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EUROPE AND MEDITERRANEAN SEA, ONE STORY

Alessandro Figus¹

¹*Link Campus University, Rome, Italy*

Abstract

The author deals with the Mediterranean issue, which is very topical today, and its relationship with Europe, a that takes into account the fact that North Africa is the closest South of Europe. In the Mediterranean, the relations between the North and South are intense and extensive. However, hidden opportunities and brakes resulting from many factors have often focused on and investment from an economic point of view. However from the political one, especially after the creation of the European Union, efforts have been made in order to implement the level of integration between the two shores of the Basin, trying to get rid of the many obstacles and the painful search for a Euro – Mediterranean free trade area. The Mediterranean area makes Europe suffer on two issues which have unfortunately been unsolved for too long: the Libyan issue and the Palestinian issue, both located in the Middle Eastern shore of the Mediterranean. In conclusion, the author addresses the subject of policies in the countries of the South – Eastern Mediterranean, which have recently changed significantly. In this context of strong change, the objectives and instruments of the European Mediterranean policies must be reconsidered, in order to gather useful elements to strengthen them and to suggest new guidelines.

Key words: Mediterranean, European Union, agreement, cooperation, relationship, development, issue, trade.

ЕВРОПА И СРЕДИЗЕМНОМОРЬЕ, ОДНА ИСТОРИЯ

Фигус Алессандро¹

¹*Университет Линк Кампус, Рим, Италия*

Аннотация

Автор рассматривает Средиземноморский вопрос, который сегодня очень актуален, и его взаимоотношения с Европой, учитывая тот факт, что Северная Африка является ближайшим югом Европы. В Средиземноморье отношения между Севером и Югом являются интенсивными и обширными. Однако, с экономической точки зрения, скрытые возможности и задержки, возникающие из – за многих факторов, часто фокусируются на инвестициях. Однако с политической точки зрения, особенно после создания Европейского Союза, были предприняты усилия для реализации уровня интеграции между двумя берегами бассейна, пытаясь избавиться от многих препятствий и болезненного поиска европейско –средиземноморской зоны свободной торговли.

Средиземноморский регион заставляет Европу страдать по двум вопросам, которые, к сожалению, слишком долго оставались нерешенными: ливийский и палестинский вопрос, оба из которых расположены на ближневосточном побережье Средиземного моря.

В заключение автор обращается к теме политики в странах Юго–Восточного Средиземноморья, которая в последнее время существенно изменилась. В контексте решительных перемен необходимо пересмотреть цели и инструменты европейской средиземноморской политики, чтобы собрать необходимые элементы для их укрепления и предложить новые руководящие принципы.

Ключевые слова: Средиземное море, Европейский Союз, соглашение, сотрудничество, отношение, развитие, вопрос, сделка.

ЕУРОПА ЖӘНЕ ЖЕРОРТА ТЕҢІЗІ, БІР ТАРИХ

Алессандро Фигус¹

¹*Линк Кампус Университеті, Рим, Италия*

Аңдатпа

Автор бүгінгі таңда Солтүстік Африка Еуропаның ең жақын оңтүстігі екенін ескере отырып, Еуропамен қарым – қатынасы бар өте өзекті Жерорта теңізі мәселесін қарастырады. Жерорта теңізінің Солтүстігі мен Оңтүстігі арасындағы өзара қарым – қатынастары кең және интенсивті болып табылады. Алайда, экономикалық тұрғыдан, көптеген факторларға байланысты туындайтын жасырын мүмкіндіктер мен кідірістер инвестицияларға жиі назар аударады.

Бұған қарамастан, әсіресе Еуропалық Одақ құрылғаннан кейін, көптеген кедергілерден және Еуропалық – Жерорта теңізіндегі еркін сауда аймағын қиын іздеуден құтылуға тырысып, бассейнің екі жағалауы арасындағы интеграция деңгейін іске асыру үшін күш – жігер жұмсалды. Жерорта теңізі аймағы Еуропаны екі мәселе бойынша зардабын тигізген, олар Жерорта теңізінің Таяу Шығыс жағалауында орналасқан елдері: Ливия және Палестинаның ұзақ уақыт бойы шешілмеген мәселесі болып табылады.

Қорытындылай келе, автор соңғы уақытта айтарлықтай өзгерген Оңтүстік – Шығыс Жерорта теңізі елдеріндегі саясат тақырыбына жүгінеді. Күшті өзгерістердің нәтижесі контекстінде оларды нығайту үшін қажетті элементтерді жинау және жаңа басқарушы қағидаларды ұсыну үшін Еуропалық Жерорта теңізі саясатының мақсаттары мен құралдарын қайта қарастыру қажет.

Түйінді сөздер: Жерорта теңізі, Еуропалық одақ, келісім, ынтымақтастық, қатынас, дамыту, шығару, сауда.

Introduction

A general overview

Europe and the Mediterranean, ancient history that revolves around a sea. In this space, events of great interest have always followed one another, and the international community has considered its duty to confront each other here, initiating collaborations and supporting dialogue between cultures, sometimes amidst a thousand difficulties. Over the years, EU policies have tried to apply the strategy of confrontation in the Mediterranean area by directly addressing the issues which emerged with the Barcelona Process, up to the point of building the Union for the Mediterranean; although, unfortunately, nothing is yet fully defined and the future often seems uncertain (MFA, 2016).

The Mediterranean, an intercontinental sea situated between Europe, Africa, and Asia, with an approximate surface area of two and a half million square kilometers, is connected to the west by the Strait of Gibraltar to the Atlantic Ocean, while to the east by the Sea of Marmara, by the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, it is connected to the Black Sea. The Marmara Sea is often considered part of the Mediterranean, while the Black Sea is generally considered a distinct sea.

I have often considered this sea to be such a confined space that I like to refer to it as a single entity. History also has sometimes proven the same, and it is hard to think today that we cannot define the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea as a single universe. To the south, the Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean, and therefore also the Black Sea, with the Red Sea, and thus opens the way to the east.

The Mediterranean has a maximum extension along the parallels of about three thousand seven hundred kilometers, a virtually closed sea with very limited tides, because of the poor connection with the ocean, which restricts the total mass of water involved in the phenomenon, takes between seventy and eighty years to completely renew its waters. Such physical peculiarities make it an extremely exposed sea. To this is also important to add the

anthropological component, which, due to the differentiation of the population that exerts strong pressure on the territory, makes it one of the busiest and most touristic seas in the world.

From the maritime traffic point of view, the Mediterranean handles 30 % of the world traffic, even though it represents only 0,8 % of the global water surface, highlighting today's issues related to environmental safety, a concern common to all coastal states. Being the Mediterranean a semi-closed basin with a significant evaporation and a limited supply of fresh river water and because of the influence of human activities, this sea finds itself in a constant water deficit, that is partly compensated by the Atlantic Ocean that annually pours into the Mediterranean, through the Strait of Gibraltar, a large volume of water. This important supply of water causes strong currents all year round, facilitating the cleaning of the shallow waters of the Strait. However, the more one sails on the waters of the Mediterranean, the more he will perceive the precariousness of the sea's health, due to the disproportionate presence and exploitation perpetrated by men (Alain de Benoist, 2019).

Every day a constant stream of ships loaded with oil and dangerous chemicals sails all over the Mediterranean Sea. Many of these ships are old and obsolete and pose a serious threat to the already precarious health of the Sea, with a high risk of pollution. The ecological balance and the marine life of the Mediterranean are now seriously threatened by the continuous flow of these dirty waters into which almost half a billion people from twenty-one countries pour their waste. Therefore, the Mediterranean coasts have a heavy burden to bear, to which is added the problem of global warming, which is allowing species of algae and tropical fishes to spread and impose themselves on the local flora and fauna.

In this context, inspired by the United Nations Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – which affirmed the importance of sustainable development – the European Union has recognized the need of implementing a program whose objective is the planning of economic development and the logical and harmonized management of the resources of the entire Mediterranean region. This new approach could ultimately stimulate regional cooperation in the Mediterranean basin, through the use of very important documents, among which Agenda 21. This document consists in a program for the complete planning of actions to be undertaken at the global, national and local level by United Nations organizations, with the aim of promoting sustainable development with governments and administrations in every area in which the human presence has had a strong impact on the environment.

To determine the global legal regime of the Mediterranean, all the regulations adopted by the European Community to fight marine pollution must also be considered as sub-regional rules, therefore binding for the Member States. The competences of the European Community in the field of environmental protection have been constantly expanding and have been recognized as a part of the contracts in all the international agreements aimed to the protection of the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, Community law replaces the domestic law of individual Member States. These Community competences have been gradually extended to other areas with various forms of cooperation, as will be shown below.

During the 1990 s, the European Union adopted a dual approach to support the building of stability in its peripheries. To achieve security in the southern periphery, EU policymakers launched the Euro – Mediterranean Partnership Program (EMP) in an attempt to encourage inter-state cooperation and increase regional interdependence as a means of maintaining stability in the Mediterranean. To maintain security in the eastern periphery, the EU has sought to export its security building model to many former members of the Warsaw Pact, as well as Malta and Cyprus (and Turkey since December 1999). It was the European Union

that, almost by itself, sought to rebuild the Mediterranean as a region in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Countless efforts were made to establish a security zone that would include Europe and the geographically closest North African states. The EU's interest in the «Mediterranean» began to evolve in line with a change in its security concepts and practices during the 1970 s. The strengthening of the European Union and the slow progress towards a common foreign policy for security, as well as the end of the Cold War, were the main factors that allowed the European Union to move towards a policy that was relatively independent of the United States and more in harmony with its internal security concerns.

While the treaty establishing the ECSC set out the international legal aspect of the Community, subsequent documents determined the legal aspect of the European Union only in terms of national law. Certainly, after the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, the situation became clearer, in order to pursue the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Certainly, after the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, the situation appears clearer, in order to pursue the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. See, in fact, what is stated in Title V – of the provisions of Art. 38 TEU. The so – called category of mixed agreements was created, which included all the cooperation agreements that constituted the foundations of the political dialogue; the Euro – Mediterranean partnership was built on this legal basis.

This process was initiated by the European Union – which at the time included 15 member states – and by 12 other states of the southern and eastern Mediterranean region during the Barcelona conference (hence the name of the Barcelona Process), which took place on the 27 and 28 November 1995. The conference was attended by the United States as observers. Subsequently, after the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, Malta and Cyprus – which originally participated in the process as third countries – clearly became part of the process as members of the European Union.

Barcelona's conference

The process of building and maintaining peace and security started from the Mediterranean basin and was then followed by a policy of controlling the flows of third countries, which constituted the main agenda of the conference held in Barcelona, during which was started a process aimed at the creation of a multilateral program of dialogue and cooperation.

There were three main areas of intervention related to the Euro – Mediterranean partnership:

1. political and security, with the aim to create a common area of peace and stability;
2. economic and financial, to allow the creation of an area of shared prosperity;
3. social, cultural and human, with the objective of increasing human resources, facilitating intercultural understanding and exchanges between civil societies.

All this the spirit of reciprocity, solidarity, and co – development, with the aim of achieving political, economic and social cooperation.

The establishment of a «free trade area» took place together with the strengthening of financial assistance by the European Union with its partners and the implementation of real cooperation through the development of shared actions in the economic sector. This was the basic political document which gradually accompanied the states, without legally binding them, towards the definition of the «Euro – Mediterranean Association Agreements» with numerous countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and even with the Palestinian Authority. However, the Palestinian Authority benefits from a specific Euro – Mediterranean Interim Association Agreement pending the

conclusion and entry into force of a Euro–Mediterranean Association Agreement. The Interim Agreement mainly covers trade aspects, as well as the cooperation of a different nature from the political one between the parties.

For each agreement, it was decided to set up an Association Council consisting of the members of the Council of the European Union, the members of the Commission and finally the members of the Government of the associated State. The Government of the Associated State meets at ministerial level to decide on matters which directly affect the targets set for resolving any dispute which may arise between the parties, with full respect for democratic principles and fundamental rights, an essential element of the Association Agreements.

In addition to the bilateral nature and specific characteristics of each partner State, the Association Agreements provide for the promotion of regular dialogue on political and security and trade matters through the progressive liberalisation of trade in goods, services and capital and, last but not least, the development of useful trade relations for the establishment of balanced economic and social relations between the Parties. The construction of social, cultural and human dialogue – with particular reference to the scientific, cultural and financial aspects – is also fundamental.

It seems indisputable that the persistence of the Israel – Palestinian conflict has had the effect of making it particularly difficult to achieve the political goal of the Barcelona Process, despite the fact that between 1998 and 2005 the European Union has signed seven Euro–Mediterranean Association Agreements with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Algerian Republic. The European Union emphasizes the fact that these agreements «give adequate discipline to the political dialogue between North and South, serve as a basis for the progressive liberalization of trade in the Mediterranean area and finally establish the conditions for economic, social and cultural cooperation between the European Union and the partner countries».

The economic goal, for example, can be considered as a success as it relates to the cultural goal. Many projects to promote cultural exchanges between the states of the two shores of the Mediterranean have been successfully launched, although the European Union is often accused of having overtaken its partners in order to obtain undisputed advantages in the area. Certainly, these projects have had a positive influence, so much so that the Mediterranean region has withstood the international economic crisis so well that it is now recovering with satisfactory growth rates. The Euro – Mediterranean projects favor the exchange of Mediterranean countries, which is destined to grow rapidly in the coming years, and the European Union continues to represent the largest share of the external trade of Mediterranean countries, which, together with the United States, absorb about two thirds of their exports and supply just under half of their imports. The development of the European Union's trade policies will, therefore, have a significant influence on the Mediterranean countries for a long time to come.

The Barcelona Conference of 1995 set 2010 as the date for the opening of the Euro – Mediterranean free trade area. Today, the free trade then agreed is fully in force only with Tunisia, at a good point of application with Morocco, Israel, and Jordan. With Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon it is still at an early stage, while with Syria it has not even started the free trade agreement signed in 2004 and revised in 2008, but still not signed nor ratified.

Europe and the Mediterranean between European integration and economic reforms

The road to regional economic integration and thus to real trade between the EU and the Mediterranean countries remains at the potential level, although the effects of free trade

agreements should not only be calculated on a commercial level but mainly on the internal economic one of the Mediterranean countries.

Economic reforms, liberalization and the opening to foreign investment, favored by free trade agreements – which are a consequence of regulatory approximation and regulation in key areas such as free competition and investment – can provide an important impetus. The main objective remains the possibility of implementing concrete integration policies between the EU and the Mediterranean countries in order to increase interchanges.

The proof of the European will to believe in and therefore promote strong Euro – Mediterranean cooperation can also be found in the Agadir agreement of 2004, which, in addition to the European Union, involves Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan. This agreement became effective in 2007 and provides not only for the creation of a free trade area in a territory with a population of almost 120 million inhabitants but also for the definition of a 'Euro – Mediterranean' denomination of origin recognized by the European Community.

The Agadir agreement laid the foundations for a free trade area on the southern coast of the Mediterranean, offering an opportunity to promote greater integration between the Mediterranean countries involved, constituting the first step towards a real area of interchange, which strengthens commercial traffic, but at the same time ensures the struggle against illegal immigration.

Over time, however, this agreement has highlighted a series of problems that reveal the decline in competitiveness of the Mediterranean area, which has resulted in a loss compared to countries such as China, which are instead able to present themselves as a complete and integrated system. An example of this can be found in the textile sector in Egypt, which has always been a leader in the production of cotton, and which today has apparently lost the challenge to the Far East. All of this translates into a missed opportunity, also considering the fact that Egypt is one of the countries participating in the agreement; this highlights the fact that it is necessary to review the agreements which should not be restricted to just obtaining customs reductions.

In 2002, the «Valencia Action Plan», in addition to strengthening political dialogue and judicial cooperation, provided for an increase in resources to be allocated to the Mediterranean area through the European Investment Bank (EIB). Many years after the beginning of the partnership and the consolidation of the process of opening up by the European Union to the southern Mediterranean, the results are undeniably marginal in relation to its potential. The region's economic development is progressing very slowly, considering that the plans to create a free trade area should have been fully realized this year.

From an economic point of view, the obvious signs of this delay are the real blockage of per capita income levels and the extreme difficulty in making regional trade operational in the Mediterranean area. Economic cooperation should have developed and spread true democracy. Undoubtedly, the rejection of referendums in France and the Netherlands in relation to the European constitutional project and the obstacles that arise with the Irish referendum – which in 2008 slowed down the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon – have not only abruptly halted the process of consolidating the idea of Europe, but have also slowed down the project of tangible integration between the Member States of the Union. The sudden drop in consensus has also caused an unexpected rethinking of the implementation of a foreign policy capable of identifying the European Union as a qualified actor able to affirm itself in international scenarios.

Surely, the countries bordering the Mediterranean as a whole form a homogeneous area that goes beyond nationalistic borders and where the ambiguity of relations between European

states and their neighbors highlights how even the commitment to support peace, stability and prosperity cannot be interpreted as a hegemonic attempt to interfere with the surrounding countries.

On this basis, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy – at that time in charge as President of the European Council during a summit held in Paris on July 2008 – together with the Heads of State and Government of the Euro – Mediterranean area, have conceived the institution of a Union for the Mediterranean (UMED). The French initiative with which the «Union pour la Méditerranée» was launched (Slimani, 2008) – although interpreted as a «neo – Gaullist» attempt to reaffirm the French «grandeur» – was clearly inspired by the model of the European Union, with the intention of bringing closer the nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

UMED, which was in fact presented in Paris, is a natural consequence of the Barcelona Process, with the common desire to create a free trade market, which since 1995 has the intention of bringing the Middle Eastern and African nations closer to the European Union. This will give a new impetus to the Euro–Mediterranean partnership project, while at the same time highlight a program of concrete cooperation in an area in which the predetermined objectives have so far only been partially achieved (Attina', 2019). We cannot hide the clear desire to give life to a concrete political change.

The accepted UMED proposal is now far from the original project of Sarkozy, which involved only the Mediterranean countries and opposed not only the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership but even the European Union itself. Sarkozy relegated his idea of the Mediterranean to the background compared to European aggregation, but the European Union had to accept a project of renewal of its Mediterranean policy which, in many of its points, is far from the partnership's guidelines. The summit was attended by the prime ministers and presidents of the forty – three member nations. Not only was Libyan President Gaddafi present, who expressed considerable criticism of the project, but he preferred Libya to be part of the Mediterranean Union as an observer member. Then we know what happened in Libya, where a still unresolved crisis plagues the country. Previously, Algeria had also shown some reluctance to be involved, fearing that the division of tasks would exclude it from the main roles that should have been reserved to Morocco and Tunisia.

Macron's foreign policy has been partially differentiated from Sarkozy's one. For Macron, the Mediterranean remains a space where «there are not only projects» to be built together between the two shores of the Mare Nostrum, but «it is above all a myth and a dream». In closing this year's summit of the 'Two Shores' in Marseille, Emmanuel Macron launched a strong appeal to restore the «Mediterranean dream» based on a «history» and «common mythologies». In Macron's opinion, today more than ever, it's necessary to «create a new page». Among other things, the French president said that «there can be no countries in southern Europe turning in on themselves» and stressed the need to «establish a new dialogue with Africa». The French president believes that when we look at the Mediterranean «we can only be worried: from the ecological issue to that of migrants, the symptom of an unbearable inequality between the two shores of the Mediterranean, a problem of political Islam or of nationalisms and fears». For Macron, even if the Mediterranean dream can turn into a «nightmare», we must not give up. Re – igniting the myth of the 'Mare Nostrum' as well as concrete projects, as done in these days in Marseille. For Macron is also fundamental the «dialogue between Mediterranean cities», to make up for «those moments of difficulty» which happened between the governments. The Mediterranean Union and the European Union must, therefore, interact strongly (ANS, June 2019).

To date, the member countries are, in addition to the European Union, the nations bordering the Mediterranean, with the exception of Libya, which has preferred to keep the sole role of observer. In addition to the member countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea and many nations of the European Union, Mauritania is also participating and Macedonia, which has already applied to become a member of the European Union.

In line with the program launched by the Barcelona Process, the main objective remains the promotion of cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In order to do this, it is fundamental to find a solution to the problems related to immigration from the southern countries to the northern ones, as well as to fight against terrorism. The Israeli – Palestinian conflict is another of the dilemmas that the UMED is trying to face and solve.

In terms of the protection of the Mediterranean ecological heritage, six matters have been prioritized: the de – pollution of the Mediterranean, the construction of maritime and land motorways to improve the flow of trade between the two shores, the reinforcement of civil protection, the implementation of an action plan on renewable energies – with particular reference to the use of common solar energy –, the development of an Euro –Mediterranean university (which was inaugurated in 2009 in Portorož, Slovenia, under the name EMUNI, European University of the Mediterranean), and finally a project relating to support for small and medium – sized enterprises. At the root of this, however, remains the vision of a widespread and shared democracy and stronger intercultural dialogue.

Mediterranean policy

A Mediterranean policy is necessary, but it is wrong to define it as opposed to the integration policy in the East, for which the European Union has spent so much in recent years (Figus, 2011). The policy of aid to Eastern Europe has been fundamental to build stability and balance in Europe and has certainly not failed in providing support for the Mediterranean region.

Each historical period has its own priorities, and the hypothesis put forward by Sarkozy and then partially relaunched by Macron have brought up a new debate at the right time, emphasizing the various points of view. Whatever the developments, the project mentioned by the French president must be carefully assessed. The process of integration between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea started with the Barcelona conference; however, this process has not been able to realize the free trade area, also because nowadays it is difficult to imagine to allow the equal participation of all the EU member states, giving also to those of Northern or Eastern Europe the same obligations and rights of those bordering the Mediterranean.

It is quite clear that currently the mechanism has come to a standstill, both because of the excessive number of members and because the non–Mediterranean countries have had no interest in carrying out the program, not to mention the problem of Turkey, which sees the date of its possible entry into the European Union postponed (Figus, 2019). Turkey could instead assume a role of absolute prestige in the Eastern Mediterranean, gaining credibility at international level while strengthening European policy in the Mediterranean. Here we are playing an important game, extremely connected to another strategic sea, especially from the geopolitical point of view: the Black Sea.

In this context, European Union countries have often preferred to make their external relations prevail, with third – party countries, rather than to link their policy to the development of strategies in the Mediterranean. As a result, the Mediterranean countries on the southern shore have not been able to find ways of increasing the competitiveness of their businesses and attracting European investors.

The Euro – Mediterranean partnership is faced with the inevitable task of acting fast in order to achieve the results it had set itself within the defined time limits. In fact, the data on demographic growth makes it fundamental to intervene in order to simultaneously increase productivity and employment.

Basing on the current rate of population growth, it will be necessary to generate at least forty million new jobs in the Mediterranean area by 2015, just to maintain unemployment levels at current levels. Today, in the Mediterranean region, there seems to be an interesting perspective in terms of the scale of investment and the creation of new job opportunities. Although, when we're talking about the Mediterranean, we cannot forget that growth is often matched by the growth of inequalities (Sigura, 2008). The area is facing a new competition that makes it necessary to establish a sustainable balance between the protection of traditional values and the innovative ideas that force even the Mediterranean countries to face each other in an increasingly strong international competition.

In this context, the analysis of the opportunities for exchange between the North and the South of the Mediterranean becomes an essential element. By Southern shore, we mean the whole coastal area of the Mediterranean, which starts from the Atlantic Ocean up to the Suez Canal, while the Middle East is the South – East area of the Mediterranean (Figus, 2011). On the basis of a new measure of inequality, the Mediterranean Middle East is the region of the world with the most uneven distribution of income; the Libyan crisis has also created problems in the south of the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, the Middle East and the Northern African areas are still shaken by the long wave of uprisings against the ruling elites, which since 2011 have affected several countries in the region, both on the northern shore of the African continent and in the Middle East. It is the problem of inequality that leads to the constant development of the migration process. Libya remains the biggest Mediterranean problem nowadays: there, a strong political opposition between the government of Serraj (supported by the UN) and the parliament of Tobruk is fueling internal struggle. At date, in the country are diffused clashes and violence of low intensity, which generate strong instability. Despite that, jihadism of the Isis is completely excluded from the context of the country and the Libyans themselves have prevented its penetration. In spite of the wealth, the country is experiencing deep inequalities that are transmitted in the Mediterranean areas and constitute a problem for Europe. We are distancing ourselves from a social and economic development that should go hand in hand. Only inclusive political institutions can bring inclusive economic institutions able to provide incentives for solid and fair development. The consequence is the urgent need to promote a better harmonization among the Mediterranean countries, which will also have a direct impact on Europe (Carlini, 2019).

Then there is also the Balkan area overlooking the sea. The demographic development is certainly a significant indicator of the economic development of a territory that today has more than 300 million inhabitants, compared to the 400 million of Western Europe. In the southern shore, the most populated countries are Turkey and Egypt, followed by Algeria and Morocco. The population of the Middle East is mainly resident in Syria. We would also like to consider the Black Sea area, an area which is not included in the European Union, but which is very populous and just as young as the southern shore of the Mediterranean and certainly younger than the European and Italian area.

This demographic trend will be deeply influencing the economic development of the area in the forthcoming years. The Mediterranean region will pursue and exploit the countless advantages offered by its strong competitiveness, in a context of positive transformation of the investment sector which also involves the Mediterranean area at the global level.

The southern shore, in fact, has withstood the crisis rather well: the region has had a better performance than the average one of the Mediterranean countries regarding their development, which is measurable through the realization of projects.

Relations between the EU and the South Mediterranean are mainly managed through the Euro – Mediterranean Association Agreements:

- Almost all countries signed association agreements with the EU. Preparations are strengthening these agreements through the creation of deep and comprehensive free trade areas.
- Negotiations on a framework agreement between the European Union and Libya are currently suspended.
- Steps towards the signature of the Association Agreement with Syria are currently suspended.

Table 1 The list of data

Country	Status	Signature	Entry into Force
Tunisia	signed	Luglio 1995	March 1998
Israel	signed	Novembre 1995	June 2000
Turkey	Custom Union (January 1996)	Custom Union	December 1995
Morocco	signed	February 1996	March 2000
Palestine	signed	February 1997	Accordo interinale luglio 1997
Jordan	signed	November 1997	May 2002
Egypt	signed	June 2001	June 2004
Algeria	signed	April 2002	September 2005
Lebanon	signed	June 2002	April 2006
Syria	signed (December 2008)	–	–

Data source: ec.europa.eu. Chart realized by the author

These agreements related to trade are accompanied by a series of further negotiations and ongoing preparations for future negotiations:

- opening up further agricultural trade,
- liberalize trade in services and investments,
- Negotiate agreements on accreditation and acceptance of industrial products,
- establish deep and comprehensive free trade areas.

Developing South – South economic integration is a key objective of the Euro – Mediterranean trade partnership. It is an essential element for the creation of a fully – fledged free trade area. However, regional economic integration between the Southern Mediterranean countries is still limited: intra–regional trade represents a small share (5,9% in exports, 5,1% in imports) of the countries' total trade, one of the lowest levels of regional economic integration in the World.

The EU supports the improvement of trade relations between the southern Mediterranean countries:

- The Agadir Agreement between Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt, in force since 2007, remains open to other Arab Mediterranean countries;
- Israel and Jordan have signed a free trade agreement;

- Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Tunisia have signed bilateral agreements with Turkey.
- There are ongoing negotiations between other Mediterranean countries to establish similar agreements.

Conclusion

Anyway, it is evident that the success of the cooperation in the Mediterranean is measurable through the political capacity of the EU member countries and of the EU itself to carry out Mediterranean development by legitimately unifying the different shores. The same applies, of course, to the project of the Mediterranean Union (UMED), which must not be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the issue of Turkey's accession to the European Union. On the contrary, these ideas must find a meeting point, by legitimizing the partners of the South and Turkey itself, in order to avoid the risk of all these countries diverging from the European macro strategies.

In order to do this, the question of whether equality between EU and non – EU members is appropriate will still have to be debated. However the matter appears more like a concession to theory than a real practical application, and this does not mean that cooperation is guaranteed.

We are now far from the time of the Arab uprisings, but the situation of the composite Mediterranean region is still very fragile.

While some countries, such as Tunisia, seem to have embarked on a more linear path leading to the adoption of a new Constitution, others have a higher degree of instability and uncertainty in their transition processes. Not to mention the conflict in Syria, where the option of negotiation has long since disappeared. The Mediterranean is an area of primary interest for Europe, especially for Italy, due to its historical ties and close economic relations in terms of security and energy supplies. It is precise because of this that, since the mid-1990s, the EU has developed a number of policies towards its Mediterranean partners. Their results , however, have not lived up to the ambitious initial expectations. Although in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation there are countries more advanced than others , the Arab insurrections and the evolution of the Mediterranean countries have pushed the EU to rethink its policies towards the area and to also face the crisis in Syria and Libya.

The Mediterranean political – institutional scenario does not seem to be fully defined: too many sovereign states, too many differences, particularly of economic nature. However, the bases for the establishment of common development are there – even if it is not possible to forget that the Mediterranean represents the most complex area in absolute terms. In this territory three distinct cultural worlds converge, the Christian, the Islamic and the Hebrew one, together with three different political-economic systems: the western one, the developing countries and the one of the post – Communist transition – that's why we like to link it to the Black Sea area. What we are dealing with is a very complex system which, on a regional scale, represents a key for interpreting matters at a global level, and that's what makes it extraordinarily central and fundamental.

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