

# What Role for Spain in the Union for the Mediterranean? Europeanising through Continuity and Adaptation<sup>1</sup>

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## RÉSUMÉ

Ce qui a été appelé initialement proposition pour une Union Méditerranéenne, plus tard «Le Processus de Barcelone: Union pour la Méditerranée» et finalement l'Union pour la Méditerranée (UPM) a considérablement modifié les relations euro-méditerranéennes. De la première formulation de février 2007 jusqu'au sommet de Paris en 2008, l'initiative française a été accueillie avec autant d'intérêt que de suspicion. La Méditerranée est l'un des axes prioritaires de la politique étrangère de l'Espagne et également un des piliers de sa politique européenne. Cet article soutient que la réaction du gouvernement espagnol aux initiatives de Sarkozy est compatible avec la logique espagnole, plaçant la Méditerranée dans un cadre européen. Dès le tout début, l'Espagne s'est efforcée de poursuivre les principes du Processus de Barcelone. Dans un deuxième temps, elle s'est adaptée à la logique de l'Union pour la Méditerranée à travers la poursuite de ses intérêts matériels. Cet article commence avec le rappel de la manière dont l'Espagne a européenisé sa politique étrangère. Par la suite il examine comment l'Union Méditerranéenne de Sarkozy a permis à l'Espagne de poursuivre, à travers une stratégie d'europeanisation souple, la plus grande continuité possible entre le Processus Euro-Méditerranéen et la proposition française. La dernière partie de l'article se concentre sur la présidence de l'Union Européenne par l'Espagne en 2010. Cet événement représente une occasion unique pour le pays de retrouver sa place centrale dans les affaires méditerranéennes, notamment par le biais du Secrétariat de l'Union pour la Méditerranée de Barcelone.

## ABSTRACT

The initially named Mediterranean Union proposal, later “The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” and finally Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), has significantly changed Euro-Mediterranean relations. From the first formulation of

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February 2007 to the 2008 Paris summit, the French initiative was received with both interest and suspicion. The Mediterranean is one of the priority axes of Spain's foreign policy and it is also one of the pillars of its European policy. This article argues that the Spanish government's reaction to Sarkozy's moves is consistent with the Spanish logic placing the Mediterranean policy within a European framework. From the very start, Spain has endeavoured to carry on the Barcelona Process principles. In a second stage, it has adapted to the rationale of the Union for the Mediterranean through the pursuit of its own material interests. This article begins with a review of how Spain has Europeanised its foreign policy. Next, it examines how Sarkozy's Mediterranean Union has enabled Spain to pursue, through a strategy of soft Europeanisation, the utmost continuity between the Euro-Mediterranean Process and the French proposal. The final part of the article will focus on Spain's EU term presidency in 2010. The latter represents a unique opportunity for the country to recuperate its centrality in Mediterranean affairs, notably via the Barcelona UfM Secretariat.

## Introduction

The initially named Mediterranean Union proposal, later “The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” and finally Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), has dramatically changed Euro-Mediterranean relations. From the first formulation of February 2007 to the 2008 Paris summit, the French initiative was received with both interest and suspicion. Spain was no exception to the rule.

The Mediterranean is one of the priority axes of Spain's foreign policy and it is also one of the pillars of its European policy. According to the position that prevails in Madrid, Spain will only be able to defend its interest in the region through a strong European policy. Only multilateral actions can bring solutions to the problems that remain beyond the reach of the traditional bilateral policy.

The project of the Mediterranean Union of 2007 led to believe that France was straying away from the priorities and interests defended by Spain. The first speeches of Sarkozy conveyed a strong disappointment in the Barcelona Process and a significant distrust in the European Commission. However, the French proposals softened as months went by, mainly to defuse the suspicions aroused in both rims of the Mediterranean.

This article argues that the Spanish government's reaction to Sarkozy's moves is consistent with the Spanish logic placing the Mediterranean policy within a

European framework. From the very start, Spain has endeavoured to carry on, insofar as possible, the Barcelona Process principles. In a second stage, it has adapted to the rationale of the UfM through the pursuit of its own material interests, whether at the agenda or institutional level.

This article begins with a review of how Spain has Europeanised its foreign policy. The Spanish policy toward the Mediterranean is a good example of the Europeanisation of the Spanish policy understood as, on the one hand, the upload of national concerns (mainly bilateral relations with Morocco) to the EU level and, on the other hand, as the creation of a diplomatic Spanish identity within the EU. Indeed, the Spanish diplomacy has projected itself as a Euro-Mediterranean driving force. This could be noticed in the EU term presidencies of 1995 and 2002, as well as in the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process in 2005.

Next the article examines how Sarkozy's Mediterranean Union, a project launched in an atmosphere of Euro-Mediterranean fatigue, has enabled Spain to pursue, through a strategy of soft Europeanisation, the utmost continuity between the Euro-Mediterranean Process and the French proposal. Considering the constraints in Spain's relation with France, the continuity sought by the Spanish diplomacy was only possible because of Germany's decisive intervention to tailor the new proposal to existing European norms and structures (Barcelona Process).

Furthermore, the article emphasises that once the French project was Europeanised, Spain focused on reaching concrete goals such as the agenda setting (Solar Plan, Initiative in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises), or the location of the new secretariat in Barcelona. The article also stresses that despite the substantive achievements of the Spanish diplomacy, there have been both political and academic debates on whether Spain has lost leadership in Mediterranean affairs in favour of France or whether Spanish actions have been in concordance with its capacities and have been able to preserve the core interests of Spain in this domain.

Spain will assume the EU term presidency in 2010 and is expected to put particular emphasis on Mediterranean affairs to consolidate the UfM. This endeavour will be conditioned by the regional context. However, as shown in the final part of the article Spain has already defined some specific priorities that would like to tackle during the first semester of 2010.

## Spanish Foreign Policy: A Dramatic Change

The Spanish foreign policy has dramatically changed since the country joined the European Community (EC) in 1986. The Spanish elite, who has been leading the participation of the country in the European framework and its adaptation to the European Union (EU) requirements, is mostly a convinced Europeanist elite. Two assumptions, ideational and material, underpin the assessment of how and to what extent Spanish foreign policy has been Europeanised. First, it is necessary to take into account that the “Europe is the solution for Spain” idea, as expressed at the beginning of the twentieth century by the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset, has deeply marked the evolution of the Spanish democracy. Second, Spain started to defend its national interest in the European foreign policy domain at the same time that the changing international context had created a fear of Spanish “marginalisation” in the new Europe turning towards the East. In any case, the Spanish governments have considered along the years that Spain’s national interests are better defended if the EU consolidates its role as a global actor. This approach has generated a twin-process whereby Spain has simultaneously acted to facilitate European actorness in the international arena and at the same time, sought greater influence within EU structures.

The Europeanisation of the Spanish foreign policy is a process that combines three dimensions: identity reconstruction, adaptation to EU policies and national projection to the European agenda. There are two issues where the impact of Spain on the European Foreign Policy output is remarkable: the Euro-Mediterranean policy and EU-Latin American relations. In both cases, Spain has worked to transfer its policies to the European level with the intention of upgrading the EU relations with those areas and, at the same time, playing a leading role in the Union concerning those policies and becoming a privileged spokesman for both regions. Since those regions are fundamental to Spanish interests, the result is going to be a dynamic equilibrium between national and collective tendencies. This article stems from the idea defended by Hill that the “CFSP should be seen as a collaborative framework of increasing solidarity, whose strength partly derives from the very fact that it permits national policies to continue in parallel. In the long run, by virtue of the fact that there are few rivals to structuration capability, it may lead to those national positions being so redefined in common terms that they fade almost to nothing. For the present, the national and collective tendencies exist in a condition of more or less dynamic equilibrium.”<sup>2</sup> The redefinition of Spanish interests in common terms is much more advanced in the case of the relations

with the Mediterranean, than with the Latin American countries. The high level of common interests between Spain and other EU partners has played in favour of the Spanish ambition to transfer its Mediterranean objectives to the European framework, whereas the low level of common interests in the case of Latin America has, on the contrary, hindered a successful Spanish bottom-up Europeanisation.

### **Europeanising the Mediterranean Concerns**

The Mediterranean has been traditionally perceived as a risk area in Spain.<sup>3</sup> The main reason is the problematic relationship with Morocco that affects material (fishing sector) and territorial (Spanish enclaves on North African coast) interests of Spain. Diluting the Moroccan problem by uploading it to the European level is one of Spain's main objectives. More than a policy transfer, Spain is looking for a problem transfer.<sup>4</sup> However, the Spanish way to deal in the European arena with this bilateral problem, plagued by tensions and security concerns, was diluting it into a collaborative and regional approach with a large Mediterranean scope.

As a first step, Spain took advantage of the structure of opportunities in the first half of the 1990s (civil war in Algeria, jihadist Islamism, high migration) to press in favour of reinforcing the Union's relations with the Maghreb countries to prevent future security problems for all Europeans. In 1989, at the same time that a Spanish Commissioner, Abel Matutes, helped to define the Community's Renewed Mediterranean Policy, the Twelve defined the Maghreb as one of their geographical priorities. Spain, together with France, Italy and the Commission, formed a Mediterranean lobby in the Union and were responsible for many of the posterior EC/EU initiatives. The 1992 Lisbon European Council endorsed the Spanish promoted idea of a Euro-Maghreb partnership and also defined – as a consequence of the Dezcallar Report put together by a Spanish diplomat – the Western Mediterranean and the Middle East as priority areas for CFSP joint actions.<sup>5</sup> Since then securitisation characterises the development of the European agenda for the Mediterranean.

The Oslo Peace Accords between Israel and the Palestinians, in 1993, also created new opportunities for Spain. Madrid began, as a consequence of the Peace Accords, to press Brussels to expand the project of the Euro-Maghreb partnership into a Euro-Mediterranean partnership, a “genuinely European exercise” according to Moratinos. In short, Madrid switched the Maghreb

approach for a Mediterranean one.<sup>6</sup> This shift in the Spanish foreign policy focus (Maghreb to Mediterranean) enabled the Spanish initiatives to resonate better with its European partners and helped Spain to project its interest at the European level in the sense that the EU had to balance its Eastern (pre-enlargement strategy) and Southern (Euro-Mediterranean partnership) dimensions. The Cannes European Council, in 1995, where Spain negotiated with the other partners (mostly with Germany) to get a balanced treatment between Eastern partners (Phare Programme) and Southern partners (MEDA Programme) is, in this sense, the best example of how Spain has managed to successfully upload its ideas (with financial effects) to the EU level.<sup>7</sup> The Spanish fear of marginalisation in an Eastern-oriented Union thus translated into its pursuit of an upgraded Euro-Mediterranean policy, both as the better approach to face its problems in the Mediterranean as well as a way to win political leverage in Brussels. The organisation of the first ministerial Euro-Mediterranean meeting in Barcelona, during the Spanish presidency in 1995, was a success for Spain in terms of diplomatic capacity. Israel, Syria and Lebanon got together with the Union and other southern Mediterranean partners to adopt a Declaration (Barcelona Declaration) and launch a process involving political, economic and security dimensions. The launch of the process by itself was a success and so is its continuity, in spite of many shortcomings.

At the same time that Spain was acting to dilute a bilateral problem with Morocco, it was also determined to build a new EU policy for the Mediterranean, creating an all-encompassing approach consisting of multiple and interdependent layers of interests (free trade area, MEDA programme) and with a normative bias (exporting norms to the neighbours). The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, that started as a way to dilute the Moroccan problem with European instruments (MEDA Programme), has turned into a priority by itself for the Spanish diplomacy, making the European framework a necessity to deal with Mediterranean matters. Over the years many northern countries in the Union (Germany, Sweden, Finland) have also subscribed to this idea.

### **An Identitarian Construction for the Spanish diplomacy**

The Barcelona Process has become part of the Spanish identity in the diplomatic arena at the same time as it is a European policy. Since 1995, the Spanish diplomacy has developed a substantial commitment to safeguard the

multilateral Euro-Mediterranean Partnership from overly radical reforms, even if the Spanish reasons for doing so are much different today compared to in 1995. Still, Spain shows notable commitment to the Barcelona Process and as it has revived, during the 2002 Spanish EU Presidency, Euro-Mediterranean relations, by celebrating the Euro-Mediterranean conference of Valence in April 2002.<sup>8</sup>

This was a period where a significant impulsion would mark the institutional development of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership with the launching of a foundation for the dialogue of cultures and civilisations along with the creation of a parliamentary assembly. Although the results were less important than expected, the financial and educational dimensions could be emphasised – creation of the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP) and extension of the Tempus in the Mediterranean programme –, just as justice and international relations would from then on appear in the Euro-Mediterranean agenda.

It is also at the time that the idea to develop a new policy to solve neighbourhood problems was introduced. The former was first directed to Eastern European countries to eventually extend to the Mediterranean basin. Spain has been scarcely involved in the initial development of this policy as it merely supported propositions coming from other actors such as Italy or the European Commission.<sup>9</sup>

When Zapatero was into office in 2004, his programme announced a willingness “to redefine, retrieve and reinforce the strong lines of Spain’s foreign policy”; facing “the withdrawal and loss of influence of our Euro-Mediterranean policy”; it was “indispensable and urgent to relaunch it and restructure it”. Thus, the commitment was made to organise a summit gathering heads of State and Government for the November 2005 Barcelona Process tenth anniversary.<sup>10</sup>

The new government spared no effort to insure the success of the 2005 Barcelona Summit by attempting to gather all Euro-Mediterranean leaders and partners to sign a set of documents likely to relaunch the Barcelona Process.<sup>11</sup> The first goal was only reached half-through. While the majority of EU member states participated at the top level, the Mediterranean partners acting in concert with them were a very small minority. The second objective was not fully achieved either. Although the ambitious programme including considerable innovations in terms of migration, education and environment was approved, there were no agreed joint conclusions and the code of conduct

on the fight against terrorism did not satisfy the majority of observers.<sup>12</sup> The mixed results of the summit can be explained mainly by the hopes it had generated in Spain and elsewhere. Neither the regional context of the summit nor the United Kingdom's presidency of the EU at the time, favoured a positive result.<sup>13</sup>

Despite its dissatisfaction, Spain kept stressing on the qualities of the Barcelona process, its diplomats arguing that the results of the 2005 summit had been underestimated.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the Spanish government stayed involved in the development of Euro-Mediterranean relations but did not present, however, any innovating ideas or projects to stimulate the following years. Indeed, one can notice that some of the efforts were focused on the renewal of the relations with southern neighbours, and particularly in the negotiation of an advanced status for Morocco (obtained in October 13<sup>th</sup> 2008), one that would go beyond the simple association, but excluding any perspective of adhesion to the EU.

### **Southern and Eastern Europeans Facing the Neighbours**

It is in an atmosphere of frustration stemming from the Barcelona Process that the project of the Mediterranean Union appeared. Whether in Spain or in the rest of the Mediterranean basin, little attention was given to the electoral promise made in Toulon by candidate Nicolas Sarkozy. Nonetheless, the speech on the electoral night sounded the alarm in Madrid as well as in other capitals. Sarkozy issued a pompous “call to all the people of the Mediterranean to tell them that it is in the Mediterranean that everything is going to be played out” and that the time had come “to build together a Mediterranean Union” that would become “a link between Europe and Africa”.<sup>15</sup>

It became quickly noticeable that the Mediterranean was turning into one of the flagship in the French foreign policy renewal promised by Sarkozy. Then how could the suspicion showed by Madrid and other capitals be explained? There are five main explanations. 1) The French proposal was not issued within an EU framework but was rather competing with the former; 2) it was perceived as serving France's interests versus the collective interests; 3) Madrid was neither consulted nor informed; 4) the project was directly led from the Élysée and even though the Quai d'Orsay had more information than Madrid, it was not in charge either, fact that generated a certain degree of uneasiness; 5) the speeches of Sarkozy and his entourage circulated a ferocious critique of the thirteen years of the Barcelona Process, first referring to it as a “failure” and



then mentioning the “shortages” of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and offending, in every instance, a Spanish government and diplomacy very committed to it. The convergence of these five factors can explain the scepticism prevailing among Spanish policy makers.

While Spain did not question France’s willingness to get involved in the Mediterranean policy and to reactivate the traditional framework of cooperation, Spain did forewarn that the initial issues of the Mediterranean Union were not within its immediate priorities. Differently said, the French proposal revealed problems of internal incoherence in the EU. As a matter of fact, coherence is determined, on the one hand, by the level of implication and commitment assumed by the member states and the institutions when formulating a policy. On the other hand, coherence depends on member states and institution’s acceptance of the norms developed by the Union in a given field.<sup>16</sup> The launching of the Mediterranean Union raised problems in both ways: first, the formulation of the French proposal and its transformation into a European policy provoked a strong internal debate; and second, that debate revealed that the norms developed in the relations with neighbouring countries, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, were not sufficiently accepted among member states, as demonstrated by the French proposal or other proposals presented around the same time such as the Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership.<sup>17</sup>

The French proposal generated three strategic responses among EU members: first, subregional leadership, such as the Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership; second, soft Europeanisation, illustrated by Spain and Italy; and last, hard Europeanisation defended by Angela Merkel. The latter had an impact on both French and Polish regional leadership aspirations. The events of the first months of 2008 in relation with the French proposal of a UfM and the Polish one for an Eastern Partnership point to a fundamental problem: the EU lacks cohesion in the strategy determining the leadership of the relations with its neighbours. On that same topic, Michael Emerson explains that “there are two broad options: either the EU takes the lead in these regional neighbourhood initiatives, or its member states closest to the region in question are mandated by the EU to take the lead for it (...) Confusion over this strategic question risks wasted energies in political and bureaucratic competitions and functional inefficiencies within the EU and its member states, and confusions too for the Med partner states”.<sup>18</sup>

## Soft Europeanisation: Other Options for Spain?

In response to unilateralism and to the French decision to adopt a new initiative limited to the countries bordering the Mediterranean, Spain suggested to focus on reinforcing the existing framework, thus increasing the development of its potential. In this sense, Miguel Ángel Moratinos suggested on *El País* the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Union. The Minister of Foreign Affairs opted for a more ambitious update of the Barcelona Process including all EU members as indicated by the concept of “union” which would consolidate the political dimension of the project.<sup>19</sup>

French representatives became gradually aware that the success of the yet called Mediterranean Union depended on the way the proposal would be perceived. It should not seem solely subordinated to French interests. The support of countries unquestionably Mediterranean such as Italy and Spain would be highly beneficial; that is how, in the Rome call (“appel de Rome”) of December 20, 2007, Sarkozy, Prodi and Zapatero agreed to jointly launch the UfM.<sup>20</sup>

Why did Spain decide to support Sarkozy? There are two compatible hypotheses. First, the decision was in concordance with the country and its government’s interests. Also, Spain had incentives to maintain excellent relations with France, whether in an EU context or within a bilateral perspective: terrorism, energy, infrastructures, particularly relevant in this context. In this sense, Zapatero had made the reinforcement of the arrangement with Paris prevail over any other issue. In order to make the project more acceptable, the French diplomacy decided to respect the red lines drawn by Spain, that is: the implication of the Commission, a new architecture, the Mediterranean looking like a counterpart of the Barcelona Process and decoupling the Mediterranean policy from Turkey’s accession process.<sup>21</sup>

However, the “Rome call” did not imply a Spanish enthusiastic commitment to Sarkozy’s project. On one hand, Spain could not consider it as its own initiative; on the other, this took place on the sidelines of parliamentary elections and, consequently, international affairs were less central to the government’s agenda. In the end, these circumstances would leave the necessary space to a non-Mediterranean country, Germany, firmly opposed to Sarkozy’s unilateral weak attempts and led to reorientate the French proposition towards the Barcelona Process. In view of this strategy of soft Europeanisation adopted by Spain, Germany fiercely defended European norms (Euro-Mediterranean

Partnership) and imposed a hard Europeanisation rationale to the French proposal.

From the beginning, Germany was, together with Spain, the EU country where the proposition of a Mediterranean Union had aroused the most suspicion. The malaise was understandable considering that the initial project excluded Berlin, leaving it with an observer role. Besides, it was worrying to see that a country that would preside over the EU in the second semester of 2008 could hold positions that were not very “European” in terms of foreign policy. Yet, Germany was not fully contented with the modification brought about the “Rome call” and it urged that the UfM be in line with a European Union logic, implying the full participation of all EU member states.

At a time where the French-German relation showed signs of fragility, Sarkozy accepted Merkel’s propositions. What was Spain’s stance in that context? It appears in private statements that members of the Spanish diplomatic corps were permanently in touch with Germany and, without an actual joint strategy, Berlin and Madrid would have shared the same objective, each manoeuvring according to their means and limitations. For others, Spain’s discreet actions would have put in peril the prestige of its Mediterranean policy.<sup>22</sup> The situation was not favourable to a Spanish diplomatic activism considering that the electoral period was followed by José Luis Zapatero’s investiture negotiations, the formation of a new government and a reorganisation of the Ministry of foreign affairs.

### **From the Paris Summit to the Barcelona Secretariat**

The Spanish diplomacy collaborated with France to secure the success of the Paris Summit. In the words of the minister Moratinos, after convincing Turkey to attend the summit, Spain also acted as an intermediary between Arabs and Israelis in the draft of conclusions.<sup>23</sup> Besides, Spain together with Italy strove to make the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative, – focusing on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises on both rims of the Mediterranean – one of the projects sponsored by Euro-Mediterranean leaders.<sup>24</sup> In the months following the summit, Spain began competing against Malta, Tunis and Marseilles to make Barcelona the headquarters of the UfM.<sup>25</sup> In the end, the Spanish diplomacy managed to introduce the “Barcelona” brand in the this new phase of Euro-Mediterranean relations thus emphasising the continuity with the 13 year Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the role played by Spain in the process.

After all the changes brought in the UfM project, a summit was convened in the French capital. As opposed to the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean summit of 2005, the majority of leaders from the South and East of the Mediterranean were present. The summit was a diplomatic success as it reinforced the image of the Euro-Mediterranean relations as a pertinent framework for political dialogue. This was illustrated by the bilateral meetings between Syria and Lebanon, Abbas and Olmert and also by the fact that the summit was used to pursue the Turkish-led talks between Syria and Israel.

If the Paris Summit gave a decisive boost to the formation of new institutions (co-presidency, Secretariat, etc.), it could not however resolve the problems likely to jeopardise the continuity of the UfM; for instance the absence of defined functions, the location and composition of the Secretariat, ambiguous phrases regarding the participation of the Arab League, the unsolved problem of the articulation of the EU term Presidency, and the incapacity to define a way to carry out new projects (means, members, operating rules).

From a Spanish perspective, one of the positive results of the Paris Summit was its subscription to the Euro-Mediterranean spirit with the participation of all EU member states, and the confirmation of Madrid's priority projects among which the Mediterranean solar plan and the Business development initiative. While the Spanish took advantage of the Summit to make official their desire to turn Barcelona into the headquarters of the secretariat, the decision would still be postponed to the ministerial conference of Marseilles.

After the Paris Summit, Spain began to worry that the negotiation between the members of the UfM would be blocked by the dissent opposing Israelis to Arabs regarding the participation of the Arab League in the structures of the UfM. Madrid pursued its effort to make Barcelona the headquarters of the Secretariat. From July to November of 2008, Spain used all its assets, including the relations between the royal houses, to achieve this strategic goal. And it was at the ministerial conference of Marseilles that the Catalan capital was chosen to host the Secretariat. Moreover, a series of important decisions were adopted at that meeting: 1) the establishment of five deputy secretary-generals; 2) the participation of the Arab League within all the institutions of the UfM; 3) the simplification of this new phase of Euro-Mediterranean relations<sup>26</sup> – UfM; 4) an agenda confirming the continuity of the priorities and rationale that guided the Euro-Mediterranean partners in the past 14 years.

If Marseille was seen as a success, it is not only for its participation rate but also because it prevented partners' divergences stemming from the Arab-Israeli conflict from undermining the UfM. In that sense, Spain played an active and positive role because of its desire to avoid a new failure in Euro-Mediterranean relations and its hope to see Barcelona host the Secretariat, thus reinforcing its pivotal role in Euro-Mediterranean relations.

### **Loss of Leadership or Discreet Efficiency?**

There was a debate in Spain, on both academic and political levels, on the leadership in terms of Mediterranean matters. Was Spain dispossessed of its leading position by France? Or to the contrary: did the Spanish government adopt a responsible and constructive approach which, in turn, contributed to the success of the Paris Summit and to that of the ministerial conference of Marseilles while conserving its Mediterranean policy prestige?

At the political level, there was unanimous consensus in 1995 – despite the tense atmosphere between the two main political forces of the country – on the positive role played by the government in the creation of the Barcelona Process; the evolution of this process was much more controversial in the following years. Indeed, the Popular Party did not hesitate to criticise the level of participation and the content of the documents approved at the Barcelona Summit of 2005.<sup>27</sup>

The same situation seemed to occur in 2008. Although there was consensus on the fundamental character of the Mediterranean and on Spain's interest to host the headquarters of the secretariat or other Mediterranean institutions, the leaders of the Popular Party vaunted France's diplomacy, contrasting it with the supposed failures of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party's (PSOE) prior projects.<sup>28</sup> The Spanish conservatives got to the point of claiming a certain envy towards the French results in comparison with the Spanish scanty responsibility in the process. Nonetheless, the critiques emanating from the opposition faded away with the choice of Barcelona, a diplomatic victory enthusiastically welcomed by all political forces.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond the political quarrels, the debate is real and should be dealt with in the most objective manner. One ought to recognise the consistent and patient work accomplished by the Spanish government and diplomacy. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Spain did have, up until the Marseilles conference, a problem of visibility and communication. In a way, Madrid left in 2006-2007 a vacant

space for other countries, especially France and its new President, to occupy. This was exacerbated by the fact that the foreign policy played a secondary role in José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's first term. In contrast, according to political leaders and Spanish diplomats, the conveyed defensive and reactive picture did not reflect the daily implication of the executive.

As a matter of fact, since 2006, the Spanish efforts were mainly channelled into the defence of the Barcelona Process against the criticisms in an attempt to preserve the "Barcelona" brand by establishing Mediterranean organisations in Spain or for instance, in the case of the Anna Lindh Foundation, to promote Spanish candidates for executive positions. Thus, from Sarkozy's first addresses to the ministerial conference of Marseilles, Spain focused on either preserving the "Barcelona" brand or making Barcelona the headquarters of the UfM. However after the Marseilles summit and especially within the perspective of the 2010 Spanish presidency, these actions might come with more concrete proposals together with a high flying strategy.

### **Epilogue: 2010 Spanish Presidency**

Spain has always endeavoured to fully benefit from its EU presidential semesters to renew its European commitment and to promote priorities within the EU, in this case the strengthening of the relations with the Mediterranean countries. Moreover, there are several indicators suggesting that foreign policy will have a more significant part in the agenda and government's priorities throughout the second term. This became visible in Zapatero's conference in Madrid in front of an audience composed of diplomats and international affairs experts.<sup>30</sup> The Mediterranean was an important part of the speech which reminded the audience of the Barcelona Process fifteenth anniversary in 2010 and emphasised that the event was the perfect opportunity to contemplate broader perspectives; and Spain should seize that opportunity to present ambitious proposals. The head of government determined four action axes: first, the joint promotion with Algeria of a "Euro-Mediterranean Chart for energy and climate change"; second, a joint proposition with France and Egypt of a "specific cooperation framework for food security"; third, within the context of illiteracy in some countries in the southern Mediterranean, the commitment with Morocco to a "socio-cultural and pedagogical reform in the Euro-Mediterranean" with a "particular emphasis on women's education"; and last, to admit that the "actual European budget framework cannot take up the challenges and ambitions needed in the region" and consequently stay in

contact with French, Italian, Greek and Portuguese Presidents in order to make the necessary qualitative improvements.

It is clear that the limitations of the common budget in tow with the international financial crisis have eroded one of the biggest incentives of the UfM: obtaining more financial resources (public and private). This is not the sole difficulty that will be seen in the development of the UfM, and therefore, in the 2010 Spanish presidency. The governance of the UfM is between the hands of a new institutional framework co-presided by an EU country and a Mediterranean partner. Unlike the Barcelona Process, the Commission has no horizontal or vertical compartments. Despite the technocratic and economicist character of the UfM, the former will be more vulnerable than its predecessor to the paralysis resulting from the Arab-Israel conflict.

For example, the 2010 summit (during the Spanish presidency semester) should be celebrated in a Southern country. Yet, as the Spanish Secretary of State pointed out, it is very improbable that any country “reaches a consensus to accommodate all delegations –essentially Israel— in which case Barcelona would undertake that task.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to budget and institutional difficulties, there are the legitimacy problems that the implementation of the UfM can cause to the European Normative power. The UfM economicism neglects the normative dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean *acquis* (human rights, democracy); hence the vehement reaction of some sectors of civil society in Southern countries, strongly committed to values defended by the EU. In this sense, one can wonder to what extent the UfM fits in the EU Mediterranean policy (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, European Neighbourhood Policy). One can also question the EU’s own foreign policy, whether *ad extram* or *ad intram* (internal cohesion).

These questions and a few others, pending, remain fundamental to the strengthening of the Mediterranean policy. Will Spain have the capacity to give that impulse and reposition itself at the vanguard of Euro-Mediterranean relations? Will the regional context help it? Or will the Middle East conflict turn the efforts made by the government and diplomacy unavailing? How will Spain manage the incompatibilities between the development of European foreign policy, with a strong normative base, and the implementation of technical projects inherent in the UfM? These answers will be available to us by mid-2010.

## NOTES

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12. Among which: Richard Gillespie, “Onward but not Upward : The Barcelona Conference of 2005”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2006, p. 271-278 ; Muriel Asseburg, “Barcelona + 10. No Breakthrough in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”, *SWP Comments*, No. 55, 2005.



13. This will be confirmed at the Parliament by Miguel Ángel Moratinos, “Comparecencia del Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación para informar sobre la cumbre Euromediterránea”, Comisión of Foreign Affairs, Session No. 4, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, IX term, No. 61, 23 July 2008, pp. 16-17.
14. Juan Prat, “La Asociación Euromediterránea? Quo vadis Barcelona?”, *Monographías CESEDEN*, No. 86, 2006.
15. “Nicolas Sarkozy’s address on the night of the results of the second round of the presidential elections”, Paris, 6 May 2007.
16. Simon Nutall, “Coherence and Consistency”, in Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 2005.
17. The proposal is made at CAGRE in May 2008. See European Union Council, *Comunicado de Prensa. Sesión num. 2870 del Consejo, Asuntos Generales y Relaciones Exteriores. Relaciones Exteriores*, Brussels 26-27 May 2008, 9868/08 (Presse 141), p. 24.
18. Michael Emerson, “Editorial: Sarkozy’s Union of the Mediterranean”, *CEPS European Neighbourhood Watch*, No. 31, available in [www.ceps.eu](http://www.ceps.eu), (consulted in October 2008).
19. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, “Del Proceso de Barcelona a la Unión Euro-mediterránea”, *El País*, 2 August 2007.
20. “Appel de Rome pour la Méditerranée de la France, l’Italie, et l’Espagne», 20 December 2007.
21. See Eduard Soler i Lecha, “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. Genesis, evolution and implications for Spain’s Mediterranean Policy”, *OPEX Working Paper*, No. 28, Madrid, *Fundación Alternativas/Fundació CIDOB*, 2008.
22. For the discussion at the Spanish parliament between minister Moratinos and deputy Jordi Xuclà on the role of Spain and Germany “Comparecencia del Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación para informar sobre las líneas generales de la política de su departamento”, External Affairs Committee, Session No. 2, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, IX term, No. 27, 22 May 2008, p. 13.
23. “Comparecencia del Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación para informar sobre la cumbre Euromediterránea”, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
24. This initiative can be traced back to the XIV Spanish-Italian Summit of Ibiza, 20 February 2007. Zapatero and Prodi announced the coordination of the policy protecting Spanish and Italian products, and the creation of the Mediterranean Agency for Business Development supporting small and

- medium-sized enterprises on the southern rim with the financing of the European Investment Bank (EIB). The idea to create such agency was part of a long term strategy to create a Euro-Mediterranean Bank.
25. Zapatero announced Barcelona's candidature, see "Zapatero confía en llevar a Barcelona la sede del secretariado de la Unión", *El País*, 14 July 2008.
  26. Spanish diplomacy last minute manoeuvres are believed to be the cause of the change of the wording of the European Council of March 13-14 2008 which consecrated for the first time the "Barcelona Process" expression for the "Union for the Mediterranean". Spain continued defending this new appellation until Barcelona was designated headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean.
  27. See discussion between Bernardino León and Popular Party deputy Francesc Ricomà, "Comparecencia del señor secretario de Estado de Asuntos Exteriores y para Iberoamérica (León Gross), para informar sobre la cumbre Euro-mediterránea", Foreign Affairs Committee, Session No. 26, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, IX term, No. 458, 21 December 2005.
  28. See deputy Francesc Ricomà's speech in "Comparecencia del Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación para informar sobre la cumbre Euromediterránea", Foreign Affairs Committee, Session No. 4, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, IX legislation, No. 61, 23 July 2008, pp. 9-10.
  29. See debate at the Parliament "Comparecencia del señor Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación para tratar de dos reuniones internacionales recientes de relevancia para la política exterior española: la Conferencia de Marsella sobre la Unión para el Mediterráneo y la cumbre iberoamericana de El Salvador" Foreign Affairs Committee, Session No. 26, *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, IX term, No. 170, 10 December 2008.
  30. Conference "En interés de España: una política exterior comprometida", Madrid, Prado Museum, 16 June 2008.
  31. Declarations by Diego López Garrido in "Acuerdo para poder dirigirse al Tribunal de la UE en catalán", *El País*, 10 February 2009.