THE EU'S SECURITY POLICY
TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN:

AN (IM)POSSIBLE COMBINATION OF EXPORT
OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL VALUES
AND ANTI-TERROR MEASURES?

Ulla Holm

Ulla Holm, Senior Researcher, Department of European Studies, DIIS.
Email: uho@diis.dk

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Abstract

The Southern part of the Mediterranean has been put high on the EU-security agenda after 9/11. The Working paper makes the argument that the EU-politics towards its Arab Mediterranean neighbours are staggering between a status quo oriented politics and a politics of export of democracy. The tension is seen as an expression of two conceptualizations of the Mediterranean and the uneasy combination of four contradicting concepts on the relationship between the Mediterranean and the EU. The first conceptualization is about the Mediterranean as a cultural cradle of great civilizations. The other one is about the Mediterranean as a conflict-ridden zone. These conceptualizations are interlinked in the discourses on how to export security to the South and which kind of security the EU has to promote. The inter-linkage between the two conceptualization of the Mediterranean is furthermore linked up to two oppositional representations of the EU: the EU as an exporter of democracy and the EU as being a model to copy but not an empire-builder. This results in the following dilemmas caused by the oppositional relationship between four concepts: Respect for cultural diversity and export of political shared values. Respect for Arab sovereignty and export of European political values. The opposition between the four concepts is sharpened by Islamic terrorism which underlines the uneasy 'marriage' of the four concepts.

The EU's Security Policy towards the Mediterranean: An (im)possible Combination of Export of European Political Values and anti-Terror Measures?

Ulla Holm

The security of the Mediterranean has been on the EU-security agenda since the beginning of 1990s and especially after the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership at Barcelona in 1995. The future of the Arab Mediterranean states-nations has become a hot security topic after 9/11 because of terrorism stemming from especially non-state trans-national Islamic actors. The Arab states-nations are weak and object to political and social criticism which very often turns into both societal and state violence. The Arab regimes perceive themselves as being besieged by the populations. As a reflection of this siege mentality the regimes find it immensely difficult to handle fundamental change in regime-state-nation relations. Any change is seen as entailing the risk of a complete break-down of both the regime and the state. The state, therefore, cling to the status quo, stressing the unacceptability of European interference with their way of dealing with the problem of legitimacy. How to bring about change is thus the great headache for both the EU with the Arab Mediterranean states and for the Arab regimes/states themselves.

The Arab regimes/states are in a state of construction of a modern state-nation system whereas the European modern Westphalian state system is undergoing a transformation. According to Zygmunt Bauman modernity is the subject of an internal dissolution. That means that it is not conquered by external forces but crumbles as a result of innate social developments. He stresses modernity's production of new ambivalences in its attempts to conceal or master them. He speaks of the revenge of ambivalence (1991). Post-modernity cannot, still according to Bauman, posit itself as superior to modernity because the modern idea of progress has faded and because it expresses a mood of differentiation and variety, that is, of not excluding or destroying the different. Hence, in post-modernity, modernity cohabits. The two modes of understanding and explaining life, exist together in an uneasy balance where modernity still tends to aspire to a hegemonic position which results in a discursive battle against postmodern forms of disordering life (Huysmans, 1996, 176).

The discursive battle with regard to modernity and post-modernity is implicitly at the centre of the EU-security discourses on the Mediterranean. The modernity discourse on security is about making order out of chaos - e.g. to export modernity to the Southern Mediterranean. The post-modernity discourse on security is about European threat perceptions stemming both from the Southern part of the Mediterranean and from the inside of the EU. This postmodern discourse on security is about a generalized concern about risk. The reflections of the European societies on themselves are seen increasingly in terms of risk. More and more dangers are the product of our own actions, and fewer and fewer attributable to forces completely external to ourselves – thus threats become risks (Beck 1992, Huysmans, 1996). Furthermore, these risks are perceived as also stemming externally from non-state actors, state-actors and individuals. Internally in the EU these perceptions of risks stem from the erosion of state sovereignty and from regionalization. These two developments put into question the hitherto organization of the territory of the nation-state.

The tendential fragmentation of the European national territories results in a widespread feeling of being in a state of insecurity. The state is seen as not being able anymore to protect neither society neither the individual. The postmodern European territorial fluidity, the erosion of the state (but not of the idea of the state), the cross-bordering with regard to free movements of persons, goods, and capital - all these postmodern transformations of the dying Westphalian state system frame the discourse on security and how to export security and which kind of security to be exported to the neighbourhood – the Southern part of the Mediterranean.

Firstly, in line with "the Copenhagen School" conceptualization of security, this paper outlines the theoretical framework of this 'School' focusing especially on how security has to be understood. Secondly, it analyses the built-in tension between the discourse on export of democracy and the discourse on terrorism. Finally, the paper makes the case that two different EU conceptualizations of the Southern part of the Mediterranean result in a status quo politics.

SECURITY AND DISCOURSES

In the Copenhagen School's conceptualization of security, EU policies are seen as constitutive actions, which construct and define threats, identities and interests (Buzan and Wæver 1998, 2003, Wæver 2004). Threats are thus not to be found objectively out there in reality. They are constructed in the language. According to Ole Wæver security is:

"Security is a speech act, a discursive practice through which a condition of insecurity is identified, threats pointed out, and an object of security is constructed. In naming a certain development a security problem, "the state" can claim a special right. It is thus only from the moment when somebody – mostly the political elite – claims that something is threatened, that an issue becomes a question of security concern. By saying the word "security" something is done. The use of the speech act – i.e. naming an issue a security problem – has the effect of raising a specific challenge to a principled level, thereby implying that all necessary means would be used to block that challenge. "Security" signifies a situation marked by the presence of a security problem and some measure taken in response. The issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Wæver, 1995).

The meaning of "security" is thus what it does. Someone (a securitizing actor) points to a development or potentiality claiming that something or somebody (the referent object) with an inherent right to survive is existentially threatened (Wæver, 2004). Thus, a security issue is posited by a securitizing actor as a threat to the survival of some referent objects that most often are collective entities such as state, nation, society and religions. Hence, the focus of this theory is on the questions of *when and under what conditions who securitizes what issue in the speech act.*

"Security" is therefore not a question about how to measure the impact of "real threats". The threat is subjective because it is about how - in this case - the EU-documents perform the security speech act. Whenever the documents state that immigration, terrorism and organized crimes *are* threats, they are threats, or challenges to security as the documents prefer to denominate threats. Pronouncing that something is a threat for example to the nation, the state or to what are considered European values is identical to take it out of the political sphere and put it into the security sphere. Naming immigration a security threat makes it very difficult to 're-politicize' this issue because the security speech act tendentiously eliminates other discourses that put immigration on a political agenda and not on a security one.

It is very seldom that an issue becomes totally securitized, or as Wæver writes: "successfully securitized" (Wæver, 1995). A successful securitization demands that all political parties and societal groups are able to legitimize breaking normal political rules. This has not been the case until now. However, what has happened especially since September 9 is that various European political parties have taken "security moves" for example in the form of proposals of strengthening immigration laws. A "security move" is a kind of early warning: if we do not

do something now we will not survive later on. These moves are most often countered by a discourse on European values characterized by protection of political pluralism and of the notion of the open society.

Since security is a speech act, the various concepts of what security is has to be found in the discourses. In the Foucauldian definition a "discourse" is a group of statements which govern the production of objects, concepts, subjects and strategies (Foucault, 1972). In line with the Foucauldian definition, Laclau and Mouffe define what they call "a discursive formation" as follows ...

> An ensemble of differential positions. This ensemble is not the expression of any underlying principle external to itself...but it constitutes a configuration, which in certain contexts of exteriority can be signified as a totality.....A differential and structured system of positions – that is, a discourse. The differential positions include, therefore, a dispersion of very diverse material elements (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 106,108).

A discursive formation is thus structured by possessing a kind of deep structure which is difficult to change. However, this is not to say that it is impossible to change the structure. But it is difficult because discourses are meaning producers – they tell stories about who we are – where we are heading – and how we ought to conduct policies (Holm, 2000). New stories about who we are can be told but if they totally break up hitherto constructions of meaning they will have difficulties in becoming dominating.

Relations inside a discourse can much more easily be moved around because they still refer to the same deep structure. They are only related differently but it is still the same elements that constitute the structure. Several competing discourses might exist at the same time. Some might seriously challenge the dominating discourse because they still consist of the same basic code but the way the relational elements are posited tell a new story which still give meaning - but another meaning than the dominating discourse. A discourse that breaks up the deep structure will certainly be marginalized because it does not give meaning at the time when it is constructed (Holm, 2001).

There is always a dominating discourse to which all other discourses have to refer to. With regard to the relation between the EU and the Mediterranean it is the discourse on political liberalism i.e. democracy – to uphold internally in the EU and to export to the Arab states - which is dominating. Competing discourses might construct other *relations* between the

different elements of the notion of political liberalism than the dominating one. The possibility of various relational positions sparks off different positions with regard to *which kind* of political liberalism that has to be exported. Related to this is *how* political liberalism has to be exported. As for this question we are here most close to the level of practical politics.

A discourse might therefore be structured into a three-level system:

1) The deep structure i.e. the basic codes about who we are and how we want "the other" to be.
2) The relational level i.e. the various combinations of the elements of the basic codes.
3) The surface level i.e. the level that is most close to "real politics".

In sum, the first level is about who we are – the question about identity. The second level takes us to the possible relations of what can be said about this identity. The third one is about the kind of politics that are available. The third level has not been seen as a deduction of the former two levels but as a combination of deduction and induction. It is thus therefore not possible to come up with positive predictions with regard to which kind of politics the political elite will chose in a given situation. The choice will depend on what happens either at the global, the regional or the national level. But it is possible to come up with negative predictions e.g. some politics are just not possible because they give no meaning with regard to who we are.

So where does one find these discourses? In texts. All kind of texts. Texts do not only refer to a written utterance of discourse but also to other discursive practices such as movies, videos, maps and architecture (Wæver, 1996, Neumann, 1998, Holm, 2000). However, this analysis is limited to the reading of the documents of the EU-Commission, the Council/s conclusions and the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership meetings.

TERRORISM AND EXPORT OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL VALUES

September 6, 2000, the Commission adopted a communication aimed at strengthening its relations with its southern Mediterranean neighbours. The communication was entitled: *Reinvigorating the Barcelona Process* (Attina, Stavridis, 2001). The communication was presented at the fourth EMP – Conference (Euro-Mediterranean conference) in Marseille November 2000. But the call for reinvigoration did not result in any new politics. Ever since this meeting, it has been discussed how to reinvigorate Barcelona Process which was launched in 1995 (Holm,

2001). However, since 9/11, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has become a much more important security question than ever before. The fight against terrorism and the terror attack in Madrid March 2004 have accentuated the importance of the Mediterranean and the Middle East for European security.

In March 2003 the Commission therefore launched a proposal for a *New Neighbourhood Policy* (COM (2003)104 final). This policy is a continuation of the Barcelona Process, even if the document suggests new measures that are to make the Partnership more effective, especially when it comes to the goal of promoting democracy and human rights. In December 2003, a first draft to a Strategic Partnership with the Arab World was equally launched, partly as an effort to counter-weight the US *Middle East Partnership Initiative and the Greater Middle East Initiative* (D(2003)10318), the latter being re-baptized Broader Middle East Initiative.

Since September 11, Terrorism has been at the top of the European security agenda. This is not to say that terrorism has not been considered a threat before. Europe has witnessed several terror actions on its soil since the 1960s. But never before September 11 was terrorism placed so high on the security agenda. Terrorism is the first one to be enumerated of all threats identified in the EU-documents. Perceived threats – from illegal immigration, air security, drug trafficking, organized crimes, possible state failures in the South, radical violent Islamism in the Southern part of the Mediterranean and inside Europe – they are all enlisted below terrorism. This is especially evident in the Javier Solana paper "A Secure Europe in a Better World" (12th of December 2003). But it is equally the case for all other EU-documents. This prioritization of terrorism as the main threat to European security was also present before September 11. This is evident in the EU-paper on *"the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean"* adopted by the Summit meeting in Santa Maria da Feira in June 2000:

> "The EU will identify common ground on security issues aiming at establishing a
> common region of peace and stability...it will reinforce cooperation against global
> challenges to security such as terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking"
> (The European Council, 20 June, 2000).

In the discourse on terrorism before 9/11, terrorism was seen as something to be combated in order to promote peace and stability in the Mediterranean. It was not seen as something which fundamentally threatened European identity. The discourse on terrorism after 9/11 constructs terrorism as something dramatically exceptional, as something which totally might change the perceived identity of Europe. Terrorism is represented as destroying the very building blocks of European values political liberalism: democracy, rule of law and human rights. The referent

object of the securitization is thus the whole European political value system that transgresses states, nations, societies because it is a securitization of the very foundation of who we are.

> "The European Union is founded on the universal values of human dignity, liberty, equality and solidarity, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is based on the principle of democracy and the principle of the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States...Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious violations (...) of those principles" (The European Council, 6 December 2001).

> "Terrorism is not just undemocratic. It is anti-democratic. It is not just inhuman. It is an affront to humanity. It runs counter to all the values on which the European Union is founded". (The President of the European Council, Mr. Bertie Ahern, March 25, 2004).

Terrorism is thus not only a matter of being a threat to *European* values. It is also a threat to *humanity*, e.g. an attack against the *universalism* of European values. Humanity, universalism and European values are thus constructed in a chain of equivalence whose opposite is terrorism identified with anti-democracy, and destruction of humanity. These chains of equivalence and difference construct implicitly a reference to the European past – to Nazism which means that if we do not do something against a possible return of the past we will no more be us. We will no more be democrats and no more be able to serve as a normative model for the world outside the EU.

Securitization of an issue – in this case - of the European values i.e. political liberalism involves extraordinary means to be taken in order to secure the threatened issue. It might entail violation of democratic laws, or result in limitations on otherwise in-violable rights. The EU has adopted a European arrest warrant, a common definition of terrorism and related penalties and strengthened border controls. Furthermore, a list of terrorist organizations has been set up. In addition, joint police investigation teams across the EU and a special Europol anti-terrorism unit have been created. These measures do not in themselves violate democratic laws but they are signs of a "security move". Each "move" has to be legitimized in order both to get support and to further "deepen" the securitization process. Such moves are going on. But they are challenged by politicization of the issue of terrorism.

The staggering between 'security moves' and 'politicization is due to the inherent tension between the notion of democracy as being characterized by political pluralism and by its open

society model and the move for securitization of democracy e.g. the European values. If democracy is seen as so much threatened that it demands total securitization it might result in the suspense of democracy in order to save democracy. This legitimization was used in Algeria in January 1992 when the elections were cancelled. But this is not possible in Europe. A suspension of democracy would only make sense in the marginalized Nazi discourse.

What makes sense is the discourse of no economic aid to the Southern Mediterranean states which do not combat terrorism. In the wake of the terror attack in Madrid, March 2004, the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs thus declared:

> "... a key element of political dialogue with other countries (with the Southern Mediterranean) and those countries whose cooperation is deemed insufficient to tackle terrorism would risk a loss of aid and trade" (European Council June 2004).

The dominating European discourse on European values is centered upon the concept of political and economic liberalism. This concept is seen as exportable, because it is represented as universal. This representation of the EU as a "norm exporter" (Manners, 2002) is the ordering principle of the EU- discourse on the relation between the EU and the Southern part of the Mediterranean. Export of political and economic liberalism has been represented as security policy – as export of common security ever since the Barcelona Process was launched. The before mentioned *Common Strategy on the Mediterranean* from 2000 is one of the numerous examples of this discourse:

> "The EU will promote the core values embraced by the EU and its Member States, including human rights, democracy, good governance, transparency and the rule of law... a prosperous, democratic, stable and secure region ...is in the best interest of the EU and Europe as a whole".

The *New Neighbourhood Policy* from 2003/2004 is inserted into the same discourse on export of democracy and political and economic liberalism:

> "The privileged relationship with neighbours will build on mutual commitment to common values principally within the fields of the rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of market economy." (*European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy Paper*, 12 May 2004).

The discourse on export of democracy as a means for exporting security is challenged by the discourse on an inherently conflictual Mediterranean to which the EU has to close its European -door. This fear of a possible spill-over effect from the conflict –ridden Mediterranean to the Europe is reflected in the prioritization of the EU with regard to cooperation with the Southern part on issues of terrorism, illegal immigration, organized crime and therefore has feared too strong pressures for political reforms that could lead to violent transitions processes or result in Islamists taking over government power.

At the political level, the built-in tension between on the one hand 'closing the door politics' and possible negative sanctions and on the other hand the discourse of export of democracy to the Southern part of the Mediterranean might result in passivity, in a status quo oriented policy which might strengthen in the immediate future the regimes thereby creating popular frustration both with regard to the EU policy and to the policy of the regimes.

TWO EU CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

In the EMP-discourse (Euro-Med Partnership discourse) the concept of the Mediterranean is either defined as a common sphere of shared values, of shared civilizational identity, or as a conflict-ridden zone.

The first one which legitimizes the idea of partnership expressed in the EMP, refers implicitly to the French historian Braudel's definition of the Mediterranean as the cradle of three grand civilizations – a crossroad – that creates a beautiful cultural melting pot. The former Vice – President of the EU-Commission, Manuel Marin, declared in his inaugural address to the Barcelona meeting in November 1995:

> "The Barcelona conference takes place at the exact same day when Pope Urban 11, 900 years ago in the French town, Clermont, launched the first crusade. There is nine centuries between Clermont and this day that will be a symbol of a new era. The remote day, 27th of November 1095, was a disastrous example of intolerance. It was the beginning of a long history of wars, misunderstandings and crisis between cultures. Differences and tension have continued. But at the same time history has donated us with a picture of the Mediterranean as a cultural melting pot, as a symbol of fertile cultural interplay. This cultural and historical heritage, shared by parts of the Mediterranean populations is a means to confirm identity but also to demonstrate mutual understanding" (27th of November, 1995).

This discourse on *unity in diversity* [1] constructs the notion of "the true nature of the identity of the Mediterranean". This nature has so to say to be dig out of the waves but it is there as a kind of deep structure characterized by multiculturalism. In this discourse "the other" is not represented as the radical cultural other. The "other" is just different from the Europeans (Todorov, 1982, Holm, 2000, Hansen, 2001). This difference is furthermore represented as a fertilizer for the future because of the peaceful notion of multiculturalism.

This discourse on unity in diversity is reiterated in the EU-report published in 2004 and entitled *Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area* (European Commission. Group of Policy Advisors. Luxembourg, 2004). But there is a conceptual difference to Manuel Marin's speech. Marin used the metaphor "cultural melting pot" in order to characterize the future happy living together. In the new document, this notion is replaced by the notion of "complementarities between the two halves of the Mediterranean":

> "Why should this relationship be made a priority between the two shores of the Mediterranean? Certainly not to prevent a very hypothetical clash of civilizations, but rather in the certainty that the <u>principal complementarities of the two halves of the Euro-Mediterranean area</u> (my added underlining) will, in the next half century, have been integrated into their day-to-day. What we *now* have to do is to prepare the ground for this...The initiative is intended to create conditions favourable to the harmonious combining of cultural, and particularly religious, diversity...Two conditions must be present. First, a readiness to seek in the dialogue with the "other" new reference points for oneself and, second, a general agreement on the aim of constructing a "common civilization beyond the legitimate diversity of the cultures" (Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures, May, 2004, pp.7-8).

The discourse constructs thus commonality (common civilization) with regard to political values and diversity e.g. complementarity with regard to culture. The notion of complementarity marks that the two halves of the Mediterranean do not fuse. They are separated from 'us', not as 'radical others' but as 'others'. This complementarity might be seen as a representation of the EU as not being an empire-builder not intermingling in cultural matters. Culture is perceived of as something specific which is rooted in a specific history

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1 The notion of unity in diversity is the term which the EU has chosen in order to define both the external and internal identity of Europe.

which does not allow for imperial cultural domination. Hence when the new EU-document - the *New Neighbourhood Policy* – announces that it is necessary to create "a ring of friends with shared values" these values refer to shared political values but not to shared cultural values.

But the fear of being considered an empire-builder intervenes in the discourse on of the construction of 'a ring of friends with shared (political) values'. In line with the argumentation for the notion of "cultural complementarity", the revised *New Neighourhood Policy* document argues that *"...such reforms (political and economic reforms) cannot be imposed from outside. They must be generated from within"* (March 2004). Hence, the EU shies away from being considered an imperial power with regard to politics. There is thus a built–in tension between the EU's vision of itself as exporter of political and economic liberalism and its refusal of intervening politically into the Southern part of the Mediterranean. Thus, neither culture nor politics have to be imposed.

The second discourse is on a conflict-ridden zone that is represented as the container of a huge amount of problems like demographic growth, poverty, regime instability, potentiality for failed states etc. This discourse does not break up the basic codes of the discourse on export of European democracy as a means of security. Democracy as identical to security is still posited in the centre of the discourse. But the underlining of the notion of *strategy* in the adopted *Common Strategy on the Mediterranean* from 2000 and in the document from March 2004 entitled *An EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East* points foremost to a troubled zone towards which the EU has to have a clearly defined strategy. This is more a one-way conceptualization of the relation between the two parts of the Mediterranean than a partnership. The notion of partnership is downgraded in this discourse to the benefit of a European strategy. The discourse does not downgrade the link between security and political liberalism but it do promote the EU as the actor as for defining the kind of threats that has to be tackled. The discourse is a discourse on " we and the other"; still not the radical other but a troublesome 'other' who has to be educated by the Northern part of the Mediterranean.

CONCLUSION

This discourse analysis cannot say whether the discourse on promotion of democracy as a means of security in a partnership or the discourse on a conflict-ridden zone which has to be handled by means of cooperation foremost on terrorism and immigration will prevail. But it tells that the EU-politics towards the Mediterranean will not be guided by a clear-cut conceptualization of the Mediterranean.

The existence of two conflicting discourses results in ambiguous EU policies towards the Southern Mediterranean. Imperial thinking encounters the refusal of being an empire. The EU as represented as a model to follow voluntarily is challenged by the EU as an exporter of democracy. Construction of equality in partnership encounters a one-way representation of threats which is in favour of a European strategy to be imposed upon the Arab Mediterranean states-nations. A postmodern EU that is scared of a possible transitional troublesome construction of modern Arab Westphalian states represents itself as exporter of political liberalism but fears changes in the South. The discourse on the Mediterranean as a space characterized by cultural complementarity is challenged by the discourse on the need to develop a strategy which foremost is based on a one-way conceptualization of threat perceptions.

The staggering between these oppositional representations of the EU as an actor towards the southern part of the Mediterranean might result in a politics of void. Some money, yes. No politics, yes. This is what the Arab regimes look for because they do not want interference into their conceptualization of what sovereignty is about. But a politics of void is against the EU vision of the creation of 'a ring of friends with shared values'. Thus something has to be done in order to prove that the EU exists as an actor towards the South. To be or to be an actor this is the huge question for the future.

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