

“Union for the Mediterranean” - A Zone of Double Security Standards

Since its Foundation on July 13, 2008., the Union for the Mediterranean tries to play a new role of transforming the Mediterranean into a “zone of co-operation, common security and stability”. This aim can only be welcomed

since for many centuries the southern and northern regions of the Mediterranean have been inextricably linked with each other, irrespective of their different civilisations, religions and cultures. Relations have also been through difficult historical periods, such as European colonial rule which ended for some members of the UfM less than a century ago and is still fresh in the memory of their societies. Therefore, it is of outstanding importance and in their fundamental interest that UfM- member states decided to make this region an area of common stability, peace and security, of cooperation, prosperity, democracy and democratic orientation.

Indeed, first positive steps with regard to specific projects, as de-pollution of the Mediterranean, maritime and land highways, alternative energies, like the mediterranean solar plan, higher education and research, and supporting business can be welcomed as well.

When the UfM was founded, there had been agreement, that this important aim can only be achieved if all member states join hands in striving together for equitable and common stability. However, hands can be joined successfully only if common security is striven for on the basis of modern perception and conception of security which take into account that our world is confronted with new compulsions and requirements calling for a re-evaluation of the nature and the future of international security.

The old understanding of international security which is based on power and military abilities of major powers ran through a basic change. Security can be guaranteed not more alone through agreements between a handful of powers in the absence of others who are marginalised. The old separation of “center” and “periphery” can no longer define the security order of our present and future world any longer since even “peripheral areas” could be in a position to effectively challenge and resist the great powers.

Hence, it can be concluded from this changed situation that a modern understanding of security in the first place must emphasise cooperative and non-military security as well as disarmament, and that inter-state relationship must be completely democratic.

Accordingly, a zone of common stability as aspired for by the UfM can realistically be understood only as a zone without double standards and without a North-South divide in stability, security and principles guiding the kind of the behaviour of the states to each other. These three categories can be considered basic criteria for evaluating UfM’s endeavours in the field of political relations and security. Analysing, from the point of view of those criteria, the intention of the UfM to create an “area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean’, including the long term

possibility of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean pact to that end”¹ a number of fundamental aspects are held unclear already in the foundation documents of the Union. Among those are of fundamental importance:

Lack of common principles

Greater groups of states differing from each other by their political systems, religions of their people, cultures and level of development can realistically not been brought into a common boat unless they have agreed on a common destination and a code of common conduct to be observed by all during their common sail. Unless those essentials are not agreed upon the aim of embarkation toward establishing a Euro-Mediterranean pact and even “integration”² will remain either empty words or lead to conflict between crew and captain who in the open sea tries all of a sudden to “set governance on the basis of equal footing.”³ However, it can be assumed that for “governance on equal footing” neither Islam nor any “oriental” political systems are thought of as basis, but, the European system.

Referring to the so far unique experience of the foundation of the “Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe” (CSCE), as an example for common agreement on common principles one can say that this organisation of states with even antagonistic political orientations could become only therefore a success story, because common principles were determined at its beginning in the “Final Act of Helsinki”, which all participants had to respect in the entire process of their cooperation.⁴ In this way CSCE participants could guarantee, that the CSCE process could be controlled as a boat with common principles, and standards, and rules of the International Law. In its founding declarations the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" even escapes the reference to the binding principles of the United Nations Charter. However, the principles layd down⁵ in the Helsinki process and the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) can be used as role models for the UfM. The parallelism of circumstances of both institutes is quite obvious.

In other words the UfM so far lacks common principles guiding relations between its participating states.

North - South security divide or collective security?

Of no less relevance is the question of common principles and standards with regard to common security, disarmament and arms control.

¹ Final Declaration, Marseille, p. 2

² Summit Declaration, Paris, p.6

³ *ibid*, p. 8

⁴ Those are in short: 1. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty. 2. Refraining from the threat or use of force. 3. Inviolability of frontiers. 4. Territorial integrity of States. 5. Peaceful settlement of disputes. 6. Non-intervention in internal affairs. 7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. 8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples. 9. Cooperation among States. 10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law. (Every principle was put a detailed interpretation on.)

⁵ Summit Declaration, Paris, p. 8

Regional security, nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agreements, and regional arrangements such as weapons-free zones etc. are declared aims of the UfM and have to be welcomed without any reservation. However, the question to be asked is: are these aims shared by all states of the UfM, including all EU Member States which are members of NATO and the Transatlantic Alliance at the same time? Who defines the quality and quantities of “legitimate defence requirements”⁶? Will all states of the UfM stand on a military level determined by the lowest possible levels of troops and weaponry, including NATO states, at the end of an armament limitation and disarmament process? Or do we have to do it with an initiative restricted to the Near and Middle East as the UfM suggests, namely, that “the parties shall pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems”⁷?

There are no answers to these questions. However, one can not find a single reference to the principle that security is undividable and that the security of each state is fundamentally linked to the security of all, and a state’s security cannot be strengthened at the expense of the security of other states.⁸ If this principle is disregarded the currently prevailing North-South security divide between Europe, NATO, the Transatlantic Alliance and its southern neighbours will continue keeping on existing uncertainties about the intentions of the other one. Thus, mutual confidence in the military and political fields will be jeopardized. It can prevail only under one condition: that security on both sides of the Mediterranean is indivisible and that common security principles should be formulated on the basis of common rather than individual security. Once that is established and outstanding political problems have been resolved, for example injustice to the Palestinian people, stability in the whole region will follow.

In other words, the UfM so far lacks the principle of indivisibility of security of Europe and the entire Mediterranean region as one zone of common stability and mutual trust.

The conflict dimension in the Union

The Union’s, and in particular its European member’s, failure of preventing or immediately stopping the military action of UfM member Israel against Ghaza and Egypt’s reaction of calling a freeze of all Mediterranean Union meetings a few weeks after its foundation indicate the difficulty and complexity of open questions in the Union, unresolved conflicts among a number of its member states as well as tensions in the Middle Eastern region.

While President Barack Obama of the USA in his historical speech in Cairo has outlined principles and means with which the US is seeking a new beginning in US

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, 91st Plenary Meeting of the Special Committee of the CSCE Forum for Security Co-operation in Budapest on 3 December 1994, Federal Foreign Office, Programme for Immediate Action Series, No. 7, p. 1

relations with the Islamic world, the European UfM member's philosophy of confidence building by jointly implementing specific projects sidelines the urgent need of conflict resolution in the Near and Middle East and drawing a new perspective for their relations with the Islamic world.

However, the most productive way of confidence building would be a joint initiative of the UfM for an immediate action to ease tensions with the Arab and neighbouring Islamic regions.

Priority should be given to all endeavours for an immediate resolution of the Israeli-Palestine conflict since the permanent occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel since the 1967 war is one of the main reasons for the constantly growing anti-Western public opinion in the Islamic world. The 'road map' as favoured by the UfM will only be an appropriate solution for the issue of Palestine and Israel's security, if it leads to the creation of a viable Palestinian state. With regard to resolving conflicts in the Arab Mediterranean region suggestions emanating from this region itself should given more effective support by the UfM.

In other words, unless practical conflict resolution is not given first priority, the UfM lacks guarantees that a real change in Arab-European relations is consistently striven for and can realistically be achieved.

Summing up: The Union for the Mediterranean in a number of important qualitative aspects still lacks integrative factors that could bring together its member states to work together for a common objective. Most deplorable is the lack of vision of a viable common perspective for Europe, the Mediterranean states and the Middle East as one zone of co-operation, peaceful coexistence, stability and security. Purposeful shape of such a perspective is urgently necessary since sidelining fundamental controversial topics in the political field jeopardizes dependability of relations as the crucial basis for a successful development and future of the Mediterranean Union. For the time being, a hasty, action-oriented philosophy overshadows qualitative aspects on the field of political relationships.

However, the *conclusion* has to be drawn that all the decision-making criteria - the geo-strategic stability of the European area and its southern neighbours, energy security, internal European stability and the acceptance and respect of the European Countries to the Muslim population and Islam, perceptions of security in southern neighbouring states, their renunciation of nuclear weapons, European neighbourhood policies in the Mediterranean, a difficult socio-political environment in the region – speak in favour of strengthening the UfM – and to call on UfM members who are not parties of NPT in order to accede the treaty.

Therefore, the Union should speed up confidence building in the field of political relations, conflict resolution and security.

The drafting of an outlook for a perspective of peaceful co-existence based on equal rights deserves particular attention. Only then can the negative 'subject-object' perceptions, which are widespread on the Arab and Islamic side, be successfully overcome. Otherwise, the UfM runs the risk of being interpreted as a tactical manoeuvre, and will not succeed in gradually overcoming historical burdens.

The outlook to be presented should consist of the following core areas: respecting the integrity of each other's civilisation; the acceptance of social and political differences; the right to self-determined development; security based on equal rights in a common area of stability.

These core areas do not imply any surrender of values or principles, but instead focus on building relations based on cooperation and peaceful coexistence. Also, security policy-wise, they do not mean any cuts in European security, because a European area of stability is not feasible without a stable North Africa, Near and Middle East and sound relations with it.