

# ➤ Southern Europe's Role After the Arab Spring: Winning Back Voice and Access

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**F**ernand Braudel once characterised the Mediterranean, with its long history of intercultural exchange and trade, as a 'space in movement'.<sup>1</sup> In a dismaying reversal, the Mediterranean today is better known for having the deadliest stretches of water for crossing by migrants.<sup>2</sup> It suffers from a lack of mobility, a sweeping economic crisis in Southern European countries and difficult democratic transitions hampered by weak labour markets in the Arab Mediterranean countries.

This paper reflects on Southern Europe's economic, political and social crisis and its implications for the EU's approach to the Arab Spring. It argues that the economic crisis and related austerity measures in Southern Europe and the rise of the extreme-right and Euro-scepticism are merely acute versions of the crisis affecting Europe as a whole. The 'Southern European syndrome', characterised by high levels of corruption and lagging welfare state reform, has been overplayed.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Southern Europe needs to win back voice and access in the Arab Mediterranean region by supporting genuine processes of democratisation, engaging with new political forces and encouraging further Southern Mediterranean integration.<sup>4</sup> To regain this crucial influence, Southern Europeans need to overcome fears of human mobility in the region and break away from the democratisation versus stability dilemma in their policies towards Arab countries. They must forge strong diplomatic and economic partnerships with Turkey and the Gulf countries. Furthermore, given their reduced defence budgets, they must review their contribution to NATO's approach to Mediterranean security and seek to address frozen conflicts such as Cyprus and the Western Sahara.

## A EUROPEAN CRISIS, NOT A SOUTHERN EUROPEAN ONE

The crisis that hit Southern European countries affected not only their economies, but also their political systems and the very fabric of their societies. Unemployment is rampant in the region. In March 2013, unemployment reached 27.2 percent in Greece, 26.7 percent in Spain, 17.5 per cent in Portugal, 14.2 percent in Cyprus, 11.5 percent in Italy and 11 percent in France.<sup>5</sup> Unemployment has most strongly affected the younger generations and migrants. In the last quarter of 2012, youth unemployment reached 57.9 percent in Greece, 55.2 percent in Spain, 38.4 percent in Portugal, 36.9 percent in Italy,

1 F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Volume 1 (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1996).

2 In 2011, according to UNHCR, 1,500 people drowned or went missing.

3 With respect to clientelism and corruption, this has been diffused in Southern Europe through the cartel parties. See J. Hopkins, *The Emergence and Convergence of the Cartel Party: Parties, State and Economy in Southern Europe*, 2013, <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/hopkin/hopkinpercent20sepercent20paperpercent202.pdf>.

4 'Arab Mediterranean countries' refers to Arab countries bordering the Mediterranean and Jordan, which form part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, launched in 1995 in the aftermath of the Oslo Process.

5 Youth unemployment includes unemployed young people between 15 and 24 years old.

31.8 percent in Cyprus and 25.4 percent in France. In Spain, migration outflows outnumber inflows, an unprecedented phenomenon since the end of the Franco regime. Between January 2011 and September 2012, around 120,000 Spanish nationals emigrated within Europe and towards Morocco, Australia and other regions of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Southern Europe is also experiencing a disconcerting rise of extreme-right political movements. In Greece, the ultra-nationalist Golden Dawn won seven percent of the vote in the 2012 legislative elections, gaining 21 seats in the Greek Parliament. The party has been accused of violent attacks on migrants, and in September 2013 party offices across the country were raided and weapons confiscated, and a number of its leadership arrested.

In France, Marine Le Pen, the daughter of the founder of the extreme-right National Front, won 17.9 percent of the vote in the first round of presidential elections in May 2012. The results made the National Front the third-largest political force in France. She has sought to 'de-demonise' the extreme-right party by 'normalising' it and dropping its racist and anti-Semitic declarations. In April 2013, she held a 44 percent approval rate, which made her the fourth most popular French politician. The incongruously named 'French Spring' movement has also seen the rise of smaller activist groups linked to the extreme-right or conservative Catholicism such as the Nationalist Youth ('Jeunesses Nationalistes') and Civitas. Both groups made headlines by participating in violent demonstrations against same-sex marriages and adoptions.

Spain may appear to be an exception to the rise of the extreme-right, but conservative stances have helped in the election of the Partido Popular. Regional identities have also strengthened as the crisis severely affected Andalusia and Catalonia. Italy has seen the rise of the *Movimento 5 Stelle*, an anti-system and populist party. Together with the *Ligua del Norte*, the two parties have called for a referendum on Italy's EU membership, highlighting a crisis of trust in the EU.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, Euro-scepticism is on the rise in Southern Europe, where governments have traditionally supported European integration. Rates of trust in the EU have decreased across Europe since the beginning of the crisis, but have done so most precipitously in Southern Europe. At the beginning of 2007, one out of two Europeans declared their trust in the EU. Today, only one third would make the same claim. Trust has fallen by 41 points in Spain and in Greece and Portugal by 33 points.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to remember that none of the phenomena discussed above is exclusive to Southern Europe. Poland and the UK register high levels of euro-scepticism, and even Germany shows signs of mistrust. In the local elections of May 2013, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) won 25 percent of the vote, and the populist Swedish Democrats and the Hungarian far-right will likely perform well in the 2014 European elections.

Northern Europe is also not much better off in terms of social unrest and integration. Suburban riots against the shortcomings of the 'Swedish model' hit Sweden in the spring of 2013, and a wave of riots hit London and other British cities in the summer of 2011.

6 'Casi 55.000 Españoles emigraron en Los Primeros Nueve Meses del Año,' *Huffington Post*, 15 October 2012.

7 See R. Dehousse, 'Europe At the Polls Lessons From The 2013 Italian Elections' *Notre Europe, Policy Paper* 92, 16 May 2013.

8 <http://lecercle.lesechos.fr/economie-societe/international/europe/221172014/attitudes-europeens-a-legard-leurope-degradation-uni>.

## BEYOND THE 'SOUTHERN EUROPE SYNDROME'

Despite the gloomy picture of a Southern Europe ravaged by the crisis, there are signs of economic, political and social improvement. Greece has achieved the largest fiscal consolidation among OECD countries in decades and has attracted back some of the foreign investment that had fled over rumours of an exit from the Eurozone. The small Portuguese economy re-accessed financial markets this year, much to the relief of its credit institutions and the government'.<sup>9</sup> Trade within the Mediterranean has also improved. In 2012, for instance, Algerian-EU imports and exports increased. The US remains the main country of export for Algeria, but Italy accounts for almost 16 percent of Algerian exports, Spain for over 10 percent and France for almost nine percent.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of compliance with EU legislation, Spain, Greece and Portugal achieved much and do not necessarily lag behind more established member states. When it comes to labour law, for instance, Southern European states adopted EU legislation on pregnant women and on the working time directive more swiftly than the EU-15 average.<sup>11</sup> Statistics debunk the myth of the stereotypical 'lazy' Southern Europe that works less and takes more holidays. On average, Greeks retire at 61.8 years (the same as in Germany) and Portuguese at 67 years. Similarly, days of annual holidays are the same in Greece and in Germany at 20 days.<sup>12</sup>

Southern Europe has also proven innovative in finding alternative ways of political mobilisation. Southern European youth voiced discontent with the current crisis and democratic practices through grassroots movements such as the Spanish 'indignados' or the Greek 'aganaktismemoi'. By relying on solidarity networks and bottom-up participatory processes, they brought back politics to the debate:<sup>13</sup> 'The citizens were no longer mere voters and passive subjects to be managed by the political elite. They would no longer take their assigned passive role, but wanted a real say over their lives and the future of Spain'.<sup>14</sup> These new political and social movements point to signs of health. They respond to the loss of power of national parliaments in favour of not only strong national executives, but also of supranational institutions such as the EU. This has contributed to a growing gap between elites and public opinion—as exemplified by rather low turnouts in recent national elections in Greece (62 percent), the UK (66 percent), Spain (69 percent) and Germany (71 percent), all which fall below the OECD average of 72 percent.<sup>13</sup>

## FOREIGN POLICY: LOSING ACCESS, VOICE AND INFLUENCE IN THE ARAB REGION

The risk that Southern Europe's weakness may undermine EU policy towards the Arab world is nonetheless real. Southern Europe has always strongly advocated balancing EU aid between Eastern and Southern neighbours. It has fostered the spread of democracy, the rule of law and peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean through EU mechanisms, notably the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the Barcelona Process). The Barcelona Process was conceived as a regional forum of cooperation that would spread political reform through democratisation, economic stability and a better understanding amongst people through cultural and social initiatives.

9 E. Alessandri, 'The Future Of Mediterranean Europe: Between The Euro Crisis and Arab Revolution. A Reflection On The Seventh Meeting Of The Mediterranean Strategy Group,' *The German Marshall Fund*, 16 April 2013.

10 Agence Europe, 'Algeria Trade with EU increases,' *Bulletin Quotidien Europe* 10784, 13 February 2013.

11 M. Hartlapp and S. Leiber, 'The Implementation of EU Social Policy: The "Southern Problem" Revisited,' *Journal of European Public Policy* 17/4: 468-486.

12 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-myth-of-a-lazy-southern-europe-merkel-s-cliches-debunked-by-statistics-a-763618.html>.

13 <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/civic-engagement/>.

However, stability and security soon took priority over democratisation, casting some doubts on the sincerity of Southern Europe's democratisation ambitions for its Arab neighbours. As the EU built a Schengen area of free movement for its citizens, it began to externalise its security practices to its Southern neighbours.<sup>14</sup> Southern European states participated actively in the securitisation of their Arab neighbours to protect the stability of their own borders. Readmission agreements, bilaterally forged between two governments to facilitate the expulsion of irregular migrants back to their countries of origin, became the core of European countries' strategy to fight irregular migration. Bilateral patrolling intensified in the Mediterranean. Regular joint patrols carried out since 2004 by the Spanish Guardia Civil, the Moroccan Gendarmerie, the Italian Guardia di Finanza and Libyan authorities under Muammar Gaddafi intercepted irregular migrants crossing the Mediterranean. Migration helped Gaddafi find favour with Nicolas Sarkozy, Tony Blair and Silvio Berlusconi and become a solid partner in business, energy and security. European development aid was disbursed to strengthen the border management capacities of the Gaddafi regime, which was then in charge of patrolling the Mediterranean and intercepting migrants despite its non-compliance with the principle of non-refoulement (a principle of international asylum and refugee law that forbids a government to return victims to countries where they suffered persecution or torture). The successful case at the European Court of Human Rights lodged by 13 Eritrean nationals who were intercepted at sea by the Italian authorities south of Lampedusa and transferred back to Libya in 2009, confirmed that such practices breached the non-refoulement principle.<sup>15</sup>

Southern Europe also lacks unity and coherence as a regional group towards Southern Mediterranean countries. Over the years this had led to the simultaneous promotion of competing initiatives, with Spain pushing for the Barcelona Process, the European Commission for the European Neighbourhood Policy and France for a Union for the Mediterranean. France launched the latter in 2008 as an alternative to Turkish accession and as a response to ineffective EU democratic policies. It started from the assumption that cooperation in the Mediterranean should focus on technical areas such as solar energy or the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. However, political and financial difficulties condemned it to perpetual limbo. The granting of an 'advanced status' to the least worst authoritarian regime of Morocco in 2008 with no conditionality whatsoever on democratisation or human rights revealed the incongruity of this framework. Most initiatives did not address the political, economic and social realities of the region.

## THE ARAB SPRING AS A LITMUS TEST

The Arab Spring, with its thirst for a better life, more freedom and jobs, took the EU by surprise. It especially surprised France, which supported the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia until its final hours. Spanish reaction to the Tunisian revolution was also disappointing: 'The timidity and the reactive nature of the approach [by the Zapatero government] reveal[ed] apprehension about future uncertainty and a default position of non-interference'.<sup>16</sup> This, despite Southern European diplomats' intimate knowledge of the region.

The general EU reaction to the Arab Spring confirmed the continuing primacy of security concerns. When the Arab Spring began, Southern European policy-makers and the media were more concerned by the influx of migrants than supporting the region in its democratic transitions. Ultimately, only five percent of the people displaced during the Arab Spring came to Europe, proving such fears to be unfounded. Reframing EU strategy centred mainly around two key European Commission communications, applying 'smart conditionality' and promising 'more money, more market and more mobility'.<sup>17</sup> This approach looked more like a cautious

<sup>14</sup> See S. Wolff, *The Mediterranean Dimension of EU Internal Security* (New York: Palgrave, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> See *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*, European Court of Human Rights, January 2012.

<sup>16</sup> A. Echague, 'Time for Spain to lead the EU's Mediterranean policy,' *FRIDE Policy Brief*, 74, (2011).

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, 'Joint Communication on a new response to a changing Neighborhood,' Brussels, 25 May 2011, European Commission, 'A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean,' 3 August 2011.

repackaging of previous policies and financial packages than a grand vision for the EU's role in the region. For instance, it took about thirteen years of negotiations for the EU to discuss limited visa facilitation incentives for Moroccan citizens. Visa liberalisation has been excluded since negotiations over a readmission agreement with Morocco began in 2000. The dire straits of the Arab economies require more than SMEs programmes or mobility partnerships that facilitate labour migration for privileged categories of citizens. Restrictive EU migratory policies have also turned away high-skilled migrants who prefer to go to the US, Canada or the Gulf countries. In 2010, a CADMUS research report confirmed that around 80 percent of Egyptians who had migrated to an OECD country in 2008 had eventually moved on to the US or Canada.<sup>18</sup>

Despite substantial efforts to mobilise the EU on the Arab Spring, Spain implemented major budget cuts in foreign affairs and related areas of activity:

'The country's foreign affairs budget plummeted 12 percent over 2010-2011, with 800 million euro sliced off its development aid budget. For 2012, Spain's new conservative government has cut the €85 million annual allocation to Morocco down to virtually nothing. The local embassy has had to refuse Moroccan requests for some governance assistance because Spanish officials and experts have no money even to pay for flights to Rabat. The government's focus on winning commercial contracts in Latin America entails aversion of resources away from the Mediterranean.'<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Italy made severe budget cuts to its foreign aid in 2011, 'leaving only €158 million earmarked for such programs, the lowest figure in the past 20 years'.<sup>20</sup> The call for a Marshall Fund for the Arab Mediterranean countries by the then-Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini never went beyond rhetoric. Perhaps the most high profile initiative, the MENA Partnership for Democracy and Development, launched in December 2012, employs only three staff in its Tunis office, indicating the level of its support from the US State Department and other funders.

France has taken the lead in foreign-policy initiatives in the region. These include persuading Moscow to support EU positions on Syria, joint defence projects within NATO or CSDP to limit the effects of budget cuts, resisting US pressure on developing a European approach on the UN vote on Palestine and encouraging Turkey to adopt the European position towards the Syrian opposition.<sup>21</sup>

This scoreboard reveals the extent to which Southern European countries and the EU as a whole have lost the ability to influence their interlocutors in the Southern Mediterranean. One of the consistently weak points in Southern European diplomacy is the lack of engagement with political actors in Arab countries, including Islamist political parties. Northern Europe has proved more open and has engaged with Islamist political and civil society actors; Germany, the UK, Sweden and Norway have launched dialogues with Islamist actors.<sup>22</sup> Such dialogues should nonetheless be more genuine and engage with new Arab interlocutors. Spain took the lead in establishing an intercultural and interreligious dialogue. In 2005, the UN launched the Alliance of Civilization initiative to 'improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions' under the aegis of the Spanish and Turkish governments. The initiative aimed primarily to improve the relationship between the Western and Islamic worlds and epitomised the willingness to bridge the gap in the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup> However, the Alliance of Civilization failed to bring forward any concrete actions. Southern European diplomats, with their knowledge of the

18 N. Sika, 'Highly-Skilled Migration Patterns and Development. The Case of Egypt,' *CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes*, 2010, <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/13454/?sequence=1>.

19 R. Youngs, 'Funding Arab Reform?', GMFUS Policy Brief, August 2012

20 A. Dessi and E. Greco, 'Damage Control: Italy and the European Financial Crisis in Southern Europe' in *Trouble Domestic And Foreign Policy Challenges of The Financial Crisis*, eds. T. Coulombis et al, Mediterranean Paper Series 2012, IAI and German Marshall Fund.

21 <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2013>.

22 K. Kausch, 'Plus ça change: Europe's Engagement with Moderate Islamists,' *FRIDE*, 2009.

23 T. Acimandoss et al., 'Islamist Mass Movements, External Actors and Political Change in the Arab World,' Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), 2010.

region and close cultural links, could reach out to Arab civil society and new political actors. Grassroots movements should reach out to transnational links. Movements that arise from demonstrations on Taksim, Tahrir Square or the Puerta del Sol could enhance their exchanges. Southern Europe's support of Palestine's observer status in 2012 proved its engagement with the Middle East conflict and delineated a different strategy from the UK, Germany, Poland or the Netherlands, which all abstained in the vote.<sup>24</sup> Exchange amongst parliamentarians and political parties on democratic transitions and security sector reform could be fruitful and Spain, Greece and Portugal, which underwent democratic transitions not so long ago, could show the way. Other EU member states could also bring these assets forward. By mobilising common resources and overcoming fragmentation and sometimes nationalistic foreign policy, Southern European countries, under the upcoming Greek and Italian EU presidencies, could create momentum and seize the opportunity to lobby their EU counterparts for a grand strategy towards the region.

## **SEIZING THE MEDITERRANEAN OPPORTUNITY: AVENUES FOR FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES**

The Southern Mediterranean region faces incredible socio-economic and political challenges. The EU must support constitution making, separation of powers, smooth running of the judiciary, security sector reform and progress towards civil, human and socio-economic rights. This presents an immense challenge because these structural changes must happen in countries already facing the difficulties of urbanisation and desertification.

Europe urgently needs a grand strategy for Arab Mediterranean countries. Europeans have thus far focused on easy and measurable democratisation targets such as free and fair elections or women's rights. The EU should revise its strategy to reflect the reality that democratisation is a long-term endeavour and an end itself for third countries and their nationals rather than a means to promote EU security interests. Southern Europe can play a crucial role in this endeavour.

The lack of money in Southern Europe may hinder creativity. Southern European countries need to forge new alliances with Gulf countries and Turkey – crucial actors in the wider region. Turkey has had a business-friendly policy towards the Arab Mediterranean countries, promoting a 'zero-problems with neighbours' policy and lifting visa requirements for Maghreb and Mashreq countries. The Justice and Development Party is also being heralded as a source of inspiration for many Islamist parties in power in the Maghreb. Gulf countries have offered Egyptian workers opportunities for many years and have in the past 10 years, invested in the Maghreb in real estate, tourism, banking, insurance, finance and energy.<sup>25</sup> Gulf investment represents around one-fifth of foreign direct investment in Morocco. Still, Southern Europe has not established privileged links with Gulf countries except for recent Qatari investments in football clubs, luxury shops in France and cultural exchange.

The European External Action Service could help Southern countries pool together resources and enhance their collective efficiency within the European diplomatic service. Several national diplomats who hold positions in the EEAS could facilitate new opportunities for cooperation. Four out of seven EEAS Directors come from Southern Europe, and key special representatives for strategic regions either come from the region or have extensive experience of it (including Alexander Rondos for the Horn of Africa, Bernardino León for the Southern Mediterranean). Cyprus could make more effective use of its privileged position vis-à-vis the Middle East, as could Malta and Italy of their privileged positions vis-à-vis Libya. In short, Southern Europe has ample human capital within the EEAS with which to regain its influence.

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<sup>24</sup> There was no common position amongst EU countries. The Czech Republic voted against, while Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, the UK, Slovakia and Slovenia abstained.

<sup>25</sup> E. Woertz, 'Gulf-Maghreb Relations: Investing without Interfering,' *Opinión CIDOB*, 22 May 2013.

European efforts have come together in Egypt since June 2013. Reluctant to describe the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi as a 'military coup', the EU has not suspended its aid to Egypt and hopes to exert some leverage in a transition endangered by violence and polarisation in civil society. The EU has adopted a pragmatic stance. Special envoy Bernardino León has established intense diplomatic ties with the new government. Aside from a ban on small arms and a mediating role amongst Egyptian factions, the EU is nonetheless challenged by Gulf countries and needs to continue engaging in mediation.

Southern Europe is also a key element of US influence in the Mediterranean via NATO strategy. The US has concerns over the security situation in the Mediterranean, heightened by the possibility of a Southern European exit from the Eurozone that could affect the region's economic, social and political stability. Instability in the Sahel affects Southern Europe and its Arab Mediterranean partners. If Libya acted as a first test case for the EU's ability to lead on security crises in its own neighbourhood, instability in the Sahel will require the coordination of the AFRICOM and Europeans on a series of threats: organised crime, drug trafficking, AQMI and other jihadist groups in Mali and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Before Southern Europeans can enact such a strategy, they must overcome tensions such as those during the intervention in Libya, when Italy (usually a key actor in dealing with the country) found itself 'excluded from a high-level conference call between France, the UK, Germany, and the [US] to discuss plans for the NATO campaign'.<sup>26</sup> Southern Europeans could also reactivate the 5+5 alliance, a forum that brought together five southern EU member states (Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Malta) and five Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania). Often seen as a competing security forum to the NATO Mediterranean dialogue, the 5+5 alliance could serve as a useful platform within NATO to advance security in the Mediterranean.<sup>27</sup> The EU has shown a renewed interest in the forum after events such as the attack on the Amenas gasfield in Algeria, insecurity in the Sahel and intervention in Mali.<sup>28</sup>

Such a grand strategy would also require tackling frozen regional conflicts. Next to the Middle East peace process, which seems to have dropped from the European radar, Northern Cyprus is still a main bone of contention between Greece and Turkey. The discovery of new oil resources in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea will probably increase tensions in the coming years. Southern Europe also depends on the Southern energy road. This was debated during the adoption of EU sanctions on Libya in early 2011, in light of Italian energy dependence on the country. Southern Europe has also turned a blind eye to the conflict in the Western Sahara, which continues to poison Algerian-Moroccan relations. Spain's fisheries interests, France's friendly relationship with Morocco and the lack of security in the Sahel play against a resolution. The Western Sahara is for the moment a rather stable region due to a firm Moroccan military presence. This conflict hampers dialogue on security within the 5+5 forum. Economic prosperity is also suffering as Maghreb countries only trade three percent with each other.<sup>29</sup> Further efforts at mediating and helping to solve those frozen conflicts are in the interest of Southern Europe's stability. Given the planned defence restrictions in most European countries, it is also unlikely that France or other countries will wage unilateral interventions along the lines of the Malian one. Building trust amongst Southern Arab partners, supporting democratic transitions and reforming the security sector are parts of a broader jigsaw that will provide reliable partners and security to Southern Europe and the EU.

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26 A. Dessi and E. Greco, 2012: 6.

27 For more on the 5+5 Western Mediterranean dialogue see:

[http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs\\_marco/2012/DIEEEM07-2012\\_5x5\\_SegMed\\_RomeoNunez\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2012/DIEEEM07-2012_5x5_SegMed_RomeoNunez_ENGLISH.pdf).

28 'Maghreb: Euro-Maghrebi Talks,' *Agence Europe*, 17 July 2013.

29 *Agence Europe*, 11 February 2013.

## RE-THINKING THE MEDITERRANEAN AS A SPACE IN MOVEMENT

The troubles experienced by Southern Europe are but an extreme version of those affecting Europe as a whole. The rise of the extreme-right, anti-immigrant sentiment, suburban riots and Euroscepticism pose challenges to all European governments.

The crisis has certainly hit Southern Europe severely. The region has focused most of its resources and efforts to its own domestic reforms. Already weakened before the crisis by the realpolitik ambitions of France in the region, and the UK-French defence alliance in Libya, Southern Europe failed to mobilise the Union during the Arab Spring. Finding new regional partners, thinking creatively about the pooling of resources within the EEAS and promoting Mediterranean security within NATO should nonetheless drive its political leaders.

Southern Europe holds trump cards crucial to reinventing the Mediterranean as a 'space in movement'. This reinvention requires a coalition of the willing that will pledge to work towards achieving human security in the Mediterranean basin and markets. But to succeed, Southern Europe needs to overcome the fear of further labour mobility and lead a coalition for visa facilitation for Northern Africa. The fragile Southern European welfare states have ageing societies, and entire sectors of Southern European economies have difficulties recruiting. In this context, migration can present an opportunity rather than a threat. Southern Europe thus needs to engage with new political forces in the Arab countries to ensure security and stability at its borders. This implies revising the traditional government-to-government approach and engaging with Islamist parties. Exchange of parliamentary and constitutional practices and democratisation experiences would benefit both. Many Spaniards have recently migrated to Morocco, and new market opportunities will open up throughout the Mediterranean. Supporting Maghreb economic integration in particular will benefit both shores of the Mediterranean, which will gain human capital, skills, knowledge and trade exchange. Only then will the Mediterranean once again become a 'space in movement.' ■