the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Theoretical Framework and Historical Evolution of North-South Cooperation

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Abstract:

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership represents a complex and evolving framework of cooperation between the northern and southern Mediterranean countries. It is grounded in various theoretical perspectives, including realism, liberalism, and functionalism, and has evolved through key historical initiatives such as the Barcelona Process, the European Neighborhood Policy, the Union for the Mediterranean, and the 5+5 Dialogue. Despite these efforts, the partnership faces economic, political, and cultural challenges that hinder effective integration, highlighting the need for flexible and inclusive strategies to promote sustainable cooperation

Keywords: *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; Theories of Cooperation; European Union; Trade Exchange*

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Introduction

The structure that has arranged connections between the two sides of the Mediterranean is known as the EU-Mediterranean partnership. It mostly consists of the nations that make up the European Union as a single bloc that interacts with the southern nations as separate entities. However, there are other nations that do not fit into the Mediterranean region but are included in this partnership framework. This is in contrast to other nations that are located throughout the Mediterranean region but are not included in this process, as was the case with Libya, for example, at one point.

Despite the differences in the stated and accepted purposes and objectives, the Barcelona Conference is the extraordinary starting process of EU-Mediterranean ties. Since 1995, there have been signs of important undertakings, such as joint or bilateral initiatives between the partnership's involved members. However, this does not imply that the Barcelona Conference is the sole or first framework that embodies the Mediterranean countries' relationship. Due to the numerous occurrences and cooperative acts that have taken place since the Southern Mediterranean countries' independence;the majority of them have clearly emerged in bilateral cooperation agreements, as those between the European Union and Tunisia and Algeria.

The general framework, however, was less structured than the Barcelona Conference because it resulted from a number of challenges and changes in the Mediterranean region, as well as the EU's maturation and rise to prominence as a regional and global power with a significant impact on international relations.

Based on the above introduction, the following research problem is proposed:

to what extent has the euro_mediteraneanpartenership succeeded in translating the conceptual theories of partenership into tangible practical reality?

This central problem prompts us to formulate the following questions:

1. how are the theoretical concepts and approaches of partnership translated into practical actions within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership?
2. To what extent have the historical initiatives and policies of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, such as the Barcelona Process and the European Neighborhood Policy, been effective in achieving political and economic integration between the northern and southern countries?
3. What political, economic, and cultural factors determine the success or failure of cooperation between the European Union and the Mediterranean countries?

based on the above research problem and sub-questions, we propose the following main hypothesis

he success of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership depends on the ability of historical policies and initiatives to achieve political and economic integration, and on the influence of political, economic, and cultural factors

The research has been divided into the following sections:

Theoretical Framework of the Partnership

Evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The Barcelona Process

European Neighborhood Policy

Union for the Mediterranean

Dialogue5+5

First: The partnership's theoretical foundation

The conceptual framework of partnership must be addressed first in order to identify the most significant theories and approaches that explain the partnership process. This is because a strong conceptual framework allows us to identify full-fledged approaches that can achieve scientific theories that can more accurately explain the phenomenon of partnership Gaber Said Awad, *Theory and Practice of Comparative Political Systems* (Cairo University), 21

1. Partnership definition

Since there are numerous political and economic definitions of partnership, it is imperative that our topic be firmly placed inside the proper conceptual framework before we can begin. "All frameworks of cooperation between institutions and organisations aimed at developing the effectiveness of concerned partners in order to achieve the agreed goals" is how B. Ponson defines partnership, and "partnership maintains the independence of institutions or entities organising this process," according to B. Garette et P. Dussage (Ayyad Mohamed Samir, 2013, PP20–21) Some people use the term "cooperation" interchangeably with "partnership," which refers to the approximation of policies without the establishment of institutions; the goal is to reach a consensus in one or more areas in order to accomplish a particular objective; therefore, cooperation can be social, political, economic, etc. (Hocine Bougara,P 13).

Without a set of objective requirements being met, the partnership's goal would not be accomplished. Experts typically identify these factors in three fundamental areas:

a. Changes in finances from the centre to the outskirts.

b. Increasing collaborative capacity.

c. Reforms in politics. (*Note Politique,* February 2015, : P2).

2. Theories of partnerships

Numerous ideas exist about the partnership process, and each one aims to explain this occurrence among various international entities based on its own analytical perspective. These theories range from political to economic.

Since economic integration occurs between nations that are historically, culturally, or geographically similar, economic theories generally concentrate on the levels of economic integration between the countries in question. The process of removing all tariffs and non-tariff barriers between a group of nations while coordinating their policies by forming a new economic bloc is known as economic integration. The following are some phases of the economic integration process:

An area of preferential trade.

The Free Trade Area (b).

c. The Customs Union level.

d. The Common Market.

e. The Union of Money.

f. Unity in the economy (Mohamed Karim Jabbar).

Political theories pertaining to regional integration have surfaced within the field of political science; we can identify some of the most significant theories that addressed this topic as follows:

A. Partnership in Realist Thought

Before addressing the realist theory and its applications at the level of international cooperation, it is necessary first to understand the realist school in international relations. This requires identifying the main pillars of this theory.

When discussing realism, one finds that it has intellectual foundations linked to the nature of the state as conceptualized by Hobbes, who associated the state with the individual—an individual he viewed as naturally evil, non-social, deviant, and ambitious. Hobbes's pessimistic view extended to the behavior of states, as the same characteristics attributed to human beings apply to states as well.

From this starting point, Hans Morgenthau derived his perspective on relations among states. He considered nations as political entities and the sole key actors in international politics. The state constantly seeks to achieve the highest possible levels of power. Morgenthau also emphasized the centrality and sovereignty of the state in international relations. He further argued that the international system is anarchic, and that power relations inevitably lead to international anarchy. He attributed this anarchy to the absence of a centralized world government capable of imposing institutional arrangements or an overarching will above state interests. (Joe Bader, 14MARCH 2021).

Definition of Realism

After this brief overview of the roots of realist theory, we turn to its definition. This theory includes major twentieth-century figures such as George Kennan, Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer in the United States, and E. H. Carr in Britain. Some realist theorists view realism as a general theory of politics, while the majority consider it specifically a theory of international politics.

Classical realists such as Morgenthau (1962) argue that the "social world is nothing more than a projection of human nature at the collective level." They also focus on statesmen and the analysis of state power capabilities. In the contemporary context, however, a group of thinkers has developed a less radical approach, combining structural (system-level) analysis with the internal characteristics of the state.(Muhammad Safar, 2014, pp. 53–54).

Theoretical Assumptions of the Realist School

Realist theorists argue that a set of fixed factors governs international behavior:

- Human nature is inclined toward evil, sin, and the possession of power.
- The geographic location of a state affects its capabilities and foreign-policy orientations. A strategically significant location often exposes states to invasion and external ambitions.
- The absence of a global organization or world government forces states to seek alternative mechanisms, which inevitably involve the use of power. Realists also distinguish between internal (domestic) political behavior and foreign policy behavior.

Neorealists argue that cooperation among international units is necessary but remains fundamentally constrained by dominant security competition. All states are actors, but their influence varies according to their relative power. The primary driver of cooperation is the pursuit of maximum self-interest. For realists, cooperationischallenged by severalfactors, notably:

1. The possibility of cheating.

1. States' concern with *relative gains*—rather than shared gains—which leads each state to compare its benefits to those of others. This distrust limits the potential for successful cooperation. Mutual fear further inhibits international cooperationnesibaBerd, "The Cooperative Phenomenon in International Relations: A Look at Its Regional and Transregional Dimensions," (*Academic Journal* (2022): PP725–726)

Neorealists also maintain that states, like individuals, desire control over others, which is a fundamental cause of conflict rather than cooperation.cooperation under

the Security Dilemma: Evolving Inter-Korean Relations in the Early 1990s,(*The Korean* (Winter 2005): P29).

From the neorealist or structural perspective, human nature is largely dismissed; instead, the focus is placed on the anarchic international system. Anarchy is the starting point for thinking about international cooperation. It is not merely the absence of a world government but also the root cause of violence among states due to the absence of overarching authority.

Neorealists acknowledge the existence of international cooperation but argue that it is limited by security competition, which always takes precedence over cooperative endeavors.

Broadly speaking, neorealism contends that cooperation is inherently limited under global anarchy because the possibility of *defection* by partners may place a state in a worse position than before cooperation. Nevertheless, cooperation is possible if uncertainty is minimized and conditions are clarified. Both classical and neorealists thus attempt to specify the general conditions under which cooperation may occur.

The emergence of "offensive realism" in the 1990s—grounded in the assumption that signaling in international environments and the overlapping preferences of states create strict limits on reducing international tensions—further contributed to realist debatesrobert Jervis. (Realism, Neorealism, and Cooperation, (Summer 1999):P 62).

Frederick Schuman stated in a 1933 study that, in the absence of overarching government, each state must ensure its own internal security by strengthening itself domestically james Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff, trans. (Walid Abdel-Hay, 1985,PP 60–61).

Realism has been subject to extensive criticism, including from classical realists themselves. The rapid evolution of world events rendered the theory insufficient to explain contemporary developments, which prompted the emergence of a more open form of realism—neorealism.

Partnership in Liberal Thought

Liberals argue that interdependence leads to mutual benefits, whereas its absence increases the likelihood of war. This stems fromseveralreasons:

- Interdependence among international units generates shared interests.
- High levels of trade, communication, and mutual dependence enhance understanding and international trust.
- When states are satisfied, they become willing to concede part of their sovereignty to international institutions in pursuit of stability and peace.

Peace is achieved through cooperation, not unilateral action as claimed by neorealists. Here, international institutions evolve into supranational actors whose influence exceeds that of nation-states.

Charles David and Afaf Ben Essaïh present several liberal arguments demonstrating the strong relationship between interdependence and peace:

1. States tend to prefer international trade over war. This was emphasized by liberal writers such as Norman Angell and Richard Cobden.
2. Interdependence is the main characteristic of the current international system, a concept highlighted by Keohane and Nye, representing an institutionalist response to state-centrism after World War II.
3. Economic interdependence is among the greatest factors limiting war. Even when one state dominates another economically, the weaker state avoids jeopardizing its interests because economic loss would be greater than any political gain through conflict.
4. Regional cooperation requires greater political legitimacy and transparency. Functionalists argue that interdependence generates problems that require institutions to manage cooperation.(Mohamed Tahar Adila, (June 2016), PP251–252)
5. Some scholars maintain that classical liberal economic theory does not fully exist in practice because it separates economics from politics. Historically, liberal political economy emerged first in Britain and Western Europe, followed by the United States. It is based on assumptions such as the spontaneous emergence of markets, decentralized function of market mechanisms, and the primacy of the individual, firm, or household as the central unit of society. Liberalism assumes that individuals act according to cost-benefit logic and possess adequate information. Flexible prices, production, and consumption are therefore possible. Institutions are seen as outcomes rather than causes of market processes, which are governed primarily by supply and demand rather than coercive authority.(robert Gilpin, , 2004,PP 47–49).

Neoliberals argue that an international system based on equality, security, and shared interests is achievable through the role of international organizations, despite the anarchic nature of the international system. Theircoreassumptionsinclude:

- Addressing global imbalances through collective action.
- The need for international units to establish an effective system to achieve common interests, which requires moving beyond the narrow confines of state sovereignty.
- States' interest in improving their positions by pursuing mutual gains.

- The necessity of transparency and clarity in external information to encourage integration rather than conflict.

Methodologically, neoliberal institutionalism is based on several assumptions:

- International cooperation is possible under an anarchic system, and states and institutions are capable of creating mechanisms to enforce international agreements.
- States remain major actors in international relations but are not the only or even the most important actors.
- Fear of cheating is one of the largest barriers to cooperation; international organizations help address this by creating legal obligations. (Ratiba Berd, 2022, PP727–728)

Neoliberal institutionalists such as Robert Axelrod, Robert Keohane, and Kenneth Oye developed their ideas partly in response to Kenneth Waltz's neorealism. There is also a degree of convergence between liberal and realist thought. As "Jervis" argues, it is inaccurate to claim that conflicts of interest among states are absolute or that international relations are purely zero-sum games. Even realists acknowledge that international politics involves ongoing compromise and that relations among states are shaped by both conflicting and shared interests. Although realists view international politics as a continuous struggle for survival, this does not mean liberals deny the existence of conflict; rather, they reject the idea that conflict is the *dominant* or *exclusive* feature of world politics. Numerous empirical cases present evidence to the contrary. (Abdelhamid Meshri, 2016–2017, p121–122)

A. The functional theory:

B. it has been associated with David Mittarni's contributions and his "functional choice" proposal for an alternative integration mechanism that emphasises the division of political and functional aspects in this process and the rejection of the notion of political union. (ali al-Hajj, PP18–19).

We tried to critique this theory for its excessive emphasis on the technical and economic components while ignoring the political side, which actually makes other aspects easier to deal with. As a result, Mitarni's suggestion is frequently impractical. (Ayyad Muhammad, P 87)

B. The new functional theory

emerged in response to the ideas of the traditional functional theory, which introduced us to the concept of pervasiveness and prevalence (Spillova) by Ernst Hans. This theory aims to alter the overlapping process between political and artistic integration because artistic integration inevitably causes this process to gradually spread to other domains, particularly political ones.

According to this theory, "supranationalism" is defined as the process of creating the sovereignty of many states at a higher level through supranational organisations, making sovereignty collective rather than individual.

C. Communication theory:

Karl Deutsch was a pioneer in this field, emphasising the value of communication between international organisations in order to develop integration and ultimately attain the "safe society" goal, which can be expressed in three ways:

A society without war, one that values diversity, and one that is integrated

Additionally, he emphasised the importance of a feeling of group identity, or what some refer to as the political culture of integration. (Ali al-Hajj, 18–19)

According to cistopher batter in his lectureoneuro_mediterranean relations in barcelona 1995, cooperation with the Maghreb side goes back 25 years. The rome treaty, wich established the European community, organized relations the former European colonies with the aim of integrating the group through trade agreements. Returning to 1969 there were agreements with Tunisia and morocco. And the European market was opened to them without imposing customs duties. In addition bilateralagreements were concluded in 1976 with other contries such as Algeria. (yacine Jabar, p14).

After the Comprehensive Mediterranean Policy (1972–1992) and the New Mediterranean Policy (1992–1995), the Barcelona Process in 1995 can be seen as the beginning of the development of EU-Mediterranean ties. (Bichara Al-Khudr, *1995–2008*, p19)

The structuring of connections, whether bilateral or collective, has been a feature of the two sides' relationship since the EU-Mediterranean Barcelona process. We made an effort to concentrate on the most significant projects that have emerged since then.

1. The Process of Barcelona

The Barcelona process, which sprang from Franco-Spanish efforts primarily to promote regional collaboration, is a comprehensive strategy for EU-Mediterranean cooperation. Expanding cooperative procedures across the region as a whole was encouraged by the 1993 Oslo Agreement, which aimed to end the conflict between Israel and its neighbours. With the exception of Libya, which was an observer rather than a partner despite its Mediterranean character, the summit between the 15 European nations of the time and their 12 southern Mediterranean equivalents on November 27–28, 1995, produced the results of the Barcelona Initiative. (Nadia Hamour, 2009, P167).

Reaching a zone of communication, exchange, and collaboration based on three fundamental strategies was the primary goal that was desired to be accomplished in the Mediterranean basin. The objectives were as follows"

a. The aspect of politics and security

b. The monetary and economic aspect

c. Human, social, and cultural aspects

A number of mechanisms have been developed to finance this engaging process in accordance with a basic mechanism of partnership funded primarily according to a program called the MEDA program. At the time, the process emphasised that the current relations would not be based on the European side's hegemony over the southern countries. (B*arcelona and Mediterranean*,P 28)

At the conclusion of this summit, it was decided that in order to guarantee the execution of the decisions made during this process, the foreign ministers of the interested parties needed to meet on a regular and orderly basis. It was also decided to broaden the scope of the process to encompass all participants, including local communities, regional authorities, MPs, and members of civil society, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the EU-Mediterranean cooperation process. (B*arcelona Process,* November1995, 27–28).

2. The Policy of European Neighbourhood

Finding a formula that incorporates the EU's neighbours became essential on May 1, 2004, when the European Union expanded to include ten more "Pico" nations in addition to the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus. During his presentation on the European dialogue policy, "Romanoprodi" summed it up as "everything but institutions" and shut out the prospect of these nations entering the EU.

Four groupings of nations are the focus of the European Commission's statement on March 11, 2004: Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, the Southern Mediterranean countries, and the Western Balkan countries. (Bishara Al-Khidr, p182–183).

Regarding the Neighbourhood Policy, it was developed as a principle to protect the benefits of the EU-Mediterranean alliance because it was intended to give nations without aspirations to join the EU a better framework for involvement. In order to find suitable solutions to the unresolved issues between the two sides of the relationship, this project was founded on a differential strategy through an action plan based on negotiations with each country separately, through monopoly rule. Reiterating "the European agreements for dialogue" was another way to achieve this goal.

It is noteworthy that numerous nations, particularly a few Mediterranean nations like Morocco and Tunisia, have indicated their readiness for this significant structure. (I*nternational Questions* (Nov.–Dec. 2004) P74).

Many analysts think that the growing number of Muslims living in Europe and Europe's proximity to the Middle East and North Africa have increased interest in these adjacent regions because they are strategically significant, particularly for Europe. The most significant of these are:

The problem of migration, Europe's reliance on energy, particularly from North African nations, security and the war on terrorism, trade, and the economy. (Tawil Nassima, P21)

b. Despite all that some nations have accomplished, particularly in the process of democratic transition, like the Tunisian case, and stability in other nations, like Georgia and Jordan, etc., the European Neighbourhood Policy framework emerged as a long-term project, and the friends' surroundings came to be known as the ocean of fire. (Caroline Janvier and Joaquin,P 1).

3. Union for the Mediterranean

This project represents a purely French perspective on EU-Mediterranean relations, overseen by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who emphasised his commitment to "reunification" through "common development" during his presidential campaign in the Mediterranean city of Toulon on February 7, 2007, and said that the Union for the Mediterranean project was essential because the EU-Mediterranean dialogue that resulted from the 1995 Barcelona process had fallen short of its goals. The countries involved in the Barcelona Process would be included in this new program since a new formula for collaboration between the two sides of the Mediterranean needed to be found. (Mohamed Samir Ayyad, P 126).

When a report on the process's results was presented in 2005, the initiative's tenth birthday, it was generally accepted that the previously declared results had not been attained. The economic and financial axis, for instance, showed that the amount of direct foreign investment (DFI) in the EU-Mediterranean region accounted for only 3% of global investment flows and only 0.2% of the nearly zero amount of foreign investment that the European Union actually achieved.

Additionally, the annual growth rate—one of the most important economic factors—did not surpass 1%, resulting in an imbalance that hindered the upgrading of the degree of partnership between the northern and southern parties. The disparity in growth rates is still wholly dysfunctional because a genuine chance for collaboration requires a rapprochement in terms of economic growth rates, which has not been accomplished as of yet.

Everyone knows that the European Union has placed a strong emphasis on these nations in the partnership process since they have joined the EU and have not supplied the requisite skills to achieve theoretic objectives.

For instance, in 2003, the European Union gave new members 545 euros, whereas other surrounding nations received only 14 euros.

Another illustration is that, in 2007, despite the significance of the south and the fact that Tunisia has advanced significantly in this regard when compared to other southern nations, Poland received roughly 2.7% of its GDP, while Tunisia received nine times less, or 0.3% of its GDP. (Nadia Hamour, P 183–184).

In order to breathe new life into this process, the Union for the Mediterranean (UPM) project, which was overseen by then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy, was abandoned. The first summit of the UPM took place in July 2008 and brought together the European Union with 16 neighbouring countries in the southern Mediterranean, including North Africa and the Middle East.

(Documentary Sheet , 2013).

DIALOGUE 5+5:

In 1984, the "Western European Countries" forum project was greatly aided by French President François Mitterrand. The French initiatives led to the creation of the so-called 5+5 group, in which France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Malta later joined the European side, in response to the effects of Arab-Israeli relations and the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of making any real progress in any Mediterranean project. Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania were part of the Maghreb side. These countries met for the first time in 1990, however the "Lockerbie" issue that followed caused a problem between Libya and some of the other countries in this group, which in turn caused the dialogue to be suspended. (Ali Hajj, PP 492).

Conclusion

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership represents a complex and evolving framework of cooperation that seeks to bridge the North-South divide in the Mediterranean region. From its conceptual foundations to its historical development, the partnership has been shaped by both theoretical perspectives and practical challenges. Realist approaches highlight the constraints imposed by security concerns and self-interest, while liberal and functionalist perspectives emphasize the potential of interdependence, institutional mechanisms, and gradual integration to foster stability and shared prosperity.

Historically, initiatives such as the Barcelona Process, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Union for the Mediterranean have marked important milestones, yet each has faced limitations, including economic disparities, uneven political commitment, and insufficient investment. These challenges underline the need for adaptive, flexible, and inclusive strategies that can respond

to shifting political, economic, and social realities in both Europe and the southern Mediterranean countries.

In essence, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is not a fixed or static structure; it is a dynamic process that requires continuous dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared responsibility. Its success depends not only on institutional arrangements and economic incentives but also on the willingness of all parties to engage constructively, address disparities, and build a genuinely cooperative framework that balances the interests of the North and the South

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