

The European Parliament and the Debate over Sarkozy's Mediterranean Initiative: A Preliminary Assessment

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RÉSUMÉ

L'ambitieux plan pour la création d'une «Union Méditerranéenne» que le président français Nicolas Sarkozy a présenté initialement dans le cadre de sa campagne présidentielle en février 2007, a créé une discordance entre les États-membres de l'Union Européenne, plus particulièrement dans le cadre du Partenariat pour la Méditerranée connu aussi sous le nom de Processus de Barcelone. Cet article traite de l'évolution de cette question au sein du Parlement européen. En effet, le Parlement européen est un acteur de plus en plus important à la fois pour la politique européenne et pour les relations internationales. On doit s'interroger s'il est prouvé que les députés adoptent, sur ce sujet, une politique «européenne», ou si au contraire les préférences nationales l'emportent toujours.

ABSTRACT

The ambitious plan for the creation of a 'Mediterranean Union' that French President Nicolas Sarkozy initially presented as part of his presidential campaign in February 2007 has created disagreement among European Union member-states, especially within the context of the already existing EMP/Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the 'Barcelona Process'). This article deals with the issue as it has developed within the European Parliament. Indeed the EP is a growing actor in both European politics and international relations. We ask if there is evidence of a Europeanised view on the subject among MEPs or whether instead national preferences still prevail.

Introduction

The ambitious plan for the creation of a 'Mediterranean Union' that French President Nicolas Sarkozy initially presented as part of his presidential campaign in February 2007 has undoubtedly created disagreement among

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European Union member-states, especially within the context of the already existing EMP/Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the 'Barcelona Process'). Over time, Sarkozy's idea has been - on the basis of a compromise - integrated into a relaunched and modified EMP, finally re-named a 'Union for the Mediterranean'/UfM in November 2008'. It consists nowadays of 43 members: the 27 EU member states together with 16 partners across the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The original 10 southern partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, the Palestinian Authority, and Turkey. Plus new members that have now also joined the UfM: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Monaco and Mauritania. Libya enjoys an observer status.

There has been a plethora of reactions and studies to the Sarkozy initiative. Put briefly, there were at least two identifiable camps: those in its favour on the grounds that the EMP had basically failed; and those opposed, as they considered it represented a direct threat to the whole Barcelona Process, indeed to the cohesion of the European Union (EU) as a single international actor in general and to its common external policies in particular.

The 'story' of this debate has been presented in many other publications but we will still offer an overview in order to put this article within its wider context (see below). However, we will focus mainly on the debate that the Sarkozy initiative has generated within the European Parliament. Our aim is to analyze the position of various of its members (MEPs) because the Parliament in Strasbourg/Brussels is becoming an important international actor in its own right. But also because the Parliament is an institution worth analyzing in order to find out if there is evidence of a "Europeanisation process" within its own midst. The Sarkozy initiative lends itself 'perfectly' to such an exercise: can we identify clear cleavages? For instance, is there evidence of positions adopted according to national lines (Mediterranean versus non-Mediterranean states, big versus small states), or according to ideological political ones (Left versus Right)? If it is the former case, then obviously there is little chance of identifying a Europeanisation process among MEPs. But if it is the latter, then perhaps some evidence of such a process could be found. Undoubtedly, Europeanisation is a long term phenomenon, but after so many decades of efforts in that direction, it is legitimate to try and test its validity in one of the leading EU institutions.²

The research will be conducted on the basis of MEPs' speeches, press releases, as well as parliamentary proceedings, resolutions, reports, and other sources, including secondary ones (media, newspapers, etc.). This article

consists of four parts. Before we analyze the question at hand in detail in Part 3 ('The EP debate'), Part 1 will put this study in its wider context by looking at the EMP and reactions to the Sarkozy initiative. As for Part 2, it will offer a general evaluation of the parliamentary dimension of Euro-Mediterranean relations. In the Conclusions, we will summarize our findings and present routes for further analysis and research.

The Sarkozy Plan and its Wider Context

The consensus among observers of the EMP is that «so far it has not achieved many tangible results»³. It remains a *zone of conflict, instability and poverty*, and, of course, with plenty of *authoritarian and totalitarian regimes* in the South. There has been little progress in any of the three EMP dimensions: security/politics, economics, and even in the human dimension. There is still a long way to go for the creation of a *zone of peace, stability, and prosperity* (cf. the 1995 Barcelona Declaration).

In brief, the economic development gap between the two shores of the Sea has, since 1995, grown, not reduced. "Perhaps the most dramatic economic fact [is] the persistence and indeed the increase in massive income differentials between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, rising from 15:1 a decade or so ago, to perhaps 18:1 today". The now daily drama of Europe's *boat people* continues unabated. "Week after week boatloads of desperate people, many of them already dead or dying from dehydration and exposure, are found along the coasts and in neighbouring waters [of EU Mediterranean states]"⁴. The initial hope to adopt "a Charter for Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean" has long vanished. Conflicts of all sorts continue to proliferate: from the Western Sahara, to the Cyprus Problem, let alone the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian issue, not to mention Lebanon or Kurdistan. The Mediterranean remains a 'zone of conflicts'⁵. Finally, all assessments (for instance the 2008 *Freedom House Index of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* or the 2008 *Reporters sans Frontières Report*)⁶ continue to give credence to Heiner Hänggi and Fred Tanner's evaluation in 2005: "[t]he Greater Mediterranean is one of the regions in the world with the largest democratic deficit"⁷.

The Sarkozy initiative: reactions, developments and implications for EU policy

Within the Union, the initial reaction to the Sarkozy idea⁸ was positive in some countries, in particular Portugal, Spain (albeit only for a very short

period, see below), but also in other countries like Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Israel⁹. However Germany and the European Commission, let alone Turkey¹⁰, strongly opposed it from the start. The Spanish reaction is important because after some discrepant and confusing views between its Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, Spain joined the opposition front by strongly defending the *Barcelona acquis*¹¹. In early August 2007, Miguel Ángel Moratinos had claimed that: “The time has come to accept that the [Barcelona] Process has concluded and to construct [instead] an authentic geographical space, by establishing a Euro-Mediterranean Union”¹²; whereas José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero had initially declared that “The reception (to the idea) was very favourable on my part”¹³, before making it sure that it would not prosper. First by securing the support of Italy, whose PM Romano Prodi had stopped short from endorsing the Sarkozy initiative¹⁴. And then, following a series of bilateral and multi-lateral meetings¹⁵, by re-defining the Initiative, once (at the request of the March 2008 European Council meeting) the May 2008 European Commission Report was finally published¹⁶. In it, it was made clear that, by dropping one key Sarkozy initial idea, it was no longer a question that those countries that know best the area would take the lead in the Barcelona Process; the EU had re-gained its preponderance.¹⁷

The above defence of the *Barcelona acquis* came clearly to the fore not only during the July 2008 “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean” Paris Summit (on the eve of the EU European Council meeting) which showed a solution which restored the primacy of EU unity. Indeed, the saga lasted until the final decision about the location of the UfM Secretariat. Sarkozy hoped that at least his initial ‘Mediterranean slant’ would be rewarded by a Secretariat based in either Tunisia or Egypt. But the Spaniards pushed strongly, firmly and effectively for the Catalan capital, Barcelona¹⁸. In a rare show of total solidarity in objectives and means, all levels of Spains’ quasi-federal system of government succeeded in discouraging any alternative venues, including that of Malta.¹⁹

As a result, where do we stand in early 2009? Some academic observers, like Bichara Khader, have argued that: «Plus d'un an après l'évocation de l'UM, force est de reconnaître que ce projet, présenté d'emblée comme une initiative française, a été si chamboulé qu'il devient 'décaféiné' et presque méconnaissable».²⁰

But such an assessment is not universally shared. Gonzalo Escribano and Alejandro Lorca²¹ contend instead that the French initiative did have a positive impact in revitalizing a stalled process. They view it more as a continuation of past practice rather than a total break from it. But Escribano and Lorca point

out that it is equally possible to overlay the continuity between the Union for the Mediterranean and other past or present EU policies such as the Barcelona Process or the ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy)²². In particular, there is no guarantee that the ENP will be compatible with the UfM for the following reasons: the ENP approach distances itself from the EMP's regional-building objective, mainly due to its intrinsic heterogeneity. In addition, it suffers from a clear ambiguity about whether it represents an alternative to enlargement for the Southern ENP partners or a pre-accession phase for its non-Mediterranean partners²³. Furthermore, does it really represent anything new?²⁴ Its most fundamental weakness remains the lack of South-South regional economic integration, which is vital for any success in Euro-Mediterranean relations.²⁵

This part of the debate on EU external policies is further complicated by existing policies or the Union's knack of continuously launching new ones. In the realm of existing policies, one could refer to the EU's Northern Dimension, which shows that at the end of the day Sarkozy's initial stress on a Southern Dimension only reflected a real-life division of labour along geographical lines among EU states. This reality is confirmed by the launch of the Eastern Partnership, under Swedish and Polish leadership²⁶. The latter has a particular implication for the issue under study in these pages as it has offered the possibility of setting up the so-called 'EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly' bringing together national parliamentarians from the Eastern ENP members and the EP²⁷.

The Parliamentary Dimension of Euro-Mediterranean Relations: Presenting the Wider Context of the Sarkozy Initiative

The international activities of national parliaments, together with the appearance of transnational parliamentary bodies of all types have proliferated in recent years, mainly after WWII but most importantly since the seminal world events in 1989-1991. This is in part due to a process of economic globalization worldwide, a relative development of democracy again throughout the world, and the appearance of the necessary technological advances for making parliamentary diplomacy possible (internet and other communication 'revolutions' in particular). Those developments have allowed for more than 'just' technical transnational parliamentary cooperation to take place.²⁸ One important way through which parliaments engage in regionalism is via the setting up of International Parliamentary Assemblies, usually in a formal and highly institutionalised manner, based on written statutes and rules of procedures²⁹.

The current proliferation of such parliamentary bodies and activities is also visible in the Mediterranean. Various national and transnational parliaments have been active in the region. Since the setting up of the Barcelona Process in 1995, there has also been a parliamentary dimension to it, initially in the form of a Forum (1998-2003) and since 2004 as a Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA).³⁰

In addition to the EMPA, from late 2007, there is a Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) which possesses two important different characteristics: the first one is institutional: it consists of the *national* parliaments of the *riparian* states, and as such the EP does not belong to it. The second is circumstantial, although not devoid of political significance: neither Spain nor Israel currently participate in its activities. Initially both parliaments were involved but for different reasons, none of them is currently participating, although its new President (since November 2008), France's Rudy Salles, has declared in his acceptance speech that one of his main priorities was to ensure that both Spanish and Israeli MPs would return to the 'PAM family'³¹.

However, parliamentary activities in the Mediterranean do not limit themselves to the EP, the EMPA or the PAM. It is possible to argue that the following parliamentary bodies have a direct interest and impact in Euro-Mediterranean politics and policies: in addition to the national parliaments of the now UfM³², there are also transnational parliamentary bodies³³ with a multitude of overlapping memberships, some going well beyond the geographical zone or proximity of the *Mare Nostrum*. For instance we could list to the following ones: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the NAA (NATO Parliamentary Assembly), or the PA of the WEU, let alone the AIPU (Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union) for the Southern partner countries.

Out of the many available parliamentary bodies dealing with the Mediterranean, what follows in this article considers the EP's reaction to the Sarkozy initiative. Why is it important to deal with the EP and not another body? First, because, both as a result of internal developments and as a consequence of a more forceful EP presence in world affairs, the Parliament is an active actor in the European integration process, and its international role has increased over the years. There are several mechanisms dealing with international issues at its disposal, be they resolutions, reports, debates, question time and public hearings. The EP also has numerous Committees and Sub-Committees dealing in one way or another with international affairs. In addition it possesses 30 permanent parliamentary delegations with third countries. There is also the more traditional and expanding 'power of the purse', especially in cooperation

and aid policies or other trade and association agreements. No doubt there are no other parliaments that so frequently debate events in other parts of the world, or denounce human rights violations and breaches of peace.

Second, because the EP is the most sophisticated and advanced transnational, *voire* supranational, parliamentary body. As such its reaction to the Sarkozy Initiative deserves attention. In particular, such a study is needed in order to find out if there is a Europeanisation process in the EP or not. It is also important because there is open contestation as to which parliamentary body will 'dominate' the Euro-Mediterranean landscape: the EMPA or the PAM, although we will not address this particular issue here.

The EP Debate Over the Sarkozy Initiative, 2007-2009

In the European Parliament (see political groups list below), two parties are particularly important as between them they have represented the bulk of the Parliament since direct elections in 1979. Although one should note that marginal parties have a greater leeway in Brussels/Strasbourg than they do in national parliaments, especially 'protest vote' groupings. This is due to a variety of reasons, the main one being the special nature of the EP which is not a true parliament but rather a parliamentary dimension to the European integration process. Its legislative role has expanded over the years (especially in co-decision matters, with the Council of Ministers), but it is true that as far as Euro-elections go, they remain clearly ones of 'second-rate', with very low turn-outs (as the June 2009 turnout confirmed). The political groups for the 2004-2009 parliamentary term (the period that covers the developments under study here) were as follows:

- The PPE-DE = Group of the European People's Party Christian Democrats- European Democrats
- the Socialist PSE = Socialist Group in the European Parliament
- the Liberals ALDE/ ADLE = Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
- the UEN = Union for Europe of the Nations Group
- the Greens (Verts-ALE) = Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- the United Left GUE-NGL = Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left
- the ID = Independence/Democracy Group

The year of 2007 saw various members of the EP disagreeing with the proposal of Nicolas Sarkozy for a 'Mediterranean Union'. For instance, German MEP Elmar Brok (PPE-DE) reproduced the same position to that of Chancellor Angela Merkel (see above) in November 2007 when he declared the following during an EP debate on the ENP and the situation in Georgia³⁴:

It is not a matter of the Central European Member States alone looking eastward and the Southern Europeans looking southward; the whole European Community is responsible for both parts. For this reason, I have to say that I cannot accept proposals such as that for a Mediterranean Union' (Debate, 14/11/07).

Likewise, Austrian MEP Hannes Swoboda (PSE) did not hide his concern for a possible division within the EU if Sarkozy's proposal materialized:

I believe that such abstruse ideas, if you will pardon the expression, as a Mediterranean Union that would draw a line right across the European Union, a Mediterranean Union in which, as President Sarkozy suggested yesterday to the Conference of Presidents, the other Member States of the EU could have observer status, should and must be prevented, to which end we must have a common neighbourhood policy and work together to strengthen relations (Debate, 14/11/07).

In the same vein, Portuguese MEP Jamila Madeira (PSE) also expressed her opposition to French President's idea. She - inter alia – asserted that:

The proposal tabled by President Sarkozy, meanwhile, on the Mediterranean Union is completely out of context. Although it is extremely useful because it revitalises the debate on the Mediterranean, it proposes on the one hand to dismantle the current partnership while, on the other, it disowns the EU's fundamental principles regarding the supremacy of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms in particular, considering them to be secondary issues according to a case-by-case pragmatism that would foster a multi-speed relationship (Debates, 14/11/07).

After presenting the EP's overall initial opposition to the Mediterranean Union idea, we now turn to the years 2008 and 2009 as they cover the period that saw the change of name and focus from a 'Mediterranean Union' to the 'Union for the Mediterranean' for the reasons discussed above (especially the agreement achieved in the 13-14 March 2008 European Council). That period saw a clear shift in this flimsy support and the (re-)appearance of

nationally drawn lines. The following analysis is based on two debates and two documents (a resolution and a report) from the European Parliament activities and documents, respectively of 5 June 2008 and of 19 February 2009. Similar opposition to the one described for 2007 can be seen in those events and documents. But the section will go one step further and address the original research question about a possible or otherwise Europeanisation of the EP on that particular issue. What appears as initial support for the revised Plan shows in fact that it does not go beyond traditional national interests positions.

It is true that during the 5 June 2008 EP debate on the Sarkozy initiative that was held in Brussels most MEPs had endorsed the French President's idea for a new European policy towards the Mediterranean³⁵. Its ensuing resolution on the 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' of the same day firmly supported the proposed development as 'a consolidation of the Euro-Mediterranean area based on democratic principles and respect for the rule of law and human rights'. The resolution also expressed the hope of the EP that this new initiative could bring added value to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and called the countries that were not part of the Barcelona Process, 'to share the Barcelona acquis as to move forward towards the same goals'.³⁶

During the debate, Italian MEP Vito Bonsignore who spoke on behalf of the EPP-ED Group had stated for instance that:

We applaud President Sarkozy for having started the ball rolling, for having aroused the interest of the European Council and for having prompted a renewal of our Mediterranean policy, which my Group supports and hopes will prove tangible and rapid.

In the same vein, on behalf of the PSE, German MEP Martin Schultz, had also expressed his agreement with the French President proposal arguing that:

The Mediterranean Union is a project which could lead to more peace and stability via the economic integration of our two regions, so it is an extremely good idea, and it is one which we Socialists therefore fully endorse.

In addition to the two major political forces in the Parliament, more examples in the same direction can be found among the smaller parties: For instance, French MEP Thierry Cornillet (ALDE Liberals) showed his enthusiasm by saying:

Our resolution makes no mistake. There was no misplaced initiative. On the contrary, there was a timely and welcome initiative: a new

initiative, new impetus, new momentum. That proves that it was at least possible to perfect the Barcelona Process and we will all focus our efforts in that direction. We welcome thus to this Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean.

On behalf of the UEN Group, Italian MEP Salvatore Tatarella seconded that opinion and ‘unreservedly’ backed Sarkozy’s initiative, ‘which has pushed - or even propelled - Europe into a position from where it can reclaim a vital role in the Mediterranean.’

But there were also signs of dissent. French MP H el ene Flautre (Greens) stated that: ‘The European Commission has put forward a good proposal. It has transformed a *relatively clumsy political initiative* - the Union for the Mediterranean - into a renewed political ambition for a strengthened Barcelona Process. That is an excellent thing’ (our emphasis). Another French MEP, Patrick Louis (IND/DEM), confirmed this important nuance: ‘Nicolas Sarkozy’s initiative is excellent in principle: it breathes *new life into a Barcelona Process*’ (our emphasis). Albeit the importance of their respective political groups is limited, it is worth noting their nationality. When put within the context of the statement that follows, made on 20 May 2008 by the EP President, Germany’s Hans-Gert P ottering (EPP), then it becomes clear that the support was rather superficial. Referring to the European Commission communication he declared that:

The Communication recognises the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly as the legitimate parliamentary representation of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean as requested by EMPA in its Plenary Session in Athens on 28 March 2008. Furthermore the Commission has taken into account both parliamentary assemblies’ views and strongly supports the strengthening of the role of EMPA in relations with Mediterranean partners. With the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership enters a new phase. It will become stronger, more efficient, and, closer to citizens.³⁷

Thus, one can identify two important issues, one that was already present in the wider debate over the Sarkozy initiative (see above) and one that is specific to the parliamentary dimension of Euro-Mediterranean relations. The first refers to the role (or better put, the initial absence of a role) for the EU and especially its Commission, but also of other non-Mediterranean EU countries, and especially Germany.

German MEP Martin Schultz (PES) could not be more explicit when he said in the EP on June 5, 2008:

President Sarkozy's mistake from the outset was to give the impression that the Union for the Mediterranean was a Franco-French idea [...]. May I also remind you that when Mr. Sarkozy came to the House right at the beginning, in order to introduce the idea of the Mediterranean Union to the Conference of Presidents for the first time, I asked him: 'Can you tell me which role the Federal Republic of Germany should play in your Mediterranean Union?', and he answered: Le statut d'un observateur. [...] He has since become more reasonable, and that is why he must be congratulated (Debate, 05/06/08).

The second dimension has to do with the question of which parliamentary body would represent the parliamentary dimension of the UfM? The EMPA or possibly the PAM? The EP could not be clearer about its role in the process and therefore the predominance it sees for the EMPA, which is the only parliamentary assembly of the two it belongs to. For instance, French MEP Tokia Saifi (PPE-DE) stressed the importance of the EMPA by arguing that this Assembly will be 'recognised as a form of parliamentary support to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership' (Debates, 05/06/08). Likewise, Spanish MEP Carlos Carnero Gonzalez (PSE) noted: 'I want to say that in that case the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly must be the legislative body that lends democratic legitimacy to this process' (Debates, 05/06/08). Other socialists, such as French MEP Kader Arif and Polish MEP Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, issued similar statements³⁸.

There are obviously other topics that were discussed during several debates, reports and resolutions on the issue. But to a large extent they confirm a lack of Europeanisation as each MEP involved would push for a more 'national' agenda. For instance, and without claiming to be exhaustive, we will focus on the following issues: Eastern Europe, Turkey, Cyprus, regional military arms race, and finally migration. We turn now to these issues.

To start with Eastern Europe, for instance, Polish MEP Konrad Szymanski (UEN) concentrated on the relations between the Union and its Eastern neighbours. He argued that:

As a neighbour of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia I very much hope that no damaging competition will arise between the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood policies. The two should instead be mutually complementary. If we are to be successful in budgetary

negotiations, for example, we need to stand shoulder to shoulder. [...] I am today strongly supporting strengthening and renewing the political framework for neighbourhood as regards the Mediterranean countries. We support the projects relating to credits, communication and energy. We also support institutional reforms affecting the South. We trust that in the future similar support will be offered for strengthening policy towards the East. (Debates, 05/06/08).

Clearly, Sarkozy's proposal was not considered to be a priority for Poland. German MEP Vural Öger (PSE) - of Turkish origin - did not hesitate in his speech on 5 June 2008 to negatively comment on Sarkozy's initial ambition, although the 'Mediterranean Union' had by then been replaced by the UfM³⁹:

Looking at the outcomes, however, it is clear that Mr Sarkozy's original idea, launched in February 2007, has failed on three counts. Firstly, a possible alternative to EU accession for Turkey was effectively banished by Spain and Italy with the declaration adopted in Rome in December 2007... (Debate, 05/06/08).

As for the other two counts, Öger added:

Then Chancellor Merkel ensured that EU-Mediterranean relations would be developed further within the existing EU structures. Finally, the Commission has now applied the brakes to Mr Sarkozy's ambitious plans for the secretariat and leadership structure of the project.

He thus championed the idea of a perspective full membership of Turkey in the EU aligning himself with the official position of the Erdogan government. But also to that of the PSE which supports Turkey's attempt to join the EU as a full member mainly on the grounds that this country plays a strategic role in the stabilisation process of the Caucasus and the Middle East regions and with regard to the energy supply issue.⁴⁰

Cypriot MEP Marios Matsakis (ALDE) expressed his concern about the situation in Cyprus, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. He argued:

Commissioner, I was disappointed with your introductory speech, because you did not address some of the major political problems in the Mediterranean. I refer, for example, to the occupation by Israel of land belonging to the Palestinians; to the occupation of Cyprus by Turkey [...]. Unless you address those serious issues, we will not be able to turn the theoretical plans for a Mediterranean Union into a reality (Debate, 05/06/08).

Although Matsakis did not only focus on Cyprus, there is no way to escape from the fact that his speech clearly mirrored a national interest, however legitimate this might be. As Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus remains a crucial and problematic issue, for Matsakis and his compatriots, any plan which aimed at promoting peace and stability in the Mediterranean basin could not ignore the need for a settlement to the Cyprus Question, nor the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Speaking on behalf of the Greens/ALE, German MEP Rebecca Harms expressed her concern about the potential increase of military equipment in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East. She declared in the same debate:

A great deal has been said about the French President's idea to equip and arm the countries of North Africa and the Middle East with a nuclear capability for civilian but also military use within the framework of the Mediterranean Union. Let me quote Asterix the Gaul here: "They must be crazy, the French!" However, I am now even more concerned about this development, given that these plans have been taken up and are fervently supported by the European Commission as well (Debate, 05/06/08).

Although one could question her assessment about military nuclear proliferation, her overall view reflects as much a national as an ideological bias. Germany and the 'Greens' have shown extreme sensitivity over the use of military force and the question of arms sales. Since the end of World War II, Germany has witnessed one of the most active and widely supported 'peace' movements in Western Europe. The Greens have always mobilized in favour of unilateral disarmament.⁴¹

British MEP Graham Booth (IND/DEM Group), concentrated on the question of the possible consequence of migration from North African countries to the Union and their possible implications for European security. He said:

We have already seen what happens when you allow people from poor countries to have freedom of movement into richer ones. Can you imagine how much more true this will be if North Africa gets this right too? At a time of heightened international terrorism, is it a good idea to have freedom of movement from countries with known Al-Qaeda presences? After the terrorist atrocities in Madrid and London, one would have thought Europe would have learned its lessons. Clearly not! (Debate, 05/06/08).

Spanish MEP José Ignacio Salafranca Sanchez-Neyra (PSE) used a more diplomatic language but focused equally on the problematic issue of immigration and Islamic fundamentalism. He said:

You do not need to come from that region [Mediterranean] to understand, as the Commissioner rightly pointed out, the major problems it faces: migration, mafias trafficking human beings, which unfortunately is not mentioned in the motion for a resolution, drugs, the economic gap between the two sides of the Mediterranean and, of course, radical Islamic fundamentalism, which is one of the greatest black holes in international politics.

Again national biases and ideological views explain those comments much more than any Europeanised approach to the Sarkozy Initiative. For instance, Graham Booth finished his speech in the EP by urging the EU to cease the planned 'Union for the Mediterranean'. His stance reflects his own country's overall caution in accepting immigrants from countries outside the EU. In Britain, both Labour and Conservative politicians, let alone more xenophobic ones, are pressing for strong measures against migration. Polls show that more than 80% of voters endorse this policy.⁴²

But beyond a possible national bias, Graham Booth's speech certainly represented a political one: British euroscepticism. The Eurosceptic flank of the country – to which no doubt Booth's Independence Party clearly belongs⁴³ - believes that Britain's historically proven record in parliamentary democracy is likely to be subsumed under that of EU bureaucracy.⁴⁴ Its leader, Nigel Farage, is a strong supporter of Britain's withdrawal from the EU in order for the country to have its own policy with reference to immigrants.⁴⁵

On the contrary, but still representing national and ideological views rather than Europeanised ones, MEP Francis Wurtz (from the GUE/NGL Group) concentrated on various parameters analysing the relations between the EU and southern Mediterranean countries, such as economic imbalance and the Palestinian problem. On migration, he focused his comments on the question of what he sees as a inhumane treatment of migrants:

The second problem is the humiliating treatment of migrants. The population of these countries is very young. The people want to live yet they do not see any future. Although they are deeply attached to their land, their culture, the history of their civilisation and its impressive contributions – with all due respect to Mr Berlusconi – many of them are looking to Europe and they see their emigrant brothers and sisters

suffering the affronts of which we are all aware: from profiling to discrimination, from detention centres to 'refoulement'.

No doubt, his reference to 'respect' towards the Italian PM was only rhetorical. But in this case as in the others presented above, it is possible to identify a different stance of right-wing and left-wing European political parties towards migration and other issues. Does it represent Europeanisation or just 'uploading' national debates onto the European scene as critics of the claim to the success of such a process have shown? (Debate, 05/06/08).

In early 2009, there was an EP Report ('The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean', dated 19 February 2009) which was previously debated in the EP (18 February) and finally adopted with 51 votes in favour, 44 against and 13 abstentions.⁴⁶ Besides the observation that more MEPs did not actually support it than those that did (a common practice in the EP that creates problems of credibility), the Report reproduces to a large extent the same issues that were discussed in June 2008 and that we have presented above. Thus, further to the 2008 speech by Polish MEP Konrad Smyzanski about the relationship between the EU and its Eastern neighbours, this time round it was Estonian MEP (EPP) Tunne Kelam who focused on the EU's policy towards the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. In particular, Mr. Kelam said:

I welcome the efforts made to further develop the EU's relations in the Euromed region. But I would like also to underline that the EU should not neglect its two other seas – the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. (Debate, 18/02/08).

The debate of February 18, 2009 also saw Spanish MEPs endorsing the European decision for the Permanent Secretariat to be located in Barcelona. In particular, Carlos Carnero Gonzalez (PSE) said:

This is a Union for the Mediterranean that is not ex novo but has come from the deep roots of the Barcelona Process, creating new institutions such as the Permanent Secretariat, which will be in Barcelona. It is something that we welcome as Europeans, as Mediterraneans, as Spaniards and as the parliamentary representatives who asked for it at the time (Debate, 18/02/08).

This excerpt of the speech of Carnero Gonzalez mirrors the clear desire of Spain to play a more active role in the UfM through the Catalan capital (see above). Such an observation can be strengthened by the fact that Carnero

Gonzalez did not speak only for himself in the EP but attempted to represent his Spanish colleagues by using first person plural.

Overall, the Report of 19 February 2009⁴⁷ confirmed three major points: that opening up 'the Barcelona Process-Union for the Mediterranean' to countries not involved in the Partnership until then had increased the likelihood of establishing parity in relations between the EU and the Mediterranean partner countries and of tackling the problems of the region in a comprehensive way. The Parliament was of the view that the new name 'Union for the Mediterranean' would help to 'highlight the joint nature of the partnership'. A point that the MEPs have always called for in that the Barcelona Process ethos is meant to be fundamentally different from previous European policies which were more unilateral. Of course this is the rhetoric because most Southern 'partners' complain about the 'excessive leadership' from Brussels. But this criticism ignores not only real forces in the region but also that the EMP is to a large extent, as with so many other common policies, an attempt to marshall the European into a common policy⁴⁸.

The EP also stressed that participation in the 'Union for the Mediterranean' did not constitute an alternative to enlargement of the EU and did not affect the accession prospects of candidate states, in clear reference to Turkey. Indeed, the Parliament's official policy remains the one it established in December 2004 when MEPs assented to start Turkey's accession negotiations during 2005. But it is strange that such a comment is made in early 2009 where there are clear signs of difficulties in both internal developments in Turkey and in its intransigence not to recognize the Republic of Cyprus as part of the extension of its 1996 Customs Union with the EU. The EP was in fact the first EU institution to put this item on the agenda, a move that led in late 2006 to a rather critical European Commission Progress Report, and the eventual decision by the European Council to freeze several chapters related with trade and external relations in December of that year⁴⁹.

Conclusions

What can be the main conclusions of the study? The first part showed how controversial and divisive the Sarkozy Initiative has been, especially among Northern EU states and the European Commission but, not surprisingly, in Spain.

If the EP had taken a more Europeanised view of the whole affair, one could

have expected a clearly pro-EU line. Some would argue that once the initial support had faded away in the Parliament, evidence of a certain degree of 'Europeanization' appears equally limited. Clear evidence of the same national preferences that emerged at the governmental level were indeed reflected among MEPs. Those parliamentarians that had been ignored by Sarkozy came back at him in no uncertain terms as we showed above: for instance German MEP Martin Schultz, but also most if not all Spanish MEPs. Furthermore, MEPs from countries with no direct national interests in the Mediterranean basin, such as Estonian MEP Tunne Kelam, used the opportunity to call for similar EU policies towards other areas, and in particular the Black Sea. Others, like MEP Vural Öger used the opportunity to support the position of their party for a full membership of Turkey in the EU. Here some evidence of a Left-Right division is clear, although other parties do not fit in this division (the Liberals for instance) but also the British Right⁵⁰. So, it is fair to claim that even within the EP, the Sarkozy Initiative was dealt with in a way that clearly had more to do with internal domestic politics than any Europeanised political debate.

Needless to say, this is a preliminary study. More research on this particular question is needed. But other parliamentary bodies should also come under scrutiny. For instance those parliamentary institutions with an interest in the Mediterranean (see above) should also be analyzed. The same would apply to specific national parliaments considering how much 'national politics' have come out of this study. For future research, our own study points to the following parliaments as of 'prime interest': the Spanish *Cortes*, the Greek *Vouli*, and of course the French Parliament as one of its committees has produced a full Report on the issue in 2007.

Finally, there are the wider implications for other EU external policies, such as the 'Eastern Partnership' initiative for instance. It is hoped that this article has shown how little is known about an important aspect of parliamentary diplomacy and that more research is indeed required.

NOTES

1. A process that one observer called a reconciliation between 'the original idea and political realities', Maxime Lefebvre, *An Evaluation of the French EU Presidency*, ARI No. 43/2009, March 17, 2009, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid: www.realinstitutoelcano.org, p. 4.

2. Although the bulk of the academic literature on the question deals with the impact of EU membership on national institutions, politics and policies, including foreign and security policy, there has been no systematic study of the impact of Europeanisation on EU institutions. For an exception, on the EP and the Cyprus Problem, see Stelios Stavridis and Charalambos Tsardanidis, «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.
3. Fulvio Attinà, “The Barcelona Process, the Role of the European Union and the Lesson of the Western Mediterranean”, *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 2004, p. 141. See also various reports by the *Instituto Real Elcano* and the *FRIDE* (www.realinstitutoelcano.org; www.fride.org), or by *EuroMesco* and *FEMISE*, respectively: www.euromesco.net and www.femise.org.
4. Fred Halliday, *The Mediterranean in an age of globalisation*, IBEI Paper No. 2008/7, Barcelona, 2008, respectively, p. 9 and p.10: www.ibei.org.
5. Paul Balta, « La Méditerranée en tant que zone de conflits », *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals*, Vol. 37, 1997, pp. 9-18.
6. Respectively: www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=395; and the section on the Middle East of the Reporters sans Frontières Report for 2008 which is significantly entitled ‘Between repression and servility’: http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=741.
7. Heiner Hänggi and Fred Tanner, *Promoting Security Sector Governance in the EU’s Neighbourhood*, Chaillot Paper No. 80, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, July 2005, p. 68.
8. See ‘le texte du discours de Nicolas Sarkozy, président de la République, tel que communiqué avant le prononcé du discours, lundi 27 août’, *Le Monde*, 27.08.07: www.lemonde.fr; joint press conference by President Sarkozy and Premier Prodi, 28 May 2007 in Paris (Embassy of France in London website: www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-joint-press.html). J.M. Martí Font, ‘Un Mediterráneo al margen de Europa’; Andrea Canino, ‘La Unión del Mediterráneo – Un ambicioso proyecto’, *El País*, 31.05.07. Ayhan Simsek, ‘Debate over Mediterranean Union heats up in Europe’, *Southeast European Times*, 13.08.07: www.SETimes.com. Joseph Byron, ‘Mediterranean Union: Peres views Sarkozy’s suggestion positively’, *EJP*, 07.05.07: www.ejpress.org. Dorothée Schmid, ‘La nueva paradoja francesa’, *El País*, 15.07.07. Katrin Bennhold, ‘Sarkozy’s proposal for Mediterranean bloc makes waves’, *International Herald Tribune*, 10.05.07: www.iht.com. ‘Spanish PM backs French plan for “Mediterranean Union”’, *News and Information for Expats in France*, 31.05.07: www.expatica.com. Commentary by Andrea Canino, chairman of the Economic Cooperation Council, under the permanent sponsorship of the Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese governments, ‘We are ready to create a Mediterranean Union’, *Le Figaro*, 31.05.07: www.lefigaro.fr.

9. For more on the Southern partner countries, see Carlos Echeverría, *El lanzamiento de la Unión para el Mediterráneo y sus consecuencias geopolíticas*, ARI No. 128/2008, November 17, 2008, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid: www.realinstitutoelcano.org.
10. As it saw it as an attempt to exclude it from joining the EU ever. As the Chief foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Erdogan, Egeman Bagis, put it in May 2007: 'This cannot be an alternative to Turkish membership in the EU.' (Bennhold Katrine, 'Sarkozy's Proposal for Mediterranean Bloc Makes Waves', www.ihf.com/articles/2007/05/10/africa/france.php, *International Herald Tribune* online edition, 10/05/2007). See also: John Thornhill and Daniel Dombey, 'France gives Turkish EU hopes reprieve', *International Herald Tribune*, 30.05.07: www.ihf.com. Renata Goldirova, 'Turkey Slams Sarkozy's "Mediterranean Union"', May 2007: www.businessweek.com; The Associated Press, 'Turkey says "Mediterranean Union" cannot be alternative to its EU bid', *International Herald Tribune*, 30.05.07: www.ihf.com; Fulya Özerkan, 'Mediterranean project vs. EU: An illusion or reality for Turkey?', *Turkish Daily News*, 30.05.07: www.turkishdailynews.com.tr.
11. For such an approach at the policy paper level, see Eduard Soler, 'Mediterráneo, "d'jà vu"', *El País*, July 19, 2008.
12. His August 2, 2007 *El País* article was characteristically entitled 'From the Barcelona Process to the Euro-Mediterranean Union'. Speeches MAEC: www.mae.es.
13. 'Spanish PM backs French plan for "Mediterranean Union"', *News and Information for Expats in France*, 31.05.07: www.expatica.com.
14. The Associated Press, 'France's Sarkozy, Italy's Prodi say they share common goals for EU', *International Herald Tribune*, 18.05.07: www.ihf.com.
15. For instance the French-Italian-Spanish meeting in Rome in December 2007 or the French-German meeting in Hanover in March 2008.
16. See the Communication from the Commission to the European Union and the Council at http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/docs/com08_319_en.pdf, 20/05/08.
17. This is why the initial proposal was referring to "a '7+8=15' core Union for Mediterranean: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta on the EU side and Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco on the Southern Mediterranean side", 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, p. 255.
18. 'A titanic struggle' in the words of one observer: Joseph Garriga, "La conjura por Barcelona", *El País*, November 9, 2008: www.elpais.com.
19. *Ibid.*

20. Bichara Khader, “L’ UNION POUR LA MEDITERRANÉE du Sommet de Paris (13 juillet 2008) à la Conférence de Marseille (novembre 3-4, 2008)”, in Stelios Stavridis and Natividad Fernández Sola (eds), *Factores políticos y de seguridad en el área euro-mediterránea*, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, 2009, p. 83.
21. Gonzalo Escribano and Alejandro Lorca, “Proceso de Barcelona: ‘Unión para el Mediterráneo’: Continuidad o Ruptura?”, *Ibid.*, pp. 57-81.
22. The ENP consists of 16 members, 10 from the South and 6 from the East: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia (Libya holds an observer status in the EMP since 1999; Turkey is not included as a candidate country); and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine (Russia is not included as it has its own special status with the Union).
23. Jacques Boniface, “La politique européenne de voisinage, entre élargissement et politique étrangère”, *EIPASCOPE* No. 2007/1, EIPA Maastricht; 2007, www.eipa.eu, p. 28.
24. *Cultura y Deporte*, Zaragoza, 2007, p. 320.
25. Gonzalo Escribano and Alejandro Lorca, 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
26. See inter alia., Deniz Devrim and Evelina Schulz, *The Eastern Partnership: An Interim Step Towards Enlargement?*, ARI No. 22/2009, February 10, 2009, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid: www.realinstitutoelcano.org.
27. See Panagiota Manoli and Stelios Stavridis, *An Emerging Euro-Black Sea Parliamentary Dimension? A Contribution to the Black Sea Synergy*, ICBSS Policy Brief No.9, ICBSS Athens, December 2008: www.icbss.org, p. 12.
28. Gabriel Eloriagga, *La diplomacia parlamentaria*, Madrid: Imagine Ediciones, 2004, p. 35. On the conceptualisation of parliamentary diplomacy, see also Stelios Stavridis, “*Parliamentary Diplomacy*”: *Some Preliminary Findings*, Jean Monnet Working Paper in Comparative & International Politics no.48, Università di Catania, November 2002, www.fscpo.unict.it/euromed/cjmhome.htm.
29. 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 Sabič, ‘Building Democratic and Responsible Global Governance: The Role of International Parliamentary Institutions’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2008, pp. 255-271.
30. For more on the EMPA, see 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; Stelios Stavridis and Roderick Pace, “The

- EMPA and parliamentary diplomacy in the Mediterranean: a preliminary assessment”, in Stavridis and Fernández Sola, 2009, *op. cit.*, pp 125-148; 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). On the Forum, see Stelios Stavridis, “The Parliamentary Forum of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: an assessment”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Summer 2002, pp. 30-53.
31. *Executive Report and Conclusions of the 3rd Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)*, Monaco, 13-15 November 2008, p. 22: www.apm.org.mt.
 32. One should also add the sub-state parliamentary level, which is very common dimension among many EU member states, but which has not reached (yet?) the Southern rim of the Mediterranean.
 33. For such a list see Stelios Stavridis and Panagiota Manoli “Comparing Experiences in Regional Parliamentarisation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Regions” (with), *Agora without Frontiers - A Quarterly Journal of International Economy and Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4, March-May 2008, pp. 290-291.
 34. See the debate concerning the European Neighbourhood Policy and the situation on Georgia at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20071114&secondRef=ITEM-010&language=EN&ring=A6-2007-0414,14/11/07.
 35. See the EP debate on the Barcelona process and the Union for the Mediterranean: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20080605&secondRef=ITEM-002&language=EN&ring=P6-RC-2008-0281,05/06/08.
 36. See the EP Resolution at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0257&language=EN,05/06/2008.
 37. Press Release, ‘Hans-Gert Pöttering Welcomes The Commission Proposal on the Barcelona Proposal: Union for the Mediterranean’: www.euromedinfo.eu/uploads/File/EP%20President%20%20Union%20for%20Med.pdf,20/05/2008.
 38. See: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20080605&secondRef=ITEM-002&language=EN&ring=P6-RC-2008-0281.
 39. Vural Öger was born in Ankara in 1942 and grew up in Istanbul. He moved to Germany in 1960 (personal website of Vural Öger: www.vural-oeger.de/).
 40. See: ‘PES Group Visit to Turkey: Clear Accession Perspective, No Open-Ended Process’, at: www.socialistgroup.eu/gpes/media/documents/116959_116959_newsletter_en_090205.pdf,05/02/2009.
 41. Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad, 1965-1990*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 378.

42. William Underhill, 'Time to Go Back Home': www.newsweek.com/id/164598 (*Newsweek*, online edition), 18/10/2008.
43. In fact, this party gained prominence by arguing for a withdrawal from the EU.
44. Peter J. Anderson and Anthony Weymouth, *Insulting the Public? The British Press and the European Union*, Longman, London and New York, 1999, p. 5.
45. For instance, on April 1, 2008 Nigel Farage comments about the stance of the other British political parties amounted to the following: 'They can bicker and fight as much as they like over who is to blame for our current problem with immigration, but the fact still remains that all three parties voted for an enlarged EU and open borders with half a billion people living in the EU. I don't see why they can't seem to grasp the idea that if we want our own immigration policy and border controls then we have to leave the EU.' ('Immigration: We Must Quit EU', UK Independence Party website: www.ukip.org/content/latest-news/561-immigration-we-must-quit-eu .
46. See the debate on the Barcelona Process and the Union for the Mediterranean at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20090218&secondRef=ITEM-020&language=EN&ring=A6-2008-0502>, 18/02/09.
47. Press Release: 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean Contributes Towards Peace and Prosperity' at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20090218BRI49890+ITEM-005-EN+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN, 20/02/2009
48. Fulvio Attinà, 'Conclusions', in Fulvio Attinà and Stelios Stavridis (eds), *The Barcelona Process and Euro-Mediterranean Issues from Stuttgart to Marseilles*, Giuffrè, Milan, 2001, pp. 222 and 232.
49. For more see Stelios Stavridis, *La Unión Europea y el conflicto chipriota (1974-2006)*, Editorial Icaria, Barcelona, 2008, pp. 114-117 and 145-146; Stavridis and Tsardanidis 2009, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
50. *Ibid.*