from 45 countries. The new Mediterranean group was chaired by President Sarkozy and co-chaired by then-Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, representing the southern Mediterranean countries. The summit addressed topics of environment, energy, food security, and political dialogue. It was emphasized that this initiative can play an important role in confronting the common security threats facing the Mediterranean region.

The final statement of this meeting stressed the necessity of involving civil society, local and regional authorities, and the private sector in implementing the Union for the Mediterranean, in addition to strengthening democracy and political pluralism, committing to human rights, condemning terrorism of all kinds, promoting legal immigration under organized management, and combating illegal immigration (Ayadi, 2014, pp. 136-138).

D- Dialogue 5 + 5

The idea of establishing a 5+5 dialogue traces back to French President Mitterrand during his visit to Rabat in 1983. He proposed the formation of the Security and Cooperation Council for the Western Mediterranean, encompassing Algeria, the Kingdom of Morocco, Tunisia, France, Italy, and Spain. This initiative, rooted in the Mediterranean context of the 1980s and France's historical involvement in the region, positioned France as a leader in fostering security cooperation in the Western Mediterranean. Initially, the proposal faced resistance from some countries, including Algeria, whose foreign policy at the time was characterized by nationalism and ideology, alongside complexities involving Libya and Yugoslavia.

This group's last conference took place in Algeria in 1991. Following the Lockerbie event, it was put on hold, and the scheduled meeting for the following year in Tunisia was canceled. The project was then revived in 2001, and one of the factors that caused it to do so was the participation of Libya at the members' meeting in Lisbon at that time:

- ✚ Exacerbation of illegal immigration.
- ✚ Stopping Palestinian-Israeli peace operations.
- ✚ The repercussions of the September 11, 2001 bombings.
- ✚ The Maghreb countries fear that the European Union will ignore them after it begins to head east.
- ✚ American-European competition in the Mediterranean (Benanter 2005, pp. 99-100).

Within the framework of security and cooperative reconstruction in the Mediterranean, a group of bets have emerged, which are:

- **The Human Bet:** The 5+5 dialogue primarily addresses concerns regarding illegal immigration and emphasizes the importance of addressing social, humanitarian,, and cultural aspects alongside security issues. It aims to regulate immigration while considering the demographic dynamics of the Mediterranean region.
- **Development bet:** For the partnership to thrive, both Mediterranean counterparts must experience comparable levels of development.
- **The security bet:** The dialogue mainly concerns the phenomenon of terrorism, its root causes, and the strategies required for collective action among participating nations. Additionally, it focuses on achieving a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and ending the conflict in Iraq.
- **-The civilizational bet:** This bet is linked to Western policies, especially the United States of America, in stimulating conflicts in addition to stimulating the dialogue and clash of civilizations (Ghaname, 2019, pp. 435-436).

Observers of the Mediterranean security dialogue note that the region is not immune to external influences, including the role of the United States in impeding security discussions. The US Secretary of State has unequivocally stated that the establishment of a Mediterranean security organization is not feasible under any circumstances. Moreover, numerous internal factors hinder progress in security cooperation within the Mediterranean. For instance, European nations have tended to prioritize bilateral agreements over comprehensive dialogue, as evidenced by agreements with Tunisia in 1995, Morocco in 1996, and Algeria in 2002.

These endeavors illustrate European countries' efforts to prevent the Maghreb from forming a cohesive political bloc or union where southern nations recognize the benefits of integrated dialogue. Despite these challenges, the European Union continues to initiate security measures, such as the Mediterranean Forum and the Marseille Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue, aimed at maintaining security and stability in Europe (Ghannam 2019, pp. 437-438).

Conclusion:

The study ultimately concludes that security cooperation among Mediterranean countries, established through the Barcelona Process, remains viable provided that comprehensive solutions are devised to address emerging

security challenges and threats, including organized crime, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration. Additionally, achieving developmental parity and providing genuine development initiatives for Southern countries are essential for fostering equitable development across the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the future of security cooperation hinges on Europe ceasing to attribute terrorism and security threats solely to Southern countries.

The evolving landscape in strategic countries within the Mediterranean region has raised significant challenges and uncertainties about the future of relations among Mediterranean countries. European nations are prompted to reassess their strategies and approaches in dealing with regional allies, recognizing the need for a forward-looking vision to address the region's multifaceted challenges. These challenges stem from political, security, economic, and cultural dynamics, which are expected to shape the trajectory of regional cooperation in the coming years.

The emergence of a desire among Mediterranean countries to establish new security dialogues akin to the Barcelona process does not signify the failure of the latter to uphold its principles. Instead, it reflects these countries' aspiration to adapt to evolving regional and global dynamics. Following the events of September 11, the focus shifted significantly towards combating international terrorism, elevating it to a top priority requiring collective international action to mitigate its impact.

In this regard, the study reached a set of results, which are as follows:

- Coordinated efforts are needed to establish a secure and stable Mediterranean region. Additionally, a comprehensive security vision, threat awareness, and a shift away from bilateral agreements are necessary for the parties involved in the Mediterranean security equation to take collaborative security actions.
- Security dialogues in the Mediterranean were able to identify the most important issues threatening security and stability in the region and thus work to confront them.
- Paying attention to the humanitarian and social aspects, such as the security aspect, which is considered the core of the partnership and which will enhance security cooperation between the Mediterranean countries.
- A number of outside factors, such as US meddling in regional affairs, are seen as a danger to the progression of cooperation in the Mediterranean.
- Among the factors that hindered the 5+5 dialogue from being the optimal framework for the security equation in the Western

Mediterranean is the dominance of European perception in establishing initiatives.

➤ Conflicts may be resolved most effectively if the Mediterranean region were politically, economically, culturally, and security-wise connected and convergent. Priorities must be rearranged on both shores, though. Africa has to endeavor to enhance its governance, administration, and fight corruption in addition to fortifying the rule of law. Europe has to deepen its integration in terms of economy, politics, and security.

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