

# FACTORES POLÍTICOS Y DE SEGURIDAD EN EL ÁREA EURO-MEDITERRÁNEA

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Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza

FACTORES políticos y de seguridad en el área euro-mediterránea / coordinadores Stelios Stavridis y Natividad Fernández Sola. – Zaragoza : Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2009

206 p. ; 23 cm

ISBN 978-84-92521-99-9

1. Mediterráneo (Región)-Política exterior. 2. Seguridad internacional  
I. STAVRIDIS, Stelios. II. FERNÁNDEZ SOLA, Natividad

327(4-13)

355.02(4-13)

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1.ª edición, 2009

Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza. Edificio de Ciencias Geológicas, c/ Pedro Cerbuna, 12, 50009 Zaragoza, España. Tel.: 976 761 330. Fax: 976 761 063  
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Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza es la editorial de la Universidad de Zaragoza, que edita e imprime libros desde su fundación en 1542.

Impreso en España  
Imprime: Servicio de Publicaciones. Universidad de Zaragoza  
D.L.: Z-1819/2009

## The EMPA and parliamentary diplomacy in the Mediterranean: a preliminary assessment

Stelios STAVRIDIS & Roderick PACE

### 1. Introduction

The literature on Euro-Mediterranean relations is extensive, but most analysts agree that even in its current phase the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership/EMP, also known as the Barcelona Process<sup>1</sup> has fallen short of its admittedly ambitious objectives as set out in the Catalan capital in November 1995. This pessimistic assessment is confirmed by several studies published on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the EMP, whose official celebration was marred by a boycott by numerous Arab leaders.<sup>2</sup>

In a number of ministerial meetings held during 2008, President Sarkozy's original proposal for a "Mediterranean Union" underwent several changes. In March 2008 the European Council endorsed the basic principles of "the Barcelona Process-Union for the Mediterranean" which would comprise all the EU member states and the states of the Mediterranean littoral who already participate in the EMP. At the July Mediterranean states Paris meeting the idea continued to be clarified and then in November, EMP Foreign Ministers meeting in Marseilles trimmed its rather bombastic title down to "Union for the Mediterranean" and gave it what appears to be a more concrete direction. Whichever way one may look at these events, there is one inescapable conclusion: they show to a large extent an open admission of the need to reinvigorate the flagging EMP.<sup>3</sup>

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1 As of late 2008 the EMP, renamed Union for the Mediterranean, consists of 43 member states (42 countries plus the Palestinian Authority). The initial 1995 EMP launched a Process between on the one hand the EU and its 15 member states, and on the other 12 Southern Mediterranean states. With the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, the EU side now consists of 27 members (Cyprus and Malta moved from Southern Mediterranean states to EU members) , and the South now includes the 10 remaining ones plus Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Monaco and Mauritania. Libya enjoys an observer status.

2 For an overview see Stelios Stavridis, 'The Barcelona Process, twelve years on: a critical overview', *Agora without Frontiers - A Quarterly Journal of International Economy and Politics*, Vol. 13, No.4, March-May 2008, pp 243-261.

3 On the Sarkozy proposal, see *inter alia* Gonzalo Escribano and Alejandro Lorca, *La Unión Mediterránea: una unión en busca de proyecto*, Royal Institute Elcano DT N° 13/2008-03/03/2008,

Among the many criticisms levelled at the Barcelona Process, some stress the lack of economic progress and development in the region, while others focus on the non-convergence of interests and identities. There is also harsh criticism of its complete inability to achieve progress on a common security charter. Similarly, tough criticism is levelled at the stunted democratisation process in the Southern Mediterranean states. With the partial exceptions of Turkey and Israel, the Mashrek and Maghreb countries are consistently and harshly criticised for huge democratic deficits<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore possible (sadly) to agree with a cousin of the King of Morocco when he says that: “Les régimes arabes modernisent ... l' autoritarisme”.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the Mediterranean region is almost synonymous with ‘conflicts’<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, it would appear that it represents an ‘ideal’ case for assessing the impact of parliamentary diplomacy, especially within the deeply institutionalised context of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly/EMPA (see below).

In that context, can parliamentary diplomacy act as a force for conflict resolution in the Mediterranean? As David Beetham has noted, ‘[t]he cessation of regional conflict is the first imperative for regional parliamentary dialogue’<sup>7</sup>.

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Madrid: [www.realinstitutoelcano.org](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org); ISS Report, *Union for the Mediterranean-Building on the Barcelona acquis*, European Union Institute for Security Studies Report No.1 (Roberto Aliboni, George Joffe, Erwan Lannon, Azzam Mahjoub, Abdallah Saaf, Álvaro de Vasconcelos), Paris, 13 May 2008; Euromesco, *Putting the Mediterranean Union in Perspective*, Euromesco Report No. 68 (Roberto Aliboni, Ahmed Driss, Tobias Schumacher, Alfred Tovas), June 2008: [www.euromesco.net](http://www.euromesco.net); Dorothee Schmid, *The Union for the Mediterranean: French Track or New European Policy*, The Jean Monnet Seminar Series, Malta European Studies Association & European Documentation Centre, University of Malta, 2008; Escribano and Lorca (this volume); Khader (this volume); Risi (this volume). On the new Secretariat, see Sami Nair, ‘Barcelona, capital euro-mediterránea’, *El País*, 16 October 2008. See also the *El País* editorial on 7 November 2008 which welcomed the decision, entitled ‘Barcelona-Med, La dinamización de la Unión Mediterránea necesitaba una sede estable como la elegida’.

4 Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (eds), *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008. See also the 2007 *Freedom House Index of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart116File163.pdf> (accessed 15.08.08). See also ‘Los países árabes, a la zaga de la educación en el Tercer Mundo’, *El País* (6 February 2008) reproducing information from a recent World Bank report ([www.bancomundial.org](http://www.bancomundial.org)).

5 Hicham Ben Abdallah El Alaoui, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 2008, pp 10-11.

6 see Paul Balta, ‘La Méditerranée en tant que zone de conflits’, *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals*, Vol. 37, 1997, pp 9-18.

7 David Beetham, *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century: A Guide to Good Practice*, Interparliamentary Union, 2006: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org), p.11.

In other words, parliamentarians are expected to reach where governmental actors cannot reach<sup>8</sup>. To quote Beetham again:

‘A diplomat is an envoy of the executive branch and represents the positions of the State. Members of parliament, however, are politicians who hold political beliefs which may or may not coincide with their respective country’s official position on any given issue. This allows parliamentarians *a margin of flexibility* that is denied to the diplomat. They tend to bring a moral dimension to international politics that transcends narrow definitions of the national interest, particularly in their principled support for democracy and human rights. Time and again we have seen that this flexibility allows parliamentarians to debate more openly with their counterparts from other countries and to advance innovative solutions to what may seem to be intractable problems’.<sup>9</sup>

For instance, Alain Berset of Switzerland’s Council of States (i.e. Senate) reminds us that ‘the first contact between the British and the Argentinians after the Falklands War took place within the Inter-Parliamentary Union’, adding further that a ‘meeting between North and South Korean parliamentary representatives [also took place] within the framework of this same organisation, which also set up a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian parliamentary representatives (...)’<sup>10</sup>.

Although sometimes traditional diplomats consider parliamentarians as ‘parasiting’ their own work<sup>11</sup>, this is a rather old-fashioned approach that does not necessarily reflect the reality of international relations in the 21st century. It goes without saying that it is also possible for parliamentarians to ‘respecter un devoir de reserve’, to use the words of Xavier de Villepin, then President of the French Senate’s Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armies Committee<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, any critical approach tends to ignore the (potential or real) benefits of parallel channels, which represents a constant alternative or addition to traditional diplomatic practice.

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8 Abdelwahab Biad, ‘¿Puede la institucionalización de una dimensión parlamentaria dinamizar el Partenariado Euromediterráneo?’, *Med.2005*, IEMed/Instituto Europeo del Mediterráneo and CIDOB, Barcelona, 2005, pp 110-113: [www.cidob.org](http://www.cidob.org), p. 112.

9 Beetham (2006), op. cit. (emphasis added). For more details, see also Roderick Pace and Stelios Stavridis, ‘The EMPA, 2004-2008: Assessing the first four years of the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process’, *Mediterranean Quarterly* (2009, in press).

10 *Proceedings of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments in Tallinn (Estonia)* on 30-31 May 2006, p. 48.

11 ‘un parasitage dans les négociations’ to use the words of Gérard Davet and Pascal Ceaux, ‘Le cas Julia’, *Le Monde*, 09.03.05: [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr).

12 Sénat, *La diplomatie parlementaire*, Actes du Colloque, French Senate, Paris, 2001: [www.senat.fr](http://www.senat.fr) (17.08.05), p.16.

This chapter consists of four parts:

- Part One briefly looks at the EMP, in order to put this study within its wider context.
- Part Two presents an overview of relevant developments *at the parliamentary level* of the EMP, namely its Parliamentary Assembly/EMPA.<sup>13</sup>
- Part Three analyzes three empirical case-studies of conflictual situations: the Middle East, the Western Sahara, and Cyprus. It will consider what contribution, if any, has the EMPA made to conflict resolution with regard to these three specific examples?
- Finally, Part Four touches briefly a number of related issues to parliamentary diplomacy, such as parliamentary input in election monitoring; the parliaments' contribution to the so-called 'socialization effect'; their importance as 'morale tribunes'; and, the role of sub-state parliamentary bodies.

## 2. The EMP, regionalism and parliamentarisation

The EU (previously the European Economic Community/EEC) has been the dominant actor in promoting bilateral and to a lesser, though not insignificant extent, region-to-region relations in the Mediterranean. In part, this is due to the very nature of the Union itself (Europe's regional integration process), and in part because it sees itself as a possible model for other regions in the world<sup>14</sup>. In recent years and especially since 2003, the EU's foreign policy agenda has been more 'securitized'. Meanwhile, key EU member states with the required capabilities continue to pursue national foreign policy aims in the Mediterranean region - just as they do elsewhere whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The inter-regional dimension in the Mediterranean area involves relations between, on the one hand, the EU states of the Northern Mediterranean, and on the other, the Southern Mediterranean states (basically the Mashrek and the Maghreb, but also Turkey and Israel). As was already noted in the Introduction,

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13 For more details, see also Pace and Stavridis (2009), *op.cit.*

14 See Carlos Conde, 'ASEAN aims to become more like the EU', *International Herald Tribune*, 13-14 January 2007; Paulo Paranagua, 'L'Amérique du Sud sur les traces de l'UE', *Le Monde*, 12 June 2008. For academic studies see *inter alia* Sebastian Santander, 'The European Partnership with MERCOSUR: a Relationship Based on Strategic and Neo-liberal Principles', *European Integration*, Vol. 27, No.3, September 2005, pp. 285-306; Joaquín Roy and Roberto Domínguez (eds), *The European Union and Regional Integration - A Comparative Perspective and Lessons for the Americas*, Jean Monnet Chair University of Miami, Miami, 2005; Claudia Beatriz Umaña, *Integración centroamericana: un proyecto en proceso de construcción*, ARI Paper No. 68/2008, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid, 27 June 2008: [www.realinstituto.elcano.org](http://www.realinstituto.elcano.org).

most of those countries experience a number of democratic deficits, and to date the EMP's record in encouraging the strengthening of democracy in these countries is far from being positive.

But this chapter does not deal with the EMP as such. Indeed, the EU's foreign affairs in several of the regions of the world have for several reasons also included a parliamentary dimension (see below). In the Euro-Mediterranean context, the European Parliament has played an important role in establishing such a parliamentary dimension. Of course this development is related to a global trend of a gradually expanding and deepening of international parliamentary co-operation. One important way through which parliaments engage in regionalism is via the setting up of International Parliamentary Assemblies, usually of a formal and highly institutionalised manner, based on written statutes and rules of procedures<sup>15</sup>. Three developments have been identified<sup>16</sup>:

- their expansion in the last sixty years;
- the geographic spread of this type of organisation;
- their affiliation to intergovernmental organisations.

Regional parliamentarization is expressed through the work of interparliamentary organs established within the framework of regional organisations. Parliamentary assemblies create a direct link between the national and the international decision-making levels.

Though (inter)parliamentarisation is by definition a formal, elite-driven process (i.e. engaging national or regional parliaments), its agenda reflects a new approach to regionalism: it does not merely involve cooperation among parliaments or parliamentary diplomacy, but it aims to strengthen other elements such as the involvement of civil society and non-state actors. It is multi-dimensional and comprehensive, as well as an open form of regionalism.

At the same time, the existing literature has so far mainly linked parliaments with regionalism focusing on its impact on *democratization*. Thus, Alex Warleigh argues that '[r]egional integration can be a force for (liberal)

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15 See Robert Cutler, 'The OSCE's Parliamentary Diplomacy in Central Asia and the South Caucasus in Comparative Perspective', *Studia Diplomatica - Brussels Journal of International Relations*, Vol. LIX, No.2, 2006, pp 79-93; Zlatko Šabič, 'Building Democratic and Responsible Global Governance: The Role of International Parliamentary Institutions', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 61, No.2, 2008, pp 255-271.

16 Stefan Marschall, 'European Parliaments in Transnational Organisations: Parliamentary Cooperation beyond the European Union', Paper prepared for the SWP Conference 'Fifty Years of Interparliamentary Cooperation', 13 June 2007, Berlin.

democratisation'<sup>17</sup>. But we equally agree when he says that 'it is rare outside the literature on the EU to find regional integration studies that focus on democracy as a key issue'<sup>18</sup>, except in Latin America.

From the above, it becomes clear that the main reason for engaging in in (inter)regional cooperation is to achieve peace and democracy which also seems to be the main objective of many regional integration schemes, foremost among them the European one. These two objectives are at the core of many such processes, even when economics are the means used to that end. The European example, of targeting political union by means of functional co-operation and economic integration propelled forward by the "spill over" effect, has been well-documented. Similarly, other regional integration projects stress the importance of multiple regional interdependencies, precisely by encouraging economic integration, as a way of strengthening long-term political stability. Their long-term objective confirms this point. For instance, ASEAN (the Association of South-Eastern Asia Nations) was set up as a means to contain communism in Asia only to emerge later as an economic bloc with a growing political agenda (human rights, anti-terrorism).

If democracy and democratisation are so important for integration studies and for New Regionalism (which is discussed briefly below), then the importance of its parliamentary dimension is almost automatic. That is to say, that one clear impact of regionalisation can be seen in the growth of (inter)regional parliamentarization. Modern democracies, or constellations of democracies, need parliamentary legitimisation. This is clearly the case in parliamentary democracies as found in Europe, but also in democratic presidential systems of government such as those in Latin America<sup>19</sup>. Most, if not all, organisations nowadays need to offer some sort of legitimacy. As a result, all regional integration arrangements include (sometimes only later on in their development) a parliamentary dimension.

In recent years, the International Relations literature has built on the existing literature on regionalism and regionalisation. This so-called 'New Regionalism' contends that following the end of the Cold-War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, there is a process of Globalisation that has led to a new form of

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17 Alex Warleigh, 'In Defence of Intra-disciplinarity: "European Studies", the "New Regionalism", and the Issue of Democratisation', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, July, Vol.17, No.2, pp 301-318, p.310

18 *Ibid.*, p. 309.

19 Andrés Malamud and Luís de Sousa, *Regional Parliaments in Europe and Latin America: Between Empowerment and Irrelevance*, paper presented to the First Global International Studies Conference, World International Studies Committee, Bilgi University, Istanbul, 24-27 August 2005: [www.iscte.pt](http://www.iscte.pt).



Regionalism<sup>20</sup>. It is within this wider context of traditional regionalism, New Regionalism, and inter-regional cooperation, that this chapter will address a specific question from a particular angle: whether parliamentary cooperation can act as a tool for conflict resolution in the Mediterranean region and in this way encourage the growth of a deeper regionalism?

### 3. The EMPA

International inter-parliamentary cooperation in the Mediterranean has a long history, starting with the International Parliamentary Union (IPU)<sup>21</sup>. Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary cooperation as such has developed within the 1995 Barcelona Process, initially as the EMP Parliamentary Forum (1998-2003), and from 2004 onwards as the EMPA<sup>22</sup>. Institutionalised inter-parliamentary cooperation shows that the international relations of parliamentary bodies have developed much further than 'just' technical, financial and training cooperation, most of which are related to the consolidation of 'the constitutional state, enhancing the proper functioning of democratic institutions through the improvement of the parliamentary work'<sup>23</sup>.

We need to stress at this stage that here we are focusing almost exclusively on the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process. There is a plethora of other parliamentary actors in the Mediterranean. But the EMPA remains the most developed and institutionalised parliamentary framework if only because the EMP represents the culmination of various decades of Euro-Mediterranean relations. As noted above, the evolution of the EMPA has also benefited a lot from the establishment of the EMP Parliamentary Forum (EMPF) a body which lasted from 1998 until 2003<sup>24</sup>. Therefore EU-Mediterranean relations, and EU relations with the Mediterranean countries at the parliamentary level, do have some long pedigree.

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20 see *inter alia* Björn Hettne, 'The New Regionalism Revisited', in Söderbaum, Fedrik and Shaw, Timothy (eds), *Theories of New Regionalism: A Palgrave Reader*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2003, pp 22-42.

21 The IPU's website is: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org).

22 The EMPA's website is: [www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/default.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/default.htm).

23 from the French Senate programme for EU candidate states parliaments: Technical Parliamentary Cooperation, French Senate: [www.senat.fr/international/english/coop.html](http://www.senat.fr/international/english/coop.html) (accessed 19.02.08). In terms of how to transmit their know-how, the French Senate organises the following three activities: missions abroad; interns and delegations visits and stays in Paris; follow-up activities. At the UN level, just as one of many other possible examples, its 'Division for Sustainable Development provides targeted advisory services at the request of individual governments. These services support specific policy initiatives and the requisite institutional development and capacity-building'. It is based on 'the strength of its parliamentary, analytical and technical co-operation work'. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Technical Cooperation: [www.un.org/esa/sustdev/tech\\_coop/tech\\_coop.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/tech_coop/tech_coop.htm) (accessed 19.02.08).

24 see Stelios Stavridis, 'The Parliamentary Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: an assessment', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Summer 2002, pp 30-53.

Up to January 2009, the EMPA consists of a maximum of 260 members who meet in plenary session once a year (and more if need be). There are 130 European parliamentarians (81 from the national parliaments of EU member states and 49 MEPs from the European Parliament) and another 130 come from the parliaments of the Southern Mediterranean states. There are now four permanent committees and one *ad hoc* Committee (initially there were three permanent ones and one *ad hoc*):

- The Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights
- The Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education
- The Committee on Improving the Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture
- The Committee on Woman's Rights (for the first four years, it was only an *ad hoc* Committee)
- The *ad hoc* Committee on Energy and Environment (agreed in March 2008).

A number of working groups have also been established:

- Peace and Security in the Middle East
- Financing of the Assembly and revision of the EMPA's Rules of Procedure
- The Problem of landmines
- Conditions for the transformation of the FEMIP in the Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank
- Civil protection and prevention of natural and ecological disasters in the Euro-Mediterranean region
- Ways for the EMPA Assembly to participate in bodies of the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures<sup>25</sup>.

We can mention *inter alia* that the huge number of specific EMP projects and initiatives (as well as their important institutional framework that includes the Parliamentary Assembly) mean that, notwithstanding the disappointments of the Barcelona Process, relations among the states of the whole of the Euro-Mediterranean basin are gradually becoming more and more intertwined and interdependent.

Thus, the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process is:

- [i] adding a level of legitimisation to the process,
- [ii] providing a parliamentary context,
- [iii] and, contributing to a sense of common regional belonging.

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<sup>25</sup> For more details, see Pace and Stavridis (2009), *op. cit.*

What does the existing literature have to say about the EMPA? One must note that it remains an under-researched area of academic interest. This is underscored by the few, usually short, analytical studies, which share some resemblance to one another because they tend to focus on the many limitations of the exercise. However there seems to be consensus that, had the EMPA not existed, this institutional structure should be invented<sup>26</sup>. Four main reasons are put forward to justify this point, namely that:

- parliamentary cooperation is useful in situations where traditional diplomacy cannot or would not act; this is particularly important in conflict situations. The main argument in this case is that it provides a practical tool for parallel or complementary diplomacy.
- it represents the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process.
- it tries to redress one of the acknowledged weaknesses of the Barcelona Process: its lack of visibility.
- and, finally parliaments are seen as the legitimizing forces of any regional process.

It goes without saying that these tasks are not mutually exclusive. In this chapter, we will focus on the question of parliamentary diplomacy and conflict resolution in the Mediterranean, as well as on other related issues.

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26 See Abdelwahab Biad, 'Los parlamentos como nuevos actores del partenariado: hacia una diplomacia parlamentaria en el Mediterráneo', *Ágora-Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, No. 8, 2003, pp 11-19; Cristina Retta, 'La política euromediterránea: su dimensión parlamentaria en el proceso de Barcelona', *Ágora-Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, No. 9, 2003, pp 37-51; Ioannis Seimenis and Miltiadis Makriyannis, 'Reinvigorating the Parliamentary Dimension of the Barcelona Process: The Establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp 85-105; Stavridis (2002), op. cit., also his 'El futuro de la cooperación parlamentaria en el Mediterráneo: el proceso de Barcelona', *Cuadernos Constitucionales de la Cátedra Fadrique Furió Ceriol*, Nos. 38/39, 2002, pp 5-15, *From Parliamentary Forum to Parliamentary Assembly in the EMP: Does it all Amount to Much Ado About Nothing?*, Med Obs/Observatori de polítiques mediterrànies (IEMed and IUEE/UAB) Working Paper No.2, Barcelona, January 2004: www.medobs.net; Stelios Stavridis and Panagiota Manoli, 'Comparing Experiences in Regional Parliamentarisation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Regions', *Agora without Frontiers - A Quarterly Journal of International Economy and Politics*, Vol. 13, No.4, March-May 2008, pp 262-291, pp 271-276; Pace and Stavridis (2009), op. cit.

### 3.Parliamentary diplomacy and conflict-resolution in the Mediterranean: assessing the impact of the EMPA

The situation in the Middle East leads to general instability in its immediate vicinity, while its shock waves reverberate throughout the Mediterranean region. Indeed over the past decades, the Arab-Israeli conflict has led to a destabilising arms race in the Middle East affecting all the states of the region. This is slowly transforming itself into one involving weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It provides Arab governments with the excuse to retard or oppose democratic reforms. It leads to periodic wasteful flareups that lead to the disruption of human and economic life in the states involved. In this respect one only has to mention the intifadas, the 2006 war in Lebanon and at the time of writing (January 2009) Israeli attacks on Gaza. Such flareups also have a negative effect on the very volatile price of oil. The Middle East conflict - along with the American occupation of Iraq - continue to provide grist to the terrorist mill, although it would be wrong to conclude that these are the sole root causes of the terrorist phenomenon. The shadow of the conflict hangs over the Mediterranean and could be one of the most important factors that strengthen the region's often negative image which, amongst other things, also affects investment decisions.<sup>27</sup>

The Cyprus Problem continues to weaken relations between the EU/European Union<sup>28</sup> and Turkey, sometimes also impinging on NATO's compactness. Thus, the Cyprus Problem has often led to confrontations between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean. In a seminar on the Cyprus Problem organized in 2004 by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Lt. Col. Peter Najera, Country Director for Greece and Cyprus, Office of the US Secretary of Defence, was reported to have said:

'In military circles, the Cyprus problem is seen as the last major source of tension in the Aegean. A settlement in Cyprus will open the floodgates for cooperation among the nations of the region in NATO, the United Nations, and the U.S.-led global war on terrorism.'<sup>29</sup>

On 7 November 2008, the International press reported that Turkey had rejected a set of proposals by the EU to unblock planned co-operation of Cyprus with NATO. The EU tried to find a solution to a long-lasting row with Turkey over

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27 see also Ana Santos Pinto, 'European Foreign Policy and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: rhetoric versus practices', in Barrinha, André (ed), *Towards a Global Dimension: EU's Conflict Management in the Neighbourhood and Beyond*, Fundação Friedrich Ebert, Lisbon, 2008, pp 99-112; Peters (this volume).

28 See Stelios Stavridis, *La Unión Europea y el conflicto chipriota (1974-2006)*, Editorial Icaria, Barcelona, 2008.

29 [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event\\_summary&event\\_id=115388](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event_summary&event_id=115388) (accessed 27.12.2008).

Cyprus's participation in NATO-led operations, but Ankara did not accept any of Brussels' proposals (according to Gerard Araud, political director of the French Foreign Ministry, whose country held at that time the EU rotating Presidency). Turkey objects to the participation of Cyprus in NATO operations, as this would mean recognising the Republic of Cyprus. This has made EU-NATO co-operation under the so called "Berlin Plus" arrangement difficult if not impossible.

The Western Sahara produces turbulence in the Maghreb, and negatively affects integration prospects in that sub-region, which is a goal very much desired by the EU<sup>30</sup>.

A close scrutiny of the work of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly shows that none of the major conflicts in the region features amongst its priorities. This does not mean of course that they are not discussed at various levels within the EMPA itself, that these conflicts do not exercise any influence on the internal workings of the Assembly, or that they are utterly side-tracked. It is also to be noted that when situations of tension flare up into hot conflict, as happened in the case of the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon war, the EMPA has tried to exercise a mediating role. In short, though the major security challenges and conflicts in the Mediterranean region have from the start been incorporated in the aims of the EMPA (i.e. inserted in its genetic code as it were), they have purposely been included under the heading of "some of the many issues to be discussed" and *not* as the main ones. It is most likely that this was done in order not to preclude dialogue and co-operation in other areas which are unrelated to security but which are equally as crucial for the development of the region and for this reason possess a longer-term stabilising effect.

As noted above, we will analyze three important conflictual issue-areas because of their similarities in their far-reaching negative effect on the region as a whole, or on one of its component sub-regions (Eastern and Western Mediterranean): the Middle East, the Western Sahara, and the Cyprus Problem.

### The Middle East

Clearly, it would be a pity - and a great opportunity lost - for the Assembly to be bogged down by a discussion of the Middle East Conflict. But then it is odd that a Parliamentary Assembly intended to strengthen North-South bonds in the

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30 see Jordi Vaquer i Fanés, 'The European Union and Western Sahara', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2004, pp 93-113; his 'España y el Sáhara Occidental: la dimensión partidista', *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, Nos. 79-80, diciembre 2007, pp. 125-144, his chapter (this volume); Novais Rui, 'The ENP and the Saharwi conflict resolution: doomed to failure?', in Barrinha, André (ed), *Towards a Global Dimension: EU's Conflict Management in the Neighbourhood and Beyond*, Fundação Friedrich Ebert, Lisbon, 2008, pp 85-98; see also Yahia Zoubir, 'Stalemate in Western Sahara: Ending International Legality', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIV, No.4, Winter 2007, pp 158-177.

Mediterranean should engage in 'small talk' at the expense of the more serious discussion of the real threats to peace and stability in the region. The treatment of the Middle East problem within the EMPA may bear an acute resemblance with a case of trying to "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds". If the issue is prioritised it paralyses all other work in the Assembly; if it is side-tracked, the Assembly is justly criticised as a sham.

Hence, for example, in the priorities which the Hellenic Parliament had set itself for the duration of its tenure of the EMPA presidency (March 2007-March 2008), the Middle East problem was only placed in seventh place, after other topics such as 'the dialogue between cultures', environmental and climate protection, energy and migration.

We are not implying that the Greek Presidency had misplaced its priorities. After all the agenda reflects the prevalent mood and priorities amongst the member delegations based no doubt on their pragmatic assessment of what is doable in the short term and what is not. The fact that the Middle East Conflict comes after many other issues could also be proof of the way in which it is perceived as having a lethal effect on a broader dialogue on a number of important issues. The reasoning behind this seems to take this form: if the 'first best' cannot be had, i.e. if a dialogue on the most important conflicts is impossible, need we also throw away the 'second best' namely co-operation in other areas where the obstacles are not so insurmountable? Furthermore, the Hellenic Presidency of the EMPA proposed as the first point of discussion in the Political Affairs Committee "*Ways for the Parliaments to contribute to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict*".<sup>31</sup> A working group on peace and security in the Middle East was established in March 2007 which by July had gained recognition within the EMPA as a parliamentary approach to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the March 2008 Athens EMPA meeting the group was already steadily on its feet.

When the European Parliament assumed the Presidency of the Assembly in March 2008, it put the Middle East process at the top of its priorities stating:

"1. Peace process in the Middle East: the EMPA should contribute to political dialogue in the region, to enhance the implementation of the road map and international law. The Bureau could become directly involved by organizing regular exchanges of views with Speakers of the Parliaments of the parties at stake and with other relevant actors (Quartet, Quartet's representative, SG of the League of Arab States, etc.). On a case by case basis, these meetings could be opened to all

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<sup>31</sup> See "Items of the Committees" on the Greek Presidency website, at <http://empa.parliament.gr/> (accessed 12.10.07).

Committee chairs and to rapporteurs should a topic of interest for their work be addressed.”

At the extraordinary EMPA plenary which met in Jordan in October 2008, work was divided almost equally between a discussion of the EMPA as the parliamentary dimension of the “Union for the Mediterranean” and the Middle East Conflict. Hence, it can be concluded that from 2007 onwards the EMPA began to focus more on the Arab-Israeli conflict and to give it more centre stage. This shift in emphasis also happened at a time when the United States was pursuing the Annapolis initiative, which must have surely introduced an element of ‘competitive interest’ in the formula: the EMPA wanted to avoid all possible criticism that the Mediterranean’s most august parliamentary institution was standing helplessly by while Washington ran the Middle East show. But when the conflict in Gaza suddenly erupted towards the end of 2008, the EMPA was caught off its guard. Meetings of the various committees were scheduled towards the end of January 2009 no doubt as a result of prior scheduling in preparation for the next plenary to take place in Brussels in March.

Notwithstanding that the Middle East conflict has only thus been gradually brought forward from one of a number of issues to the forefront of the EMPA agenda, the discussion of the conflict has paradoxically monopolised most of the debate throughout the lifetime of the EMPA. Sometimes it has also monopolised and paralysed discussion in committees (besides the political committee) where its absence would have allowed members to carry out a more rewarding dialogue on socio-economic challenges facing the peoples of the region.

### The Western Sahara

At the first session of the EMPA held in Cairo in 2005, a resolution was approved that referred comprehensively to the issues involved in the process and instructed its Political Committee to monitor the situation in the Middle East and in Cyprus, but the Western Sahara problem was side-stepped never to feature again.<sup>32</sup> The exclusion of this conflict, which has bedevilled the politics of the Maghreb for so long, fatally wounding the Arab Maghreb Union<sup>33</sup>, is very hard to explain. Developments on the issue during 2007-2008 have not stirred

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32 Resolution of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly on the assessment of the Barcelona Process on the eve of its tenth anniversary adopted on 15 March 2005 in Cairo: [www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/committee\\_poli/final\\_resolution\\_cairo2005\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/committee_poli/final_resolution_cairo2005_en.pdf) (accessed 11.10.07).

33 See for instance, Francis Ghilès, ‘El Magreb paga el precio de su desunión - El cierre de la frontera entre Argelia y Marruecos es un disparate. Los magrebíes no tienen otra alternativa que abrir las fronteras que les separan y fomentar la libre circulación de personas, mercancías y energía’, *El País*, 5 June 2008.

the EMPA into action, at least visibly. In April 2007 the UN Security Council approved a resolution on the situation in the Western Sahara.<sup>34</sup> Contacts later resumed between all the affected parties, primarily involving Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria and the POLISARIO and on 1 October 2007, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs signalled to the UN General Assembly the possibility of a way out of this quagmire, citing the Moroccan Statute of Autonomy for the former Spanish Sahara as a "realistic, applicable and final political solution to a regional dispute that hinders the construction of a strong and homogeneous Maghreb, interacting with its geopolitical environment."<sup>35</sup> Algeria augurs a solution to the conflict and hopes the people of the territory will be able to vote in a "self-determination" referendum. The European Parliament has meanwhile frequently condemned human rights violations in the Western Sahara. But the EMPA seems to remain blissfully ignorant of a conflict that is at the very core of its *raison d'être* at a time when new developments may require the EMPA's encouragement and involvement. Thus, the March 2008 Final Declaration of the Athens Fourth Plenary Session does not mention the conflict in the Western Sahara at all, nor does the Final Declaration adopted in Jordan in October 2008.

### Cyprus

Similarly, the long standing Cyprus Problem remains side-lined in the EMPA, notwithstanding that it was mentioned in the 2005 Cairo resolution. Again, there is no reference whatsoever to that particular conflict in the March 2008 Final Declaration of the Athens Fourth Plenary Session or the Jordan extraordinary session.

In the report on the activities of the third EMPA Committee presented in Cairo in 2005, we find that the Turkish delegation had 'asked for the deletion' of a reference to Cyprus 'as there was no need to discuss this issue in the session'.<sup>36</sup> In the record of the Proceedings it is stated that:

'The Cypriot Representative wondered why Turkey had asked to delete the paragraph on Cyprus, pointing out that a large part of his country is occupied by Turkey. He asked for keeping that paragraph which called for the respect and promotion of human rights in Cyprus'.<sup>37</sup>

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34 Security Council Resolution adopted at the SC's 5669th meeting, 30 April 2007, S/RES/1754 (2007).

35 Statement by HE Mohamed Benaissa, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of the Kingdom of Morocco to the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 1 October 2007.

36 *First session of the EMPA/Première session de l'APEM*, Cairo, March 2005, p.33.

37 *Ibid.* p. 35.



This situation is not new and reflects a long-standing effort by the Turkish parliamentary delegation to deflect any potential criticism of its continued occupation within the EMPA framework. Thus, as early as the initial parliamentarisation of the Process known as the Parliamentary Forum (see above), a similar incident had taken place when ‘an addendum by the Cypriot delegation complaining that the Forum Final Declaration does not refer to the Cyprus Problem because of “the objection of the Turkish delegation (...) despite repeated calls by several members”<sup>38</sup>.

There was no reference to Cyprus in the 2005 Cairo Final Declaration but in a Resolution tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Security “On the Assessment of the Barcelona Process on the Eve of its Tenth Anniversary”, the EMPA instructed the said committee to monitor - among other things- ‘other political problems pertaining to security and neighbourhood between partner countries, *including the Cyprus issue*’.<sup>39</sup> The fact that there was no direct reference to the Issue but just it being mentioned as one of many problems in the Mediterranean confirms this lack of attention to the Problem. What is also pertinent to point out is that the EMPA despite its vast number of parliamentarians - 260 in all - finds it difficult to attend to other conflicts other than the Arab-Israeli one such as those in Cyprus and the Western Sahara.

Such an attitude towards the Cyprus Problem is strange because Cyprus is a member of the EU, part of its territory is illegally occupied by a candidate state to EU membership and a fully-fledged participant in the EMPA, and the reverberations from the conflict periodically produce seismic activity within the EU itself.

Finally, beyond the scope of the current study, one cannot but ask the question of whether it is so because Cyprus is ‘small meat’ when compared to the more ominous challenges the Union faces? But one should be careful that even ‘smaller’ problems (and their lack of a solution) can develop into bigger ones, especially for a Union that claims to be an international actor.

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38 Stavridis (2002), *Mediterranean Politics*, op. cit., p. 33.

39 39 *First session of the EMPA/Première session de l’APEM* (2005), op. cit., p. 64 (emphasis added).

#### 4. Other related issues to parliamentary diplomacy and conflicts

There are at least four other issues that are related to the topic under study in this chapter. For obvious space limitations, we will only refer to them rather briefly. These issues are as follows: parliamentary bodies as 'moral tribunes'; parliamentary input in election monitoring; the role of parliamentarians in the so-called 'socialization effect'; and, finally, the importance of sub-state parliamentary actors.

##### 'Moral tribunes'

It is often argued that parliaments act as 'moral tribunes' on foreign policy. That is to say that because parliamentarians do not have to *necessarily* follow the official governmental line on international affairs, this allows them to be more 'flexible' (as noted above) and to adopt a more normative approach on foreign issues. They do not have to 'stick', as it were, to the official state diplomatic line on any given international issue. This makes sense also because in many cases the positions of parliamentary assemblies are not dictated by members of parliament of the governing majority but also include Opposition MPs who normally have divergent views from their governments. In addition, the position taken by some MPs often represents a particularly personal view. This is the view that Flavia Zenon has expressed about the reasons why she claims that the European Parliament and the EU states have divergent positions on many international issues:

'Council foreign policy tends to reflect the sensitivities of Heads of State and Governments to economic and commercial matters, such as Realpolitik concerns are of less interest for the representatives of the European peoples sitting in the European Parliament'<sup>40</sup>.

Her point of view is not an isolated one. Several (French, British, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Luxembourg, Cypriot, Catalan) parliamentarians have repeatedly made this point on the international role of parliaments<sup>41</sup>.

But there is also the overall question mark as to whether parliaments are really moral tribunes, or not. In some cases, they appear to be acting in the same

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40 Flavia Zenon, 'The European Parliament: an autonomous foreign policy identity?', in Barbé, Esther and Herranz, Anna (eds), *The role of Parliaments in European foreign policy-Debating on accountability and legitimacy*, Office of the European Parliament in Barcelona, Barcelona, 2005, Chapter 6: [www.uab.es/iuee](http://www.uab.es/iuee) (accessed 21.10.05), no page given.

41 see Stavridis (2002), *Mediterranean Politics*, op. cit., and his 'The international relations of the Cypriot Parliament', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol.5, No.3, December 2003, pp 337-354, 'Towards a "European Solution" of the Cyprus Problem: False Promise or Real Opportunity?', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Spring 2006, pp 87-119, *The European Parliament and the Cyprus Problem: a preliminary - and critical - assessment*, Institute of International Economic Relations Working Paper No. 24, Athens, July 2006: [www.idec.gr/iier](http://www.idec.gr/iier).

*Realpolitik* way as governments and states executives do. Thus, recent analyses of the EP stance on Cyprus and Turkey point to a strong dose of *Realpolitik* at the expense of morality<sup>42</sup>.

When all is said and following careful analysis, it seems true that there is a higher dose of normative thinking in parliamentary diplomacy that is not present in traditional diplomacy. For instance, there has been a surge in the number of public apologies for past mistakes (slavery, colonization, genocides) but also a more active parliamentary involvement in difficult enquiries in issues dealing with ethnic cleansing or other past atrocities. Thus, both the French and the Dutch parliaments produced reports on the behaviour of their military forces with regards to the July 1995 massacres in Srebrenica. *Le Monde* called the report 'the conscience of the MPs' (29 November 2001). In the light of the report produced by the Dutch parliament, the Netherlands government resigned in the Spring of 2002, following the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility. A similar claim could be made with regard to the way the European Parliament reacted to the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. It adopted a more 'moralistic' stance than the other EC/EU institutions throughout the tragic and violent events in the region<sup>43</sup>. Another similar case would be that of the EP during the many bloody conflicts in Central America in the 1980s. Again, because of the way the two dominant political groupings (Socialists and Christian Democrats) interact in the Parliament in Strasbourg/Brussels, there appeared a much clearer 'human rights' policy towards that part of the world than in any of the other European institutions<sup>44</sup>.

### Election monitoring

As far as electoral monitoring in the Mediterranean is concerned, parliamentarians ought to play an important role. The European Parliament has been involved in a limited number of election monitoring missions in the Mediterranean: so far in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (2002), Lebanon (2005) and Palestine (1996, 2005, 2006). But the EMPA has not been directly involved in such initiatives. During a hearing of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and Human Rights Subcommittee held on the 24 June 2005, it was

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42 see Stavridis (2006), *Ibid.*; Stelios Stavridis and Charalambos Tsardanidis, Charalambos, 'The Cyprus Problem in the European Parliament: a case of successful or superficial Europeanisation?', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 14, No.1, Spring 2009, pp 129-156; see also Vaquer (2004), *op.cit.*

43 see Stelios Stavridis, *The European Parliament, European foreign policy and the conflict in former Yugoslavia 1991-1995*, Unpublished Report to the European Commission, Brussels, Jean Monnet Chair Research Project No. 95/0549, Reading, December 1996.

44 see Stelios Stavridis, "Foreign policy and democratic principles: the case of European Political Cooperation", Unpublished thesis, PhD in International Relations, Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 1991, pp 248-257.

argued that election monitoring was the first step towards democratisation; but that the obstacles in mounting them were many particularly because prior agreement was required of the governments of the states concerned before they could be carried out.<sup>45</sup> Democratisation was placed at the heart of the EMPA at its first meeting in Cairo in March 2005 and criticism of Egypt during the session coincided with the release of the Opposition leader Mr Ayman Nour, though pressure on Egypt in this case was also mounted by the USA. In a Resolution adopted in that first session of the Assembly, it was stated that the EMPA instructs its Political Committee on Security and Human Rights to monitor among other things, 'the strengthening of democratic processes in all the partner countries, particularly *the sound organisation of elections*'<sup>46</sup>.

### Socialization

The 'socialization effect' is meant to work in such settings where democratic parties live together with undemocratic or partly democratic ones as is the case in the EMPA. Such institutional frameworks are meant to socialise over time their less democratic or experienced participants. Another argument is that by participating in these fora, members of democratically-elected parliaments are able to engage their 'counterparts' from non-democratic states.

Of course, the debate is more complex. Southern Mediterranean MPs bring their own domestic politics into the workings of the EMPA - but do they take with them back home the lessons they learn there? Are they acting as MPs in the Western liberal sense of the word, possessing political ties with their parties back home but also enjoying some freedom of action and initiative? Or are they the parliamentary arms of governing elites using the EMPA to defend national positions in the same way as so many diplomats normally do within the UN General Assembly or other major diplomatic conferences. In short are they, for want of a better term, diplomats disguised as MPs?

One should note nonetheless that parliamentarians from the developing countries themselves often express the wish to see their own national parliaments develop from 'rubber stamp' institutions into full-fledged legislative assemblies. To take an example from outside the Mediterranean context, speaking at a UN conference, MP Anne S. Makinda, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania, described the benefits of parliaments associating with parliaments of developed democratic countries thus:

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45 [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050624-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20050624-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN) (accessed 15.08.08).

46 Point 44, 'Resolution of the EMPA on the assessment of the Barcelona Process on the eve of its tenth anniversary, adopted on 15 March 2005 in Cairo (Egypt) on the basis of the resolution tabled by Mrs Tokia Saïfi, Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee on Political, Security and Human Rights Issues', *First Session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly*, Cairo, March 2005, p.64 (emphasis added).

“it is important that parliaments and not only governments and international agencies be seen increasingly as actors in building South-South as well as North-South cooperation. We should not underestimate the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation at the regional level, which in some cases is already bearing fruits. We need to help parliaments to learn from one another, compare experiences, and exchange information on best legislative practices and policies. Parliaments should also be seen increasingly as forums that can assist in peace-building and conflict resolution in those LDC countries that are either at risk of or are emerging from conflict.”<sup>47</sup>

Of course, regional parliamentary meetings, normally held in exotic settings by the host countries, could sometimes also lead to criticism of ‘parliamentary tourism’, but most observers and practitioners agree on their long-term beneficial impact on a wide range of ever increasing domains. Linked to this point, we should also mention that the European Union, and the EP in this case, try their best, for instance by insisting on some form of legitimisation for the Southern parliamentarians. They must be elected and can no longer be just representatives of their respective regimes (usually appointed diplomats) in order to be accepted as EMPA members. This practice began in the ACP Parliamentary Assembly<sup>48</sup>. No need to say that those regimes have invented ways of circumventing this hurdle, but it is yet another additional obstacle that they still need to overcome.

### Decentralization

Decentralised cooperation between the two shores of the *Mare Nostrum*, and in particular among its parliamentarians, could and should also be promoted. Such a development would facilitate a better understanding of why the ‘sacred’ indivisibility of the state does not necessarily reflect the best form of democratic governance in the 21st century. We should also note that the paradiplomacy involving sub-state regions is becoming more and more visible<sup>49</sup>. Their parliaments are also becoming more active at the international level. This

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47 Statement by the Honourable Anne S. Makinda, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, United Nations, New York, 18 September 2006.

48 French Green MEP Alima Boumédiène interview, in Stavridis (2002), *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 47-48.

49 On paradiplomacy, see for instance Mario Kölling and Stelios Stavridis and Natividad Fernández Sola (eds), *Las relaciones internacionales de las regiones: actores sub-nacionales, para-diplomacia y gobernanza multinivel / The international relations of the regions: sub-national actors, para-diplomacy and multi-level governance*, Actas de Congreso/Conference Proceedings, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, 2007.

is not the place to develop it further, but one could note that for instance some Spanish regions (*comunidades autónomas*) and their parliaments are becoming very active in the Mediterranean area<sup>50</sup>. The 'Declaration by the regions and cities of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Barcelona Declaration' that was issued in Barcelona on 26 November 2005 confirms that view.<sup>51</sup> Other organisations of European regions equally lamented that declarations on the Sarkozy initiative did not *de facto* 'provide for the involvement of the regions in the re-launch of the Barcelona process', to quote from an Assembly of European Regions note published in June 2008.<sup>52</sup> Positively, this hurdle has now been overcome.

Associated to the above, one must also stress the link-role that parliaments play with civil society actors<sup>53</sup>, the increasing role of 'municipalities' and especially that of 'big cities', in particular port-cities like Barcelona, Marseilles, Naples, Athens (Piraeus) to name but the Northern ones.<sup>54</sup> For instance, in the case of the French region PACA (Provences-Alpes-d'Azur-Côte-d'Azur), its paradiplomacy initiatives clearly refer to the Mediterranean space in all its multi-level dimensions. Thus, PACA President Michelle Vauzelle, in conjunction with the mayor of Marseille, Jean-Pierre Gaudin, organized the 22-23 June 2008 Forum of Local and Regional Authorities of the Mediterranean to reassert the need for renewed impetus to the Barcelona Process within the framework of the

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50 For the Catalan Parliament, Laura Brunet and Martí Grau and Stelios Stavridis, 'Los parlamentos regionales como actores internacionales: el *Parlament de Catalunya* y el espacio euromediterráneo', *Cuadernos Constitucionales de la Cátedra Fadrique Furió Ceriol*, No. 47, Spring 2004, pp 133-153.

51 For a preliminary discussion of such a development see Helena Oliván and Pau Solanilla, Pau, 'Las regiones y los poderes locales, nuevos actores del Proceso de Barcelona', *Afkar/Ideas*, IEMed, Barcelona, Summer 2005, pp 70-71.

52 *Contribution of the Assembly of European Regions to the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" in preparation for the summit on 13 July 2008*, Adopted by the AER Bureau in Wroclaw on 11 June 2008: [www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu).

53 For an earlier assessment of the link between parliamentary cooperation and civil society, see Roderick Pace and Stelios Stavridis and Dimitris Xenakis, 'Parliaments and Civil Society Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No.1, Winter 2003/4 (2004), pp 75-92. On civil society, see also Annette Junemann, 'The EuroMed Civil Forum: Critical "Watchdog" and Intercultural Mediator', Panebianco, Stefania (ed), *A New Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Identity*, Frank Cass, London, 2003, pp 84-107; Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués, *Civil Society in Euro-Mediterranean relations: What success of EU's normative promotion?*, EUI Working Paper RCAS No. 2006/40, Florence, December 2006; Helena Oliván, 'El balance del proceso de Barcelona y la encrucijada de la política de vecindad: ¿Qué instrumentos para la sociedad civil?', in Martínez Dalmau, Rubén (ed), *Europa y el Mediterráneo - Perspectivas del diálogo euromediterráneo*, Publicaciones de la Universitat de València and IMEE Barcelona, Valencia, pp 119-129, 2006). Without falling of course into the trap of mis-taking 'servile societies' for 'civil societies', to borrow from Carlos Chamorro, '¿Sociedad civil o sociedad servil?', *El País*, 18 October 2008.

54 See the Conclusions of the Valencia Seminar on "Cooperation at the local and regional level in the Euro-Mediterranean area" Tuesday 10 April 2007, Committee of the Regions, Brussels, CdR 59/2007 fin EN/o, 23.04.2008.

Mediterranean Union. Vauzelle observed that relations between the regions and cities of the Mediterranean were not simply characterised by “neighbourly relations” but genuinely by a “community of fate”. Local and regional authorities attending the Forum adopted a final declaration inviting States to fulfil their commitments and to step up the amount of public aid in the Mediterranean region. Moreover, they were urged to work together with local and regional authorities to afford this partnership greater effectiveness in the regions as well as greater proximity vis-à-vis their peoples<sup>55</sup>. The November 2008 Marseille Declaration makes reference to the establishment of a new regional programme to strengthen links between parliaments and civil society. Indeed, a decision has been taken to create an ‘Assembly of elected representatives of the regions and local authorities in the “Union for the Mediterranean”’. For some time many Mediterranean sub-state regions had indeed been expressing an interest in becoming more involved in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. One of course will have to wait to see how actions under this programme will develop in the future before adding more comments on this initiative.

### Conclusions

Although to date the record of the parliamentary impact on conflict resolution is not that promising, one should be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

It remains clear that there is a lot of potential in employing parliamentary diplomacy for conflict resolution, *provided* that this potential is actually acknowledged *and* a conscious effort is made to use it. The main test of the efficacy (or otherwise) of parliamentary diplomacy in conflict resolution should not be the record so far, simply because if it has not been employed efficiently to date, then it is axiomatic that the results will not be the desired ones. Besides, parliamentary diplomacy is an activity which can produce results in the long term if it is vigorously pursued over time. One must also stress that it is a very recent phenomenon. Hence, it is not appropriate to compare its results with those of traditional diplomacy. Nor should one expect that parliamentary diplomacy alone can achieve what has not been achieved so far by the more traditional diplomatic methods in trying to resolve the Palestinian, Saharawi or Cypriot conflicts either. Indeed, parliamentary diplomacy must be seen as one of a number of mutually reinforcing activities in international relations aiming to bring parties to conflicts closer to one another by increasing mutual

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<sup>55</sup> The Committee of the Regions was also invited to confer a formal position to local authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. For more on paradiplomacy and the Mediterranean see Stelios Stavridis and Romain Pasquier, “Linking levels”: Re-examining the EU’s Multi-level Paradiplomacy in a Globalized World”, 3rd GARNET Annual Conference, Bordeaux, 17-20 September 2008.

Understanding and access to one another, and by creating that environment of trust which is necessary to help diplomatic efforts. Hence, parliamentary diplomacy must be analysed and judged by (so far not fully articulated in the literature) its own set of criteria and objectives. For the time being, it is necessary to stress that in conflict situations, the stakes are too high, and that in such situations there is hardly any choice other than to keep on trying. Parliamentary cooperation can and should be used as often as possible. Our critique is that its main defect has been to date that it has not been used to its full potential in trying to resolve any of the Mediterranean Region's long standing conflicts.

The potential 'bridge-making' role of parliamentary diplomacy in conflict resolution should not be under-estimated. It is therefore surprising that a recent study on 'Conflict Prevention in the EMP' does not even mention *once* the potential and actual role that parliaments can play in that area<sup>56</sup>. It is equally relevant to our study that the same EUROMESCO Paper does not make a single reference to the Cyprus Conflict. We do not expand on the possible reasons for such an omission but we think any independent-minded observer would note the irony that the EUROMESCO "experts" survey did not include anyone from either Greece or Cyprus, though perhaps not *surprisingly* (sic) one from Turkey was included.

It is also clear that the EMPA as a parliamentary assembly should primarily become involved in political issues which are central to the peace and stability of the Mediterranean Region and to the EU itself. It must not be allowed to be distracted from the main issues by venting its otherwise unused energy on topics which may be important in the long-term but which contribute very little to the enhancement of stability in the region. Democratisation will not occur by itself. The numerous conflicts that exist in the region must be resolved. In this context, though the EMPA started as the parliamentary dimension of the EMP and ought to remain there, it does not imply that it must stick to the EMP agenda. The EMP was originally started to help bring about peace, security and a shared prosperity in the Mediterranean region; the Middle East problem and the other conflicts of the region (Cyprus and the Western Sahara) are *the* problems to be tackled, *not* the ones to run away from.

As long as the main destabilising conflicts such as the Middle East, Cyprus and Western Sahara, often and misleadingly labelled the "frozen conflicts"<sup>57</sup>, persist it is hard to achieve progress on the 'softer' issues; linkage politics - whether

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<sup>56</sup> Euromesco, *Conflict Prevention in the EMP*, Euromesco Paper No. 64 (Roberto Aliboni, Yasar Qatarneh), September 2007: [www.euromesco.net](http://www.euromesco.net).

<sup>57</sup> One can but only refer to the other so-called "frozen" conflict, like the one in Georgia which this summer of 2008 went 'hot' at a "micro-wave oven" speed, to keep with the analogy.



subtle (covert) or open (overt) - connects the two. This is because states continue to link progress in one area to progress in the other. All the conflicts analysed here have at one time or another been blamed for the lack of progress in regional co-operation of various types even when such co-operation was considered to be of a functional, non-political nature or better still was perceived as a sort of longer-term confidence building process that could lead to positive spill over into the political domain. For example, the Western Sahara issue has stifled economic integration in the Maghreb, notwithstanding that the economic welfare gains that would accrue to all the participating states are such as to make the case for establishing the union a seemingly full proof one. Similarly, a solution to the Cyprus Problem (another case of justice delayed) will benefit all the people in that island, remove a cause of internal turbulence from within the EU, and finally might bring Turkey closer to its own accession ambitions.<sup>58</sup> As for the 'mother of all conflicts', the Israeli-Arab one, any solution will stop the regional arms race, unblock possibly the way to long-awaited reforms in the Arab world, and steal some fire from terrorist organisations.

What seems to be essential is that in regional parliamentary initiatives such as the EMPA, participants are constantly reminded of the need to maintain their focus on the objectives of such initiative in conflict resolution. It is sad that often many national delegations behave just as the extension of their countries' diplomatic service often turning EMPA meetings into arenas for scoring propaganda points or for trying to influence the world views of European parliamentarians. It is time to call the parliamentarians to order and convince them to focus more radically on dialogue.

The absence of pluralistic democracies in the south where parties and members of parliament need to maintain contact with constituencies and voters to stand any chance of re-election is already a serious handicap. The lack of pressure to be accountable to voters leaves southern politicians free from any constraint to produce results. In addition there is the problem of the visibility of the EMP and EMPA itself, the interest shown in them by the public and media. As long as both the EMP and the EMPA are not in the vortex of the public and media interest, what happens in them and what the various participants do in them (including parliamentarians) will remain irrelevant and isolated, taking place in a bubble separated from the rest of the world. But should the EMPA become

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58 We say 'possibly' because there are plenty of other obstacles to Turkey's road to EU membership, see Aylin Güney, 'The Politics of Turkey's Accession Process to the European Union', in Stavridis, Stelios (ed), *Understanding and Evaluating the European Union: theoretical and empirical approaches*, Nicosia University Press, Nicosia (2009, in press). On the question of a 'case of justice delayed', see *inter alia* Costas Melakopides, 'The legal and moral grounds for Europe's obligation to end the occupation of northern Cyprus', in *Ibid.*

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more forthcoming and pro-active on many issues, including conflict resolution, then the publics everywhere will become interested in it and what their parliamentarians are doing or not doing, given that there is near universal desire that existing conflicts ought to be resolved once and for all. The guiding star is simple and unproblematic: give the parliamentary assembly a credible, important role in conflict resolution and the public will focus on it thereby increasing its relevance and effectiveness. Allow it to languish in the desert of irrelevance and trivia, and the public will disregard it thereby devaluing it further as an effective political force for good.